

MIND MURALS

The Literary and Arts Journal of
Sigma Tau Delta's Eastern Region



STAFF

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Amy Woody

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Crystal Lanucha

LAYOUT EDITOR

Rachel Van Campenhout

POETRY EDITOR

Lyndon Seitz

ASSISTANT POETRY EDITORS

*Jessica Thelen, Austin Hall,
Rachel Van Campenhout*

PROSE EDITOR

Walter Merryman

ASSISTANT PROSE EDITORS

*Allison Bennett, Amanda Hebson,
Jared Senatore*

ACADEMIC EDITOR

Leigh Koonce

Cover Art by Jared Senatore

EDITOR'S NOTE

Mind Murals: let's break it down. It's a lovely alliteration, and sort of a tongue twister. It's just ambiguous enough to imply anything really—murals of the mind, in the mind, geared towards the mind. "Mind" is a slippery word; it could mean thought, or memory, or emotion, or perception, or intelligence or any number of other slippery words. Murals, however, are expression. They bring order to the pluralistic chaos of "mind" by bringing in collaboration, compromise, collectivism. By putting our multitudinous voices together in this journal, we truly are making Mind Murals.

This journal would not have been possible without the help of many people. I want to thank my editorial staff for making the "in chief" portion of my title nothing short of a pleasure; the central office and student leadership committee for always being supportive in whatever way they can be; our Regent, Dr. Glen Brewster, for being such a vigilant and enthusiastic advisor, and all of the contributors whose talents truly continue to astound me. It is my hope that this journal continues to grow and flourish!

Finally, to you, thanks for reading! Enjoy!

*Sincerely,
Amy Woody
Editor in Chief
Student Representative
Eastern Region, Sigma Tau Delta*

CONTENTS

POETRY

JUST SING 8

APRIL 9

AN INTERIOR 10

BIG RED SUITCASE 11

IN AUTUMN 12

UNTITLED 13

PLAYING BLACK GRANITE 14

DAFFODILS 16

ENCOUNTERS 17

A WORLD WITHOUT PEOPLE IS A SENSIBLE

EMPTINESS 18

SOMNOLENCE 20

TBG 23

THE GIRL WITH THE GLASSES 24

UNKNOWN 26

THE BOOT	28
UNTITLED	29
STATIONARY PIANO SONG	30
PINK FLAMINGO	31
RUIN	32
YOU ARE ODYSSEUS ON THE ROAD	33
WARMTH	34
WRACK	36
UNTITLED	38
MERRY GO ROUND	39

PROSE

WALLS	40
OLD HABITS	44
GUITAR MAN	46
BY A RIVER	48
EAGLE'S NEST	51
MY FATHER'S WINTER	52

PORIFERA	56
FULL MOON	63
STAR SHOOTER	64
PEARLS AND DRIFTWOOD	66
THE BREAKOUT	72
CHIP	79
23 RULES OF LIFE	80
RACKED	82
TEEN FAIRY TALE	88
SCARLET NAILS	94
UNTITLED	96
BOTANICAL GARDEN	97
OHIO	98
LIQUID EXISTENCE	102
JOB SECURITY	108

ACADEMIC

T.S. ELIOT'S BREAKING POINT 111

STEPHEN'S SURVEILLANCE:
FOUCAULT AND A PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN 115

LACK OF WISDOM IN THE BOOK OF JOB 121

GLASS GHOSTS: 126
THE GHOSTLY DESPAIR OF FRANNY GLASS 126

FROST'S NATURE POETRY:
BLURRING THE BOUNDS OF THE ROMANTIC, MODERN,
AND POSTMODERN 132

MOTHERHOOD AND SLAVERY:
THE SORROWFUL CONDITION
IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED 139

RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN 143

AN EXPLORATION OF DR. SUSAN CALVIN'S ALLE-
GIANCE TO HUMANITY 150

LOVE, OBSESSION, AND DEFINITION OF THE SELF:
ADAM'S MOTIVES IN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST 155

THE FEMININE ESSENCE AND IRIS MURDOCH'S A SEV-
ERED HEAD 160

JUST SING

A lonely woman stands peacefully
Hovering outside of space and time.
Her bright umbrella absorbs the rain of doubt
Allowing the droplets to roll off the fraying fabric
And puddle mockingly about her feet.

The music of the rest of humanity swells
Somewhere in the distance,
Its rich tone falling quietly on her delicate ears
And she has no desire to join in the song.

For if she stands here,
She is strong.
If she stays here,
She is intelligent.
If she remains here,
She is gifted.
If she dwells here,
She is breath-taking.

An independent woman stands firmly
Ruling over space and time.
Her shield blocks the rain of doubt,
Making the droplets flee from her presence
And assail the beings who first hurled them.

The humming of the rest of humanity goes on
Somewhere in the distance.
The murmuring has no effect on her
For she has her own song to sing.

And she will perform it for no one but herself.

APRIL

In the rocking chair, the view is tilting: the yard through the
empty doorway, ceiling,
the yard bee-buzzing, forsythia edged.
With one foot push off, pop the heel of a blue flat off and
dangle it from my toes.
Feel the chill in my palm and the off kilter hike of my skirt,
tangled around my knees: rough lace.
Champagne slips against blued lip of glass, condensation on
swelling sides colors peach.
Hear my breathless murmur under creaking oak.
Yellow, blocky petals dot the yard like canary feathers, as if
the sun
has become a thousand south migrating birds
in leaving, molting.

AN INTERIOR

*The chimes of the clock
Garble what was, at once, a figure,
A rationale.*

*It is these rooms which concern me;
The darkened study, the staircase,
Polished a blackbird ebon.*

*The house, the decorator's love
Of the Victorian.
Amid wood screens, frowning women*

*Move, peering out from curtained rooms.
An austere air rouses,
Disapproves.*

BIG RED SUITCASE

We stuffed her in the bag, we did.
And then we snuck out the fire escape
 and down sleeping alleyways
 between walls that whispered and sighed,
We rushed through the airports with our heads bowed
 like saints and played it holy through security,
 who frisked me as if I were a virgin

In the rooms
We laid her on beds that creaked and whispered
 the magic words through air vents,
We bought her rum and coke at casino bars
 to calm her down, to soothe the seething,
And then we spread her open on a poker table
 before men who smoked big cigars

And they stood, they gasped
 one fell dead with heart attack

And out she comes like a blooming red flower
And out she surfaces like a lovely lioness
 her dress touches the floor.

Brad Phillips
Walsh University

IN AUTUMN

On the trees, the red leaves
Chatter, expectant children
Before the parade.

UNTITLED



PLAYING BLACK GRANITE

Clarinets, bassoons, the band,
their music is palpable.
I hold it in my hands
I see it in my eyes
splashing out the scene,
and now I'm no longer in my seat.

Little soldier boy,
your face is written in the notes of this music
sweeping me away
and into the beats of the blood and drums
with our hands tied together,
and where the brass lays heavy on your shoulders,
showering us in metallic rain.

The horn calls you back
reminding you of the fight that's far from over,
a lone bell calls you home.
A whisper, a flute, your love waiting,
but you can never return;
as we continue again into the chaos.

It's a slow march, forever onward,
pushing through a swamp of sharps and flats,
cymbals thundering and spitting out bombs.
What lies at the end of this cacophony of sound,
this honor-bound death march?

*I feel your exhilaration.
Then it's my hand or yours
that shoots a trumpet blast
which pierces as well as any gun,
pounding your name into the dirt and black granite.*

DAFFODILS

*These yellow beings,
These lemon-masked women;*

*They have encircled their scalps
With the thinnest of silks.*

*How remarkable they are in these concealments!
It is a spring social of quandary.*

*From underneath the gauzes
There is the chattering of coy voices,*

*Though they are stationary as trees;
The moving lips are hidden.*

*But how impatient they are
In the pea pod-like mantles!*

*And how the veils crack
From their warming emerald crowns.*

ENCOUNTERS

She brushed up against divinity,
once or twice, and maybe perched
like a cat on a fencepost admiring the moon,
on the verge of accepting angels and golden areolas.
It never lasted more than a moment;
she would startle, disturbed by some ethic
or scorched by a sermon,
and slink back to her shadows,
hissing and spitting at the hand that almost held her.

Anger shields her. Anger
and the memory of embers
dying, smothered against her skin,
forbid her trust, but still she yearns
to forgive and to let someone stronger
worry about her hunger or her festering foot.
So she presses her cheek against the colored window,
watches parent and child embrace, and cowers
whenever the child glances her way.

When the yellow street lamps flicker alive,
she imagines they are incandescent stars.
In her eyes, the reflections glitter
like hope. She ties her trench about her
and, leaning on a lamp post, waits late into the night
for a miracle, a mere glimpse of wings.
At dawn, she will shuffle to the bus station,
rub her arms against the cold,
and breathe a cloud-white prayer.

A WORLD WITHOUT PEOPLE IS A SENSIBLE EMPTINESS

or so the gun-rack said.

A herd of bicycles went by an hour ago, insolent wheels
squeaking as they raced past a pair of armchairs slouching
down the sidewalk, arm in arm, frayed, with colored flowers
half

worn-off, sagging where absent hips used to nestle,
hollows where absent faces used to smile.

All that is left are the spiky lamps who run for election in the
cabinet

and planes that try to sit on telephone wires
bookshelves head the education system (nothing much has
changed)

tanks discuss the possibility of “containment” overseas, while
coffee cups direct transportation, newspapers talk stocks on
Marta.

Closets keep to themselves, secretive as always—whose
bones

are they hiding in the red-darkness of their chests?

Police cars roam the streets searching for lost strollers and
truant gum-chewing desks,

flowered aprons keep a lookout from their high wires for
knobby canes

too old to be near playgrounds; swings giggle in the parks.

At night it is different:

coat hangers lounge on shadowed corners strung

tight with lust for soft necks, boots
wander aimlessly drunk on polish,
soles flapping as they recount the bloody revolution.
Kitchen scissors stab old clothes out of spite, looking for
 “traitors to the cause”
the tap of a crowbar on an empty bedroom window
 spiderwebs the glass.
Teddy bears smuggle top-grade varnish to dirty old sofas
 stuffed
with flesh (they gasp when their insides are ripped out,
 button eyes popping),
gangs of baseball bats roam the ragged darkness looking
for skulls that have not yet been broken.
Amid the furious horns of a highway a wounded ambulance
wails its death-cry
surrounded by snarling motorcycles and flashing lights.
On a lonely, forgotten hill a dirty pink blanket cradles
a tiny mound of earth
weeping, without words or tears.

SOMNOLENCE

I lied to myself when I was twelve:

My father is a sleeping god
who murmurs at my spoken name.

I twisted the tendons of a swing
imagining him on a desert plateau.
I'd stand by wavering skinks
and shout up into a glare
(covered in red dust with knees shaking
from the long thrum of his exhale).

I'd find him knee deep
in the murky, knobbed ice of a marsh,
with face folded in arms
like a mired Polyphemus,
so that when I reached him, passing crackling reeds
with shorn edges,
the silence would come intermittently
like blows.

Mother bruised her palms
on the prongs of a succession of nightlights
and smeared very berry chap stick
when gnawing her lip.
I filled orange bottles with stones
so they looked full under white caps
and my father slept sitting, with his elbows on his knees
in a hall like a broken cage
where all the windows rose as slats

and the door had decayed.
His cheek was like a cliff
around which a highway turned.

Today, when pulling clinking bulbs
from cardboard boxes
I know best, not the sound of her voice,
but a recumbent hand, huge and strange in gloom
with a pulse like a boom-boom-boom.
In the box, the empty paper cells shift, say:
“Your father is a sleeping god.”





THE GIRL WITH THE GLASSES

*I thought I knew the girl with the glasses,
but the truth is
no one but God knew her.
And her glasses were a wall
of matchsticks burning
the unsaid words away.*

*I thought the girl with the glasses must be clumsy.
She'd walk into class,
bruised and scraped,
whispering angry words I couldn't hear.
Maybe she cried,
but I couldn't see past the glasses.*

*I thought the girl with the glasses was my friend.
I told her that her family wasn't good to her.
And my head slammed against the lockers,
her fingers closing around my throat.
I wondered if there was a demon in her eyes,
but the glasses revealed nothing.*

*I thought the girl with the glasses hated me.
She yelled at me to go away,
but I followed her to where the older girls
pushed and clawed at her with their words.
I broke their stoning circle
and took her outstretched hand.
She might've been happy,
but the glasses only reflected the sun's light.*

The girl with the glasses came into class today
blood on her fingers, glasses cracked.

"What happened?"

"I smashed them,"

And she shattered and broke
the glasses falling off her nose.

UNKNOWN

I've forgotten all about me,
All about who I really am.
My whole life is a huge question mark
And I do not have the strength to try and figure it out.

For so long I've been pretending
To be anyone else but me,
Its hard to realize and see
That in the process I ended up loosing me.

What drove me to live a lie,
I am not sure I truly know.
There's so much I've gone through
But also stuff I've decided to ignore.

Every decision is now harder to make,
I am constantly doubting myself.
Not knowing who I really am
Leads me to wonder if I have any clue
As to what I really want.

Not knowing where to go,
Scares me more than I care to admit.
How am I supposed to know if my dreams are my dreams,
Or only dreams of my pretend to be.

I'm afraid I won't be able to figure it out,
I do not even know where I could start.
For now all that I really know
Is that somehow I've ended up feeling completely alone.

*Its simply terrifying realizing this,
If I do not know who I am,
How is anyone else supposed to know.
How am supposed to save myself,
If I don't know what I'm saving myself for.*

THE BOOT

*I found the boot to the side of a trail
in the last rash of woods in the city.
It was lined with faux fur and idiotically thin
for the harsh northern snow of last winter.*

*I imagine two lovers, college students—
philosophers or artists here
for a tête-à-tête with some muse,*

*but these children of suburbia
underestimate the snowflakes
so pretty on their lashes.
Their gloved hands fold together,*

*and suddenly she has lost the boot.
She leans on a tree, one socked foot
held crooked in her hand,
while he flounders in the snow.
He digs until his face is dusted white.*

*Eventually they hobble back to their car,
clamber into the back seat together,
and he will rub with nervous hands
her bluing toes.*

UNTITLED

*The world ended while we were sleeping
It was only five in the afternoon but it was dark and you said,
Is it nine?*

*It was only five and we were no longer sleeping
The curtains hung open like gashes in loose cloth and
We, rubbing the sleep from our eyes, shook our heads and said
No, it cannot be*

STATIONARY PIANO SONG

Stationary, it looked stationary in the sky
that weightless bird stood still before it waved goodbye.
It reminds me of my brother, dead now,
of how he played the piano and how
he would leave it hanging in the air so high.

At night I can't help but miss his lullaby,
that song of his breath, like his piano, it will die.
It won't remain somehow
stationary.

The stationary bird wheeled away with a cry
Maybe I'll start to cry too, because my brother used to be shy,
except with me. And he would bend low
and smile at me with those eyes that held music that could flow
straight into my heart and there forever it will still lie
stationary.

PINK FLAMINGO

*Ann Gentile
Shepherd University*



RUIN

The wood bent
above tawny cherries
reddening above the crawling of pale stalks,
the collapsing spines of leaves.
Obscured May apples curled into suggestions.

Thistle crooked nimbly
over the stoop of a gnarled creature,
who knew the dusky taste of roses,
(thick and dry)
more than sweetness
not yet swollen
in taut skin.

The cherries fell, split leaving
a viscid glint on sickly leaves
and persimmon dipped below
the water, their thick chambers
slid onto the gluttoned riverbed.

Soon, long-leaved trees will
overlay remnants:
wilting ivy and nascent dandelions;
like worn words on tombs
they will speak indistinctly
of color in lessening half-light.

YOU ARE ODYSSEUS ON THE ROAD (IN A DESK)

A desk drawer filled to the brim,
Sixty bucks, a paper clip,
A Polaroid of grandmother with baby sister,
And a pair of finger nail clippers.

My cup of Alcatraz is at home in the lake of blue glass,
Dip the tin full of crystals that melt in the mouth
And drink full, drink heavy, drink until the blue is gone
And settle the cup in its drawer where it may collect more
time abroad.

See the window thrown open thriving,
Reaching far, insatiable,
Look twice and three times and linger late thirsty,
Hungry, transfixed and far away.

WARMTH

The tangy scent of fresh cut grass fills me and temporarily distracts me from my book.

As the sun beats down on my bare shoulders and knees, I am acutely aware of the signs of life around me.

The ground has finally thawed and dandelions and purple blossoms are beginning to dot the newly green hillside.

Sunday boaters are out on the river, once more enjoying the almost-forgotten sunshine.

I am sure that on one of those boats a boy and a girl are shyly scooting close to one another and talking of the weather.

Later in the evening, when it cools, he will put his arm around her shoulders, pulling her closer, and another summer romance will begin to unfold.

A mourning dove coos longingly; hidden among the branches of a nearby tree and he is answered only by the unfriendly call of a crow.

The cool caress of the breeze is a sweet reminder of the long winter and a harbinger of the long days of summer which lie ahead.

I am almost lulled to sleep by the tranquility of the scene when I am startled by the sudden snapping of the sheets on the line as a strong gust of wind comes through.

Even the scent of the sunscreen on my milk-white skin is a welcome change from the long-sleeves and heavy coats of February.

But the warmth, oh the warmth of the sun is the most precious of changes for it gently rouses the earth from its restless slumber and illumines all the wonders of spring.

WRACK

In the ending, there was
a low beach: little more than a white breath
in a black mouth
where dead sirens rolled slowly
thumping softly and plashing up
with the pock-marked foam
and down on a gravel of shells,
smoothed bottle glass, and coarse sand.

A patched man, rounding his shoulders,
hiding the fraying of his pale hair,
saw a snarl, a clot in the undertow,
and pallid bulk.
He held close a slipping belt buckle
and shuffling, skidding,
with the airy huff of sand upset,
soon soaked his feet
and the hem of his brown overcoat.
Its loose seams stretched like old scars.

He braced himself on frost fondled stone
and crouched to drag up a silvered hand
so the body splashed cold and dipped bluing feet
The loose feathers of gulls and pipers
were on the lip of her empty throat
while the waves lashed and tugged:
orotund.

Sympathy was in his tightening mouth
though he swore with a hoarse voice.
One still lived, her neck askew:
wedged on the rim of a tidal pool.
She watched his mouth
and, uncomprehending,
saw the curse in its contortion.

He raised red spotted arms
like the diseased stems
of unbalanced flowers,
white seams slipping
down to bony elbows,
and crossed, invoked
the favor of dead maternity.

Fatuma Hydara
Pace University

UNTITLED



MERRY GO ROUND

*It seems a constant, the procession of gaudy mained horses,
thin leopards and jaguars,
All situated on chromium poles.*

*Summer bore down on the animals.
Their painted foreheads burned with warmth.*

*Autumn arranged leaves on the circular stage while bitter air
slipped through their legs.
Wool coated children hurried them onward.*

*Winter offset the elaborate dyes,
Their year near an end.*

*Spring, and all manner of life was repainted. The movement
began anew.*

WALLS

Dripping like the wall is melting. Lava, hot wax, scalding oil running down the drywall. Mixing. Mixing. Everything is mixing. Blood with paint. Ink and egg yolks. Semen joining molten earth. I don't want to be burned. I can't stop my hand from moving. It's strangling me. Stopping. Crawling on my face like a spider, stepping into my eyes, tripping in my hair. I restrain it. Restrain myself. Stop!

The boiling liquid is almost upon me. Not tea. God save the Queen, anyway. I jump onto the blue bubble. My foot's caught between the cushions. The purple lava turns into a green rhino, charging the blue bubble. Pull. Pull. My leg's free and so am I. For a split second. Weightless, floating. Gravity rapes me and pulls me down. Smash onto the floor. Crash. Rash. From the heat? Where's the melted wall?

Stand up. Metal in my mouth. A spoon? Bullets? Change? Metal. Metal. Drink the floor. Stop the taste. Burn my mouth. The floor is dry. Where did it go? The rhino. He drank it all; turned himself into a blue elephant. Grew.

Peanuts. I need peanuts so the elephant will give me a drink. Shower me with cold water from his trunk. Bathroom shower. Shells in the drain. Water flooding. Not yet. Peanuts. Where are the peanuts? Peanuts. Peanuts. Peanuts. Peanuts. Peanuts. Peanuts.

“Butler. Bring the elephant peanuts!”

Silence.

“Butler! Peanuts!”

I’m alone. Just my elephant and I. The walls dried up. The floor is parched. Cracks. Opening. Metal in my mouth. Coins. I’ll pay the butler with my tongue, but I have no butler.

Sink. I can find a sink. I’ll open a hole in the wall. Its forcefield will open out like a book cover. James Joyce. Edgar Allan Poe. They’d be my friends. Jane Austen is gross. Pull. The hole opens. It has spots. Purple spots. Red spots. Dots. Dots of yellow. Yellow and red join. I hide my eyes. Embarrassed. Pop! They’re orange. Dots are darting around. Spots are spilling down the stairs. Mop. I need a mop.

“Butler! Mop up the spots.”

The wall is shedding. Skin falling off. Blue skin. Blue blood. Aristocrat. That’s me. I run to save the wall. Footsteps. Mine. Sound, mini-earthquakes. Sound waves. Discs. Records. Blue skin. Ice cold. Too cold. Burning cold. The elephant. He’s blue. Frozen? Pluto.

Run to save him. The hole’s corked. Help! Sewn closed. How can I save him? Pull. Pull. Push? Fall forward. Down. Over. He’s gone. Missing. 5. 4. 8. 3. No phone. S.O.S. Morse. Inspector? Code.

Alone.

The walls are spreading. The room is huge. Football field. Library of Congress. Giant. Universe. No walls. No elephant. I trip over an asteroid trying to get to the other side. Running. Rushing. Something's stopping me. Up. I have to run up. Wait. It's a wall. Run up the wall. Through the wall. Move the wall. Find the elephant.

Stop. What's that sound? Glass. I'm knocking on the window. There's someone out there. They can help. Elevate the window.

"Sir? Or Madam? Would you help me save my elephant?"

Zombies. Or maybe just crazy. They won't help. Why won't they help? Perhaps I can sound the alarm and someone will come to my aid.

"Missing elephant!"

Those trees are alive. They'll help. Moving toward me. Angry. Dark. They'll hurt me, not help me. Sharp ends. Stab. Stab. No eyes. I have eyes. "Stop tree! Or I shall prune you."

Close the window. Safety. "Get away! Get away! Get away!" Slam.

Shiny everywhere. Cool. Clear. Shiny. Shiny. Water. Sharp water. All of it. I have to drink all of it.

Sharp. Cold. Sharp.

Quiet.

OLD HABITS

Morgantown, West Virginia, somewhere between finding my place in the world and losing myself in degenerate friendships. I was helping an old acquaintance, Brice, move across town for the second time after his second eviction. Arbitrary was the best word for our relationship. The realm of the unexpected.

A phone call came while I was dining with my grandparents at Minards—some Italian diner in northern WV that mourns the death of Jim Crowe. The call showed up “private.” “Excuse me, Bubby, I should take this.” An angry X, perhaps? Someone without the balls to give me the satisfaction of knowing? I hate secrets.

“Kyleigh?” Who was I kidding? She’s engaged to a goddamn seaman.

“Barnes? Is that you?” The groggy baritone could only be one person.

“Brice?” I was taken but not surprised.

“It’s Brice. I need your help.” Of course you do.

“Moving again?”

“I’m being evicted. The bastards caught on.”

I asked no further explanation. I knew the rent wasn’t paid and the posters didn’t cover the holes.

“When do you need me?”

“Tomorrow. Don’t worry, I’ll compensate.” I knew he would. His deviance was always good for some manner of chemical payback.

It was a sweaty evening. Brice was waiting right where I’d left him one year back. Thankfully, most of his pressboard belongings were lost to drunken madness. A stained mattress with box spring, a pristine leather couch (no

questions asked), hundreds of sacred comics, half a dozen cacti—all piled neatly in the threshold.

“Lost some things along the way?”

“The price you pay for gained wisdom.” He hadn’t lost his crooked brilliance.

We moved in several disorganized trips with a stop along the way for two quarts of unpasteurized strawberry milk. The new place was quaint. Up three staggered flights of stairs, a brown shag carpet studio apartment with big windows blocked by kudzu-covered oak branches—the Shady Grove district—properly named.

We shifted boxes late into the night without direction, cacti placed in the big window. After excessive drink and smoke diluted the cause, we sat for conversation. Overindulgence has made the record blurry, but I know we spoke of the past and the present. There was no cause for the future. We hit the subject of classes taken—his pottery ventures. He sprung from the couch and shuffled through a box in the kitchen. An amalgam of warped clay with sloppy brown glaze.

As I left he handed me a deformed coffee mug and said something to the tune of “compensation.” Our bond never consisted of verbal pleasantries. Sincerity did not matter. I have not been in contact with Brice since that night and don’t expect different.

Throughout my travels since, I’ve “forgotten” the brown mug in various locations, only to have it returned unexpectedly. It sits beside this computer as I type, remnants of French-pressed coffee in its bottom. I guess some things are never lost no matter how hard we try.

GUITAR MAN

On a dirt-covered street corner in the middle of Savanna there once was an old bearded man with a guitar who'd play for whatever tips he could get. He was called "That Guitar Guy," or "Guitar Man", or "Him" on the account that no one could ever remember Guitar Man's name, even Guitar Man. And for a man with no name and no home he could play the guitar pretty good.

Now all things were fine until one day a young man named Johnny walked to that same corner since he needed money. He had recently had a windfall from the profits of a golden fiddle sale. The problem is that the money dried up real quick, considering his bad luck with the horses and all. He waited until dawn when Guitar Man was sleeping, holding onto his instrument, and Johnny pulled out his fiddle right there and started playing, with no regard for the folks of that corner, who were just minding their own business.

The sound of that fiddle was horrifying; sending chills down the street so bad the puddles of water dotting the road turned to ice on the spot and then shattered into 1,654 pieces. They got that number cause counted those pieces to try to get the thought of Johnny's fiddle out of their head.

To clarify just how damn awful this fiddle playing was, I'll tell you a short aside. Now this is just a rumor, but a man two miles away was gonna jump off a bridge that day until he heard that deathly noise and thought to himself, "now I ain't got it so bad, at least I don't sound like that." From that point on he turned his life around and became the city's mayor, complete with suit jacket and flag lapel pin and

everything.

Now back to Guitar Man. As anyone would, he had taken great offense to this as he'd been there so long he couldn't even remember how long he'd been there and rightfully thought it was his spot. Guitar Man never left his spot. No one ever asked questions as to what he ate or drank or anything like that. We also don't know what he did with all those dollar bills and stuff. All we knew then was that he was there and he played a decent guitar and that was the way we liked things.

And on that note the guitar man started playing at the same time and started playing some old tune thought forgotten to the swamps, swallowed by the gators a long time ago. The song ignored the shrill sound of the fiddle and made grown men cry and women fall in love by the second strumming. People kept passing and passing and throwing money, gold rings, the rights to a few graveyard plots, and even the deed to a family fortune went into the case of the Guitar Man. By the end there were enough tips in his case to buy a block of the city of Savanna.

Even after that hell of a show Johnny tried to continue but the people didn't want to hear no damn fiddle. They booed Johnny and threw things and ran him out of town so bad that some say he crossed the border into Alabama, where he thought that maybe there'd be people that would appreciate the fiddle a bit more. Needless to say, he didn't find work for years, and wound up burning the thing for firewood to roast the rat he caught using his own severed toe as bait.

And that's how Johnny learned to never bring a fiddle to a guitar fight.

BY A RIVER

It had rained all day and in the break they made it for the river. They sat on a broken piece of concrete where the bank was ripped up and the roots of trees were reaching out in a tangled mess. He said he hadn't been to work at the orchard all week because of the rain and she said it wasn't so bad to have time off every once in a while. Except that I stare at the walls all day and wish I were outside, he said. I used to love the rain, he said.

They watched boats go up and down the river and they talked about everything. It got cooler, and when mist came down the river he talked about mountain climbing. He loved watching mist and clouds pour over mountain tops. He talked about hiking the Smokey Mountains and she liked hearing about that trip because the most diverse salamander population in the world is in the Smokeys and salamanders were one of her four favorite animals. She talked about how the chemicals in the water were killing the salamanders around here. They listened to the water that ran over the small rapids. Her young hair was womanly and full and he wanted to sleep in the brown folds. Then a train howled from deep in the woods. They ran for the tracks, the wind of the train pushed against them, and when the noise drifted away he said it felt like he hadn't seen her in forever, and she said I see you every day. She asked if he wanted to sit by the water. She was already barefoot, and he took his shoes off and they dipped their feet in the river, and never had the rocks in the sand felt so real.

Above, the moon wanted to come out and cast itself on the water as a silvery disk. He remembered a story, though he didn't remember its origin. The moon is the

mother of the moth. The sun became jealous of the moon's beauty and shook the moon and her children fell to earth. He said moths were the most tragic of all the animals. Fallen, they spend their whole life flying, trying to return to the moon, their home, but they never find their way because of all the lights on the city street. Long ago, he said, moths really did make it to the moon. So many of them crossed the vacuum between here and there and gathered on the side facing the earth that eclipses would happen. And when the moon turned the other way the moths dispersed and turned into stars.

The lights on the river started to ripple, like puddles, and it started to rain harder, pouring. They ran. Out of breath, they wondered why they were running, and then they walked in the middle of the street.

She made a sudden cry and dashed for something on the pavement. She held whatever it was close to her chest. She cupped a toad in her hands, its throat bubbling in and out as it breathed. She asked if he had ever hypnotized a toad. No, he said. She turned the toad over in one hand, it kicked and tried to jump away and she soothed the toad's belly with her one finger. This was supposed to make the toad calm down, she said. It goes into a trace, and then you can walk around with a charmed toad on your shoulder and it won't jump away. She said when she was a biologist at such-and-such park this trick always worked. She taught her magic trick to the children who came on school fieldtrips. She showed the parents when they asked if it were true, and she hypnotized frogs in the deep woods when she was alone collecting samples of tree bark and pond water. But this frog wouldn't calm down. The toad didn't trust her, she said, and she watched the toad hop away in jagged, confused lines.

He wanted to ask her to stare at the wall and

listen to the rain with him as they sleep. Her clothes were soaked through, clasped tight to her skin, her hair down straight, matted and tangled. He had a shower and the towels for the both of them. He thought no. He told her good-night, to get warm, to not get sick and went his way. He walked several blocks before the rain died. Under the eave of a popular café was a light bulb. Moths fluttered against the burning glass. In a spider's web a moth was struggling. A gypsy band was playing inside the café and through the glass he could see the shapes of shadows waving like leaves on a tree.

Ann Gentile
Shepherd University

EAGLE'S NEST



MY FATHER'S WINTER

The evening my father passed away, it snowed light and fluffy onto sleeping Philadelphia. It was cold, but there was no wind. The fat snow droplets fell straight down onto the cars parked in the hospice parking lot. I had never been to this hospice because he had only been moved there for a temporary stay and everyone knew it. I cannot remember for sure now, but I believe he was only there less than a week.

By the time he had been moved to the hospice, he had lost his faculty of speech, and it was a mystery as to whether he could hear us. In my mind I couldn't fathom how kidney cancer could affect one's ability to communicate so much, but I also knew that I had denied myself the knowledge of his condition on purpose. I received all of my news and information on his condition through my mother, through texts and phone calls, and she, with her still thick Chinese accent and broken English, would attempt to pronounce words that probably were incorrect—nonexistent medical terms that I would hold as gospel truth but never research. I could've very easily asked his doctors what kind of cancer he had and what it was doing to ravage the inside of his body. I still don't know whether I was afraid of the truth or whether I dismissed this information as some kind of already past knowledge, as if I would not need to remember all of it in the future, when he was well.

During all this time, I cannot remember ever receiving a clear explanation of my father's illness and its progression. I knew the words "kidney cancer" and some mela-...mela... some forgettable long word that my mother kept repeating to me every time we spoke, like a defense mechanism blanket, cloaked over her inability to understand what was

happening to him. Her blanket was thin and full of holes, but I didn't even have one. I was forging mine almost literally at his bedside, knitting a navy blue pillowcase that was intended to be under his head upon completion, make him feel better, maybe even cure him. I thought, if he sees that I finished this pillowcase for him before he died, he will have something to cling to, and maybe fight harder. The effect of the pillowcase was useless; almost four states away, I had called him on the phone to tell him I had begun it, and the next time he knew of its progress, we could not know if he could see it.

I stayed away, four states away, as long as I could through the length of his health's degradation. I blame myself now for this, for any loneliness he felt, for any loss of hope that could've quickened him to his death. I surely had killed him myself, his only child who would not visit him in sickness. I clung to my school work. I received straight A's that semester. I had diligently attended classes every day, and diligently cried in the bathroom between them. The only days I felt it was alright not to cry were the days my mother or father called me with good news. The radiation was working. The doctor was hopeful. The surgery will help. In retrospect, these hopeful news bulletins were merely pawns of mercy, lines fed to my mother and me to appease our grieving hearts. It was all bullshit.

The snow was nice that night, in a way; it was comforting to me, but I felt bad for him. Summer was his season of ecstasy, which I always thought strange for a man who grew up in Minnesota. He relished perspiration and staying in the sun until his back had to be peeled the next day. His favorite time in summer was known in our household as "poo' time," when he would don his crazy eighties swim trunks and wraparound sunglasses, and shoot hoops from inside the pool. I felt bad that he had to die in the winter, cold and pale.

The night had gone on longer than expected—it seemed as if he was holding on for dear life, but for what reason I'll never know. He was a skeleton kept warm and breathing by a machine, but he was no longer my father, or so I thought. He lay with his jaw slack, cracked, dusty lips spread thin across yellowed, molding teeth. I can never forget this expression; it has haunted me ceaselessly since then, so that I feel the need to look at pictures of him every day to remember he had color in his face, he had a wonderful smile, he was a little chubby and healthy and happy.

A tiny rasp was escaping this ghoulish expression in a timed manner, every however so many seconds, the machine gave him a breath. My father was Caucasian and I suppose a Christian, although he lived life to the fullest without need for religious practice; however, he had requested a group of Buddhist monks my mother was familiar with to be present and pray for him. He had always been more interested in the eastern religions and cultures, which I suppose was part of the reason for marrying my mother. These monks had long since come and gone, and it was so late that even the streets of Philadelphia were quiet. We decided to leave and come back tomorrow. My mother begged me to go home and get rest, and she would follow soon after she had spoken to him a little more. I fought this movement, thinking he might not make it to the morning, and asked that I could have time with him first.

They kept his room dark, and going in alone was the most frightening experience of my life. I had been told not to touch him, not even his hands, by the monks who had cautioned that touching the patient may cause him to hold onto life longer, thus prolonging his pain and ours. I was not sure if I would have wanted to touch him anyway—the color,

texture, and look of his skin were not correct on him. He looked all wrong, like I had accidentally gone into someone else's father's room. I did not know at first if it would matter if I spoke, but I did, partially to comfort myself. I told him that I loved him, that I couldn't bear to see him like this, and that if he wanted to be free of his pain, he needed to let go—let go of his life, and let go of me. I left not knowing if he had heard anything I had said, and it took all I could to try and control the pain I felt at not having been able to speak with him before he had fallen to a body with an absent soul.

I made my way down the corridor towards the elevator. I cried in the elevator, where I was allowed time and space to go completely insane. On the first floor was the exit, a door straight out to the parking lot. I had set two footprints in the fresh snow, one for my right and one for my left, when the attendant called out behind me that my mother requested I come back upstairs. I felt irritated at first; as if I already knew she was bothering me about something trivial. When I stepped off the elevator into the second floor hallway, I had already known what had happened. Two men in uniform, an unidentifiable uniform, were waiting, anxiously in the hallway. The nurses looked at me sympathetically, and my mother, they told me, was in his room. I looked at the nurse who was in charge of my father, and she nodded with an expression that at first resembled nervous complicity, but melted into empathy. My mother came out of the room and her face was wrought with sadness.

"He let go."

"What do you mean?"

"He's gone. He's let go."

He had heard me telling him to let go and he had listened. I fell to the floor and wept.

PORIFERA

I was young the last time I had been to the Keys, too young to recall how young. The only thing I remember was sitting in an inflatable dingy my dad had blown up with a foot pump a few hours earlier. I was sitting in the raft, in what was—to me—the middle of the ocean, while all of the adults were snorkeling around me. I had been *afraid* to get in the water. Jerry, a family friend and pastor at our church, had shot out of the water, screamed “shark,” and flipped the raft. I don’t really remember what happened after that. From then on, the sea always had another level of power for me. After being hurled into it, I was afraid of it even more than I had been, but I was more fascinated with it too. The older I get, the more the fear becomes irresistible captivation, a pull that hasn’t ceased to produce anxiety, sheer possibility.

Rachel had planned the trip, and the other five of us benefitted from her efficiency. I’d met Rachel a summer ago; she was Z’s friend and he made a point to introduce her. She was tall for a girl, six-feet and athletic, with high cheekbones and silk-straight hair that flashed in sync with her eyes and teeth. Whenever I pictured Rachel, I thought of how a coin shines in the sun when you roll it around in your fingers.

I think if I had met Rachel on my own, I would have been more likely to pursue her, but Z had introduced her with a vicarious sort of pressure. A part of him always seemed a part of me, each of us fixing his own projected problems by trying to solve the other’s. When I met Rachel, I could only imagine Z thinking, look, this will help piece you back together. It was the best I could do.

I had only known Z for a couple years, but I told him everything. The year before I left for college, I worked with Z

and Mike at a small arcade/go-kart track. There was plenty of enmity between us and our bosses to keep us close, and all of the talks Z and I had about our failed relationships were the early cement of ours.

**

Z and I were sorting poles to set up the eight-man tent we had unpacked and stretched across the sand, while Kara and Rachel picked out food to cook later. Ty walked away, down the trail, to the campsite information booth to ask about getting firewood. Ty kicked the ground as he walked and watched the wind dissipate clouds of dust. I was a bit worried that Ty would feel excluded. Z had introduced Mike and me to Rachel a year ago, and she almost always brought Kara with her whenever we hung out. I had only told Z about Ty, and he was a stranger to the rest. But Ty was resilient; he'd do alright.

To the North, somewhere over the sea, thunderheads swelled and sagged, dark with rain. The wind whipped up half of the tent, and Z and I scrambled to grab the ends, pushing them down and scooping sand over the flaps.

**

We had left Rachel's house at 9:00am, cramming into the back of her four-door F-250 as a thunderstorm ushered us out, and spent the next five hours driving. The air conditioner only half worked and the rain and heat had fogged the windows for most of the drive. I sat on the backseat hump and unsuccessfully tried to make out the shapes Ty traced on the window to my left while, to my right, Z filled out a crossword. In the front, Kara and Mike talked about how much better the beaches were in the Keys than on Pine Island. Rachel fixed her eyes on the road, a statue, while she listened to *Crime and Punishment* on my iPod.

Getting out of the car had been an escape in itself.

After registering at the visitor's center, we found our campsite and started to set up camp. Near the shore a flock of sea-birds hovered over the water—rising, falling, breathing. The breeze rippled the shadowed surface of the sea and conducted my shirt in the same symphonic flutters, crescendo evaporation; diminuendo thaw.

**

With Mike's help, we finished setting up the tent. It quivered against the wind, but the storm had broken over the sea, and it looked like the dark wall of water connecting sea and sky was going to pour everything back into itself. Ty came back with an armful of dried hickory and put it under a tarp in the bed of the truck.

I slid my knife onto my dive belt and fastened it around my waist, slipping a mesh catch bag under it and grabbing my spear, before heading down to the beach. I walked along the shore for a few minutes, letting everyone make their way out a bit. I paused on the beach—that strip of sand, narrow with the high tide—that seemed to shield the entire sea. Staring at the horizon, I felt blinded by distance. Five bright snorkels danced their way deeper in a huddled mass, flagging the Popsicle puppet show my friends were putting on. I smiled and stepped across the threshold of the dry sand, cool after sitting so long underneath the brooding storm.

Water seeped through the sand, drawing my foot further into its embrace. A lightning burst tingle sprinted up my spine when the tide-line first tumbled through the spaces between my toes. The water continued to swallow as I walked deeper across the slight gradient of shifting ocean sand, so slight that there seemed to be no layering, no dropping, nothing but a gradual and imperceptible sinking. When I was waist-deep, I paused again; standing—not thinking, not in words—just

letting the rock of the waves and the power underneath pass over and massage my thighs. I took a deep breath and stretched my lungs as I relinquished control of the muscles in my legs—collapsing as I let go of my breath, most precious thing—and let the recoil of my diaphragm push the air past my lips, bubbling up as I drifted down.

**

Through the water—weakly sparkling where the sunbeams powered it—I saw a huddle of sponges, ocher ocean brains. I swam toward them, spear and hands cutting through the water in front. Approaching the reef-like throng of table-sized sponges, a school of silver fish flashed in front, breaking apart and reforming in sync with my movements. Any underwater structure is a good place to start looking for life.

The sponges were hollow spheres. A few fist-sized holes in various parts of the sponge allowed the water to move inside, increasing its ability to suck in the life of the sea. Lobster loved to hang out in the sponges. I always thought it was strange that a lobster's most dangerous predator only needs to look for where it hides. The protection becomes its danger.

**

The fire danced bright through the black iron bars of the makeshift grill propped over it. I wasn't sure where Ty had gone, and I decided to keep an eye on the grill until he got back.

Mike handed me a beer and clapped his hand on my shoulder, shaking me. I laughed. I was glad to be with the group. I was in the Keys. Life was gorgeous.

The lobsters were turning red in the bubbling aluminum tray and the light gray smoke drifted up to be wind-whipped throughout the campsite. The smell was incredible:

sea-salted hickory and fresh, ocean-bred seafood. I snapped off a couple of driftwood branches and placed them into the fire, watching them catch and glow green with salt-tinged flames.

I stood entranced by the flames until being play-pushed into them. Kara laughed as I turned around grinning and picked her up, threatening to toss her in.

**

I half-dropped Kara in the sand and fell to my knees, turning over into the choke and grabbing Ty by the wrist. When we were both scrambling on our knees, he tried slipping his free arm around my neck, but I bulled him over with my shoulder and set my forearm over his collar bones.

**

I looked away and started brushing the sand off. I could feel Ty's stare. I started to laugh and had to clear my throat before trying again. I tossed my empty beer can at him, "Spilled it, you bastard." "Oh... Well, I can admit when I'm wrong," he said, and grabbed a beer from the cooler. Ty smiled at me as he pretended to bite off the tab before lobbing the can into the sand at my feet, "Fire in the hole," he said quietly and turned away to tend to the grill.

**

After dinner, I brought a canvas folding chair down to the edge of the ocean and set it ten feet past the tideline, six inches deep. The tide had nearly erased the beach and I was still close enough to the tent to hear the cracklings of the fire between the slow points of the melody Z was playing on his guitar. He was playing in the key of D and each slow-strummed E minor hummed in tune with the sea-music melody.

I like the horizon best at night. It pulls you in further at night than at any other time. You have

to strain your eyes to try to see where sea meets sky; the darkness draws you toward it every second. I sat there trying to conceive of something so huge. The sea seemed no less never-ending than the sky, just distance. The feelings were what they were. The sight forced you to acknowledge wordlessness. I sat there trying to think how I could ever contain anything so ineffable, realizing that I never could and deciding that it was alright, that I could sate myself on its being there without the need to take it home for others.

I felt both omnipotent and impotent.

**

As I stared at the stars through the thin lattice black bars, I listened to the breath of the four around me, to the ceaseless hum of the sea, and to the rise and fall of the cicadas' chorus. The paralytic feeling had yet to dissipate and at some point it occurred to me, more in feeling than in thought, that I had ceased to exist in any sense other than a conscious ordering of sensory interpretation, that I had become a recursive extension of something I had once been. I thought about the false vacation, and nothing felt right anymore, not my body, or the stars, or the sea, or the four who lay quietly breathing in the moonlight.



Anne Gentile
Shepherd University

FULL MOON



STAR SHOOTER

The lovers stood in each other's arms, looking at the night sky from under the glass roof of a skyscraper the man, a self-made man, built. The clear glass let all through except the cold wind of the high reaches of the atmosphere, leaving only the soft yet sure voice of the man and the calm voice of the woman. The woman, by his side since the beginning of his climb to the top of the world, took in the stars with both awe and sadness, the night's reflection glistening in her trembling eyes. A single tear fell down her face when she looked down upon the city for the first time, tasting bitter when it fell down to her lips.

The man asked her what was wrong and she responded, "A long time ago you said that the sky was the limit. What are we going to do now that we have touched the sky?"

"We'll go as far up as we can," he replied. After a few seconds he continued, "I guess there are always the heavens."

"I think we were in the heavens first," she said smiling, looking up at him now instead of the stars or the city below.

"Then we'll go higher than the heavens, my love," he said in a soft voice.

"But the only thing left to reach for after that is the stars," she said.

He didn't look down into her eyes, instead he simply said, "Then we'll shoot at the stars."

Then, the man went over to a small black box on the wall of the skyscraper roof and took out a pistol from it. He took the woman into his left arm, holding her so close that her sweet perfume was all he could notice, and fired blindly into the air above him with his right hand. The bullet cut

through the glass ceiling and was sent into the stars. The shards from the broken glass ceiling did not rain down upon the pair, but instead scattered to the winds.

And whether it was by chance or skill, a satellite fell out of orbit the second the report from the gun vanished from their ears, tumbling into Earth's atmosphere bursting into flames, ripping a small hole in the night sky that led to a place that we as people cannot describe. It was just large enough for two star-crossed lovers to escape into.

When others were asked of this occurrence, no one in the city could give a reply. The light down below was too much to see the satellite fall from orbit from anywhere except the heights of the tower.

And no one knows what happened to them, but they were never seen on this earth again.

PEARLS AND DRIFTWOOD

The land rushed at his eyes as if it were a tidal wave, his breath fighting to stay alive along with him. He tried to lift an arm to swim, but he could only float there, an oceanic tumbleweed contemplating its insignificance to the world. He was almost out of the sea, almost out of the darkness he once thought he loved. A small piece of driftwood passed by him, triggering his memory, at that point something as foggy as the morning air surrounding him.

He knew he was washed off a fishing boat somewhere, and that he was a captain. After that, nothing. He allowed the driftwood to be the focus of his thoughts once again.

Perhaps, he thought, the driftwood was from his boat. Forgetting his was mostly made from metal, he weaved a romantic tale in his mind about this unfortunate, scarred piece of wood.

In this romantic tale the wood was lazily moving along the surface when it was snatched up by a gull, then dropped into the sea, plunging to the depths until the currents whisked it away to be in the presence of some long forgotten ship of legend. The wood got picked up by a mermaid, who treasured it for an imagined history until she decided to let it go off into the sea once more, so that it could go to someone else who could make up stories as to where it has been.

He came out of his dream, and he could now see a woman on the shore. She was pale, with long brown hair that reached a little beyond her shoulder. She spotted him, and ran away up the shore. Hopefully for help, he thought to himself. He couldn't last much longer out there.

His mind was making things up for him, and his body was weak from being the toy of the waters around him. The young man closed his eyes once more, trying to remember how he got there.

There was a storm worse than most of the crew had seen before. The captain told his crew to stay inside, while he fastened a few things on the boat. This fish were safe in the hold, and the equipment was tied down well. He just wanted to check one last thing. The captain could not remember what that last thing was, however. All he could remember was that after this the waves and wind carried him away. He had a life jacket on, which was keeping him afloat the whole time, but there was no way he could get back to the boat, as he was being swept away from it. After a crack of lightning, the boat in front of him vanished, its fate lost to at least him, if not the world. He struggled to stay afloat, being overwhelmed by the strength of the waves. The darkness started to overtake him. He turned around in the water, the boat not reappearing as he hoped. Getting weak, he started to let the water take him, his swimming turning into flailing, each stroke having less effect.

He woke up again from his hunger and sleep deprivation induced haze. The woman on the beach was back, trying to call out to him. He could barely make out the words “hang on” from reading her lips. Even if those weren’t the words she was saying, those were the words he needed to hear. He needed to survive a little bit long to do... something. He could not remember that task. He focused his mind on his crew, and a little more strength came to him. He had to survive for them, he thought. He looked down to his side and noticed there was some red leaking out. He must have cut himself on something out at sea. Normally it wouldn’t be that much of a problem, but with the sea water he knew that

it could prove the end for him.

Yet his mind couldn't be contained in this world for long. The blood loss and the seawater were getting to him, and there was a realm that wanted him more, the realm of those stuck between life a death, where your life goes in front of your eyes.

In his mind he was back at the bay he launched from. A woman was with him, kissing him goodbye. The way she kissed him suggested her mind wasn't on him leaving. It wasn't like the other times. She had short brown hair that lent itself to waving in the breeze. It was a sunny day, and the breeze that enveloped her brought the salty air into his mouth and nose, obliterating thoughts of earth from him.

He promised her he would return, as he always did, with just a little doubt, and cast off on his ship beyond the woman's vision. She would return to the sea every day, but not for him. She told him that every day she would walk the beach, hoping that a pearl would find her looking up at her from the sands. She also told him that she was waiting for someone who needed to remember, but he could never understand this.

Upon awakening this time, she was closer than ever, just beyond yelling distance. The sun was lifting itself step by step in the sky. Maybe she would have a better chance at finding someone to help, he thought. It seemed her previous attempts to find help were in vain. It looked like some other men were in the distance, but he wasn't sure. I can't just lie here, he thought. He had another burst of adrenaline and felt strength surge to his arms and legs. He started to lift his arm, but his vision went red and the pain prevented his arm from leaving the sea. He screamed out, hoping that someone would hear his voice carried on the wind. He slipped into the darkness as he screamed.

He remembered back to a time before he was captain of the *Dawn's Dream*. This flashback was all the way back to an argument he had a long time ago, one he couldn't forget.

"James I don't care about that! You never even see me anymore! And when you are here, you go to the bar and blow our money!"

"I go out there for you, Elaine! One day I hope to be good enough to marry you! And I only go out to the bar on the first night back on land with everyone!" he said, perhaps a little too angrily.

Her tears started to stain the beaten-up couch she was sitting on. The better part of him calmed him down. He sat down next to her, unspoken syllables on the tip of his tongue, each of them hoping to be good enough to be said.

"I always think of you out there. It'll always be you and me." It was the best that he could come up with.

"What is the point of me and you if there is no you?" she said, sobbing. He held her closely, trying to ease her mind.

"I can't be held by anything out there," she continued. "James, I don't care about your job, or your money. When I met you five years ago I was someone who dreamed of marrying someone by the seaside. Now I wait by the sea for something that will never come! You used to be obsessed with me, not this crazy dream you have!" She clenched her teardrop necklace that she had before she met him and never took off.

Before he could respond, James found that his lips were no longer moving. Instead of the pale light of the moon lighting his small home, he saw the noon sun lighting up his entire world. The water was cleared from his eyes as his head was tilted forward and he was propped up on a

makeshift mound of wet sand.

“What’s your name?” came a voice, as someone began dressing the small wound in his side with a makeshift bandage. James looked at him and saw a middle aged man from town that would frequent the bar he went to after each trip. He was the only man in town with medical experience, and his shadow blocked the sun from him and contrasted little with the sand surrounding him. James tried to talk but fresh water was poured down his throat before words could come out. It was better than anything he had back in town with the man.

After he was down he said “James... I can’t recall my last name. I can’t recall much of anything. I was on a... What about my boat? There were five other men on that boat! Quick! Radio someone to look for the *Dawn’s Dream*!” he said in a moment of panic he didn’t have the energy for. He collapsed on the ground from the mound he was propped up against, coughing up water and blood. The bandage on his side turned a heavier shade of red.

“They’re fine,” the man said. “The boat capsized but the crew was rescued in time. Mitch sent out an SOS when they knew you weren’t coming back. They were actually looking for you already, wondering what the hell you were doing going out there in that weather. We guessed it was you this young lady saw out there so we called them. You’ve been floating around for probably a little over a day now.”

Ignoring everything after “They’re fine,” he turned to the woman. She had long brown hair, pale skin whiter than the sand despite being near the coast, and had an air of familiarity to her. He knew he saw someone like her before, but her face was blurry and the water in his ears muffled her voice.

He asked her in a whispered hush, "What were you doing here this early in the morning?"

"Waiting for someone," she replied with a smile.

"Me?" he asked.

"Someone a lot like you," she said, looking out to sea. And with that answer he fell asleep, most likely to be awakened in a world of medical machines. He dreamed of many things, except there was the sound of a crying woman that sounded a lot like Elaine. He dreamed not once of the sea. He never again would dream of the sea. In one dream, a teardrop fell from the sky and turned into a necklace. In the real world, at the same time, the young woman that found him on the beach put a teardrop necklace in his hands as she got on the ambulance with him.

James never remembered this, but the reason he went back out on the deck of the *Dawn's Dream* was that he found a perfect pearl for Elaine in one of the catches. It was a large one, half black and half white in which the two colors swirled to make waves like the ones in the storm. He was planning on making something with it and proposing to Elaine when he got home. He hid it between some of the fishing equipment and wanted to go get it. He did manage to collect his pearl, and it miraculously stayed in his pocket the entire time he was out at sea. But when he was picked up to be put on a stretcher, it at last fell out, and the sea took back its jewel. In the man's dream the faint sound of a crying woman stopped at last when it reached the sea floor, along with a piece of driftwood originally from the deck of the *Dawn's Dream*.

THE BREAKOUT

"Charlie, when are ya busting me out of this place?"

Charlie looked down at Bob. His friend for over 50 years, the man he'd met in the navy, the toughest, grumpiest, most stubborn man he'd ever met was sitting in a stiff bed in a stark white Florida hospital room. Almost completely bald, there were scarred patches on his head from melanoma spots being removed. Blind in one eye because of a tumor, he had to wear an eye patch to ease some of the pressure, but the other was still sharp and clear. They'd matched his uniform perfectly back in the day, a powerful shade of blue. He'd always been thin, but his wrinkled skin seemed to stick tighter to his bones than ever. His thin lips were set in a frown, looking around the room with obvious loathing.

Charlie sighed and shook his head. "I'm working on it, Bob. I'm working on it!" he replied. Bob had been sick for a while, toughing out his cancer as best he could, but despite his stubbornness he still ended up in the hospital. It didn't really surprise Charlie that it had taken so long to get him there; he had too much willpower. Why, he'd seen Bob climb a 30-foot rope with a 102 degree fever just to stick it to their drill sergeant. That's why it was hard to see in such a state, but Charlie promised he'd visit him once a week. "You need anything before I go?"

"Yeah, a hacksaw and a getaway car!" he grumbled. Charlie laughed as he strolled out the door. At least the cancer couldn't take away his sense of humor.

True to his word Charlie visited again. Bob looked even thinner than he had the week before, the tan skin paler than he'd remembered.

"When are ya busting me outta here, Charlie?" Bob asked, ornery as ever.

"I'm workin' on it, Bob. How are they treatin' ya in this joint?" Charlie asked, sitting in the little plastic chair by the bed.

He snorted. "Terrible. The food's garbage, it's too cold in here and the damn nurse won't let me go outside!"

Charlie chuckled sympathetically. Bob hated to be stuck indoors. He always had to be doing something outside, whether it was walking with his grandkids through the woods, mowing the lawn, or just sleeping under the stars. The cold part surprised him though. It had to be at least 70 degrees in the room. "You want me ta ask for another blanket?"

He shook his head. "Nah, don't wanna be a bother. Could ya open a window, though?"

Charlie did as he asked, watching his old friend stare longingly outside.

"It's killin' me, Charlie. Being cooped up in here is gonna kill me before the cancer ever does," he scowled. His quiet, hoarse voice was strained and bitter.

The nurse, a prissy woman with thick glasses whose pinched face always looked like she was eating sauerkraut, chose that moment to walk in. "Visiting hours are over, sir, so I suggest you allow my patient some rest."

"Aw, come on, Jane!" Bob grumbled, "He just got here! He ain't hurtin' nothin'!"

She gave them a glare that would scare a marine. "Now."

Taking the hint, Charlie grabbed his hat and clapped him on the shoulder. "Don't worry Bob," he said cheerfully, "I'll bust ya outta here soon enough!" He left the room,

ignoring the nurse's glare, the cogs and gears in his mind slowly turning. He knew he couldn't really break him out of a hospital, especially in his condition, but he'd do what he had to to keep Bob's spirits up.

When he came back the next week, he was once again greeted with the hoarse call of "Charlie, when are ya busting me outta here?"

He stared at his old buddy. He was even thinner than before, and instead of sitting up like he usually was he was propped up against the headboard with a pile of pillows. Charlie sat down by the bed.

"I'm workin' on it Bob. They treatin' ya any better?"

It took him a moment to reply, as he was suddenly overcome with a coughing fit. Breathing deeply, he growled, "Nope. Now they won't even let me outta the damn bed! They keep pokin' an' proddin' me an' injectin' me with crap they know won't work, an' the room smells like Annie-septic or whatever the hell it's called!"

Sniffing the air, Charlie nodded in agreement. "Don't worry Bob, I'm working on a plan. We'll have to do it at night, though, get out under the cover of darkness."

Bob smirked. "Sounds good. Let me know when you got a plan. I hate this damn room more every day!"

They chatted a bit more, remising about the old days; their late wives, the navy, old jobs, everything they could think of to get their minds off the cancer. It seemed to work, as Bob was starting to flash him that crooked, thin-lipped grin he occasionally blessed his close friends and family with. The hours went by until Jane came to kick Charlie out. "He needs his rest," she chided, shooing him out the door. Glancing back at the bed, he saw the crooked grin melt off his wrinkled face, once again replaced by his trademark scowl.

Walking down the three flights of stairs, Charlie started thinking. *If* he were to bust Bob out, he'd have to bypass the security. Jane had a scary face, but she was pretty small, so he didn't think she'd manage to stop him if she caught them sneaking out. He made his way to the automatic doors, where a massive man in a security uniform nodded politely as he passed. Charlie revised his assessment of security. Even *if* he could take on the nurse, the guards would be another matter. He knew he couldn't take a man like that, not anymore, so *if* he were to actually decide to go through with such a crazy promise, he'd have to think of another way out. The doors were definitely not an option.

Another week passed, and this time Bob wasn't even propped up. Instead he lay there, staring at the ceiling, an IV bag filled with clear fluids dangling mockingly above his head.

"Charlie, when are ya bustin' me outta here?" This time Charlie could barely hear him from the doorway. His face was gaunt, and his one good eye was beginning to look cloudy, like frost over a window.

Once again sitting by the bed, Charlie forced a smile. He'd been thinking of a story all night that might satisfy the man. "I think I got it, Bob! We'll sneak you outta this damn room around midnight, then make our way to the roof. I'll bring some rope so we can climb down, then we'll jump in my car and make a getaway!"

Bob gave him an annoyed look. "What, the door not workin'?"

Charlie laughed, glad that Bob at least still had his sense of humor, even if he did look worse than ever. "Nah, Bob, they got guards watchin' the door! The roof's the way we gotta go if we don't wanna get caught! Anyway it's closer,

you bein' on the top floor an' all."

Smiling weakly, Bob nodded. "So when we leavin'?" His eyelid was beginning to droop, and Charlie knew he desperately needed some rest.

The nurse tiptoed into the room, motioning for him to leave. Gently squeezing Bob's shoulder, Charlie whispered, "Soon, Bob. Just give me another week ta figure out the details, then we're bustin' you out! You just focus on gettin' some sleep, I'll do the rest. I promise you'll be outta here soon."

Bob smirked and closed his eyes. "Can't wait to see the stars again." He gathered his strength and grabbed Charlie's hand. "I appreciate you doin' this Charlie. I really do."

Charlie's throat tightened, but he held back any tears, not wanting to cry in front of his old buddy. The grip on his hand loosened as Bob drifted off, and he took a moment to watch him sleep, his soft snores and the impatient tapping of the nurse's shoes the only sound in the room. Giving her a cordial nod, Charlie walked through the threshold, but instead of taking his usual route to the stairs, he casually strolled about the top floor. He started checking for possible escape routes, trying to figure out the best way to sneak past the nurse's station. This meant more to Bob than he'd originally thought, and he wasn't going to let him down.

Charlie spent the whole week getting ready for the breakout. He had his car looked at to make sure it could get them as far away from that damn hospital as possible. He also wanted to make sure it could withstand any high-speed chases they might cause. He bought some of the strongest, longest rope he could find and tied knots in it. He knew Bob could climb it, after all he'd managed worse with a 102 degree fever, but he figured the knots were a good precaution.

After all, they weren't as young as they used to be. Still, the more he thought about it, the more he decided that Bob needed to get out. He didn't need medicine and bed rest, he needed the stars and fresh air, and if those damn nurses were too dumb to realize that then Bob was better off without them.

On the last day Charlie packed a suitcase and some supplies and threw them in his car. He was ready to rescue Bob. He just had to visit once more to make sure he'd be ready to go.

Strolling through the doorway with a small skip in his step, he paused, taking in the room. Something was off. It was the same room alright; he could've found it in his sleep. But the bed was empty and made, the sharp, stiff corners jutting out without a person's feet forcing them to lose their shape. Jane glanced up from wiping down the little bedside table, apparently surprised at his sudden entrance. She nodded sympathetically at him, some of the tightness gone from her face, and his grin slowly fell.

"Where's Bob?" he asked, still trying to sound chipper, but it came out strained. "You move him to another room?" He knew the real answer, it was obvious, but he wanted to hold off the truth for just a little while longer. All that planning couldn't go to waste, not now.

"He's gone," she said, shaking her head sadly. "Last night, 'round midnight." She gave a small smile and handed him a folded piece of paper. "He left this for you, though. Said you'd wanna see it."

Taking the little piece of hospital stationary, he unfolded the crisp note and started reading, the familiar shaky letters coming into view.

Charlie, it said, sorry I couldn't wait for you, but I couldn't take one more day in this place. I don't quite know

where I'm going, but I know I'll see you there. Take your time though. And don't feel too bad, Charlie had to take a moment to wipe away the tears clouding his vision, I know you'd have kept your promise. You're just crazy enough to do it. Thanks for being there for me, I mean it.

Take care,

Bob.

He glanced at Jane. "He finally got out, huh?"

She chuckled, and some more of the sourness left her face. "He made it all the way to the roof. I've never seen anyone do something like that, but he was a stubborn one. Said he'd rather the cancer get him."

And for the first time since he'd walked into that damned room, Charlie smiled.

Anne Gentile
Shepherd University

CHIP



23 RULES OF LIFE

1. Never tell someone a secret unless you're sure they won't tell someone else. Also, they will tell someone else, so don't tell them a secret.

2. Always study, unless it's a bullshit class that you don't need to study for.

3. You can cheat on a test, but seriously, don't cheat on your spouse.

4. Baseball is the greatest sport ever. If you disagree, that just means that you haven't learned your lesson yet.

5. *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* is for girls from 4-12 years old. No exceptions. If you are a man of 18 and above and you are watching it, put the weed away; it's doing you more harm than good.

6. Tom Brady is the sexiest man alive, especially when he is winning Super Bowls.

7. Susan Coffey is the sexiest *person* alive. In fact, she is so gorgeous; she's basically an angel. If I met her, my head would explode because there would be no point in living after that. Seriously, she would never love me, and I will never meet someone that beautiful ever again so I would die happy having met the goddess that is Susan Coffey. Your wife will never be this beautiful. Accept this now and move on. If you are married/dating Susan Coffey, do not break up with her. You will regret it. Also, you are a God, and I must pray to you in the hopes that I might soon meet Susan Coffey and die happy.

8. If you have more online friends than real friends, you need to get out more. Facebook doesn't count, because if you can breathe, you can get 500 friends on that site.

9. Putting a profile pic with “alluring eyes” on Facebook does not make you pretty. Writing an awesome poem or being wicked smart makes you pretty.

10. Fantasy Football is addictive, but worth it. Hopefully.

11. Dungeons and Dragons is great as long as the storyteller is a good storyteller. Otherwise, fuck that game.

12. The greatest sports video game ever is MVP Baseball 2005.

13. The worst is MLB 2K11. (Sigh).

14. Whoever thinks video games are trash has not played Red Dead Redemption, BioShock, BioShock 2, or Batman: Arkham Asylum.

15. Batman is the greatest superhero ever.

16. Aquaman is the worst superhero ever.

17. There is nothing more dangerous than a religious extremist.

18. Religion is the funniest thing to make fun of.

19. Sex is the second funniest thing to make fun of.

20. If someone tells you they are “high on life,” punch them in the face.

21. I am rubber and you are glue, your words bounce off me and then hit me a second time because what you just said was fucking hurtful. Asshole.

22. Clocks are only to be used to tell time, but time is relative. Therefore, clocks are worthless so don’t invest in a clock.

23. Texting will give you serious injuries if you don’t look where you’re going every five seconds.

RACKED

Chest day was my favorite day back when I enjoyed lifting weights. There was something fluid about it, something centered: right over my heart. I could feel the stretch and contraction of the pectoral muscles, a steady rhythm that fell in sync with my breath. It seemed unifying, as if for that brief moment in time, my body came together and my mind melted into an obscure and tropically colored background: *The Great Escape*. I was just a body, a working body with a full range of motion. Thoughts—the ones that consumed and overwhelmed—dissolved. They were incinerated along with the calories, burned up for energy, the remnants transmuted into liquid drops that pushed through my skin, ran down and away. I would always weigh myself afterwards, and every time I would be lighter.

Some days it was difficult to go to the gym; the darkness would come back. I wouldn't want to do anything at all. Sleep seemed like too much of a cop-out. Every time, I felt I was committing a little suicide, killing my consciousness for a day. Those nights when it was particularly difficult to sleep—when it only came as an emergency shutdown—I knew that I must have been a masochist. In a way it was always a small comfort, a biological promise to preserve myself in spite of everything else.

When the feelings came I wouldn't face them. When I wasn't working out, movies were the easiest. Half of the time I didn't enjoy the movies I watched, but I'd always have another one loading on my computer half an hour before the ending of the one playing. The pattern would iterate until the shutdown. The movies became my own paradoxical

medium of existence—an anti-silence—just like everything else. Sometimes it was screwing, drinking, reading, writing, or music; but after the orgasm, when I would lie down sweating on the same filthy sheets I'd be sleeping on as soon as I could get away from the girl I had just been so eager to be with; when the buzz broke in the night and I greeted the mid-morning world with bile from my tortured stomach; when I could no longer drown out my thoughts with the words on a page; when I was helpless in attempting to pour out my own black thoughts onto a page never finished; or, when the music turned into an uncomfortable drone, I would lose my loosely constructed sense of self. The carefully maintained edifice of my ego irrupted, leaving behind a brand of idle emptiness for fretful thoughts to flow through once again. I tried to fill the void with the outside world, tried to stop the silence that screamed and screamed and screamed, but they were only distractions; they only lasted for so long before I was left with vicarious nothingness, a prisoner to myself once again.

I used to force myself to go to the gym. It was a routine, but it was different than the rest of my rituals. I had more control over this one. I'd select the same play list, the same songs I knew by heart playing over and over: *Suffocating, In too Deep, Under the Knife, Falling Away from Me, False Pretense, No Rain, Under the Bridge*. The volume would drown out the surroundings, everything but the feeling of my physical body: ballooned lungs and pounding heart, acid in my muscles and a head empty and clouded by exertion. The only sounds from the outside were the clang of iron plates ringing over the drums in my ears. I'd keep adding weight until everything hurt. I'd tell myself, *That's a new max. Keep going; do more--you can lift more weight; empty yourself*. Between every song, Whitman flashed in my mind:

Song of Myself, three second blips of unbridled physicality—the flittingly audible explosion of a panting, animalistic breath: my breath—a biological reminder, *this is human*. These reality highs were best kept short, anything longer and the breathing became a gasping, the blend of breath and heartbeat turning further inward, becoming pains somewhere under the collarbone and above the hip. Just like, when twisting the shower knob all the way to the cold side to wrench something novel into life, you take the cold in a gasp and let it flood through your chest while the water assails you. You can only handle it in flashes. Anything fuller and the experience goes back into itself, passes the threshold and becomes its opposite, as life to death.

My first lift today is bench press. I keep sliding plates onto the barbell, but I used to lift so much more. I'm wondering if endorphins are a myth. The idea is indelible once it becomes conscious. Once upon a time there was solace in physical exertion, the only place it existed, or seemed to anyway. Working out erased everything else and the ecstatic emptiness didn't begin to taper off until a couple hours after I was finished. I attributed it to endorphins.

The bar looks like a stick connecting two pyramids by their bases, a five, ten, and forty-fived iron triangle—my one time holy Triune. I feel a connection to the weights. I see a part of myself in each one: the heavies and lights of self. For an hour it feels as if I can do it—declare war on the weight—but the bar always feels heavier, and my body isn't as strong as it used to be. I keep adding weight—making half-hearted attempts—but I hit a point where I can't push the bar back up. It rests on my chest and forces the air from my lungs, both threatening and tempting in its steady, reliable pressure. I wonder what it would be like, to die like that: *Student Expires in University Gym, Dean comments, "The world*

asphyxiated him.”

There is nobody else in the gym and I end up having to tip the bar to one side, the weights on the right releasing themselves gently just before the antitheses on the left rip me back with the counterbalance. The weights scream as they hit the floor. The forty-fives fall flat and the tens and fives roll across the rubber floor of the gym, the irreconcilably ugly selves running until they hit a bench or a rack, extinguishing and obscuring themselves. I lie on the bench gasping for air, surrounded by the scattered remains of failure.

I started working out when I was thirteen years old, a couple months after my mom died: cancer, we all knew it was coming...didn't "help" a god damn bit, no easy transition like the people from church speculated it might be. *At least it wasn't a shock. There is always consolation in prayer.* Shove it up your ass.

I started working out because I needed to scream, the quiet kid finding a medium. My dad had a small gym set up on our back porch and I would exercise there four days a week. I used to plan my day around workouts. When I wasn't lifting weights, I would hurt my eyes reading bodybuilding magazines. I would write workout routines and nutrition plans months in advance. At nights I would dream about lifting weights, always looking forward to my four weekly hours of oblivion, my immersion in unthinking. I told myself that my body was a science project. I fell in love with that idea. I wanted to become a machine—that cold iron: bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh...and a cold steel soul.

After two years of working out, not missing a single workout, I had put on thirty pounds and was entirely absorbed. I weighed myself no less than five times a day. I always wanted to be bigger, to cover myself with dense stria-

tions, to transform my body and hide behind the weight. I gorged myself with food and constantly fought the urge to throw it back up, rejecting my body's rejection. I kept covering the surface, and by the time I was sixteen I was a solid 215 pounds.

Chest day was always my favorite. Everything seemed so centered. The skin covering my pectorals felt like paper pulled on from every angle and veins surfaced from invisible depths. Everything burned and I was happy because I knew it meant my muscles were growing, protecting my vital organs. I used to think that my chest could become bulletproof, that if someone shot me, the sheer density would stop the bullet and leave my heart untouched, my lungs still capable of holding air.

By my senior year in high school I was just over 250 pounds and I started to wonder how long I could maintain the pace I had set. Physically, I had changed so much.

After graduating from high school, I became disenchanted with lifting. I couldn't understand the purpose it served. I no longer knew how to hide; I didn't know myself. The muscle had held me together. By focusing hard enough on the physical, I had created a sense of unity, a purpose—a measurable, visible, externally confirmed, but inevitably deconstructive purpose.

An idea is indelible once it roots itself consciousness. Once time had removed the illusion—the naivety—from my workouts, I couldn't force myself to punish my stomach every meal. As soon as I stopped forcing myself to eat, it became hard to eat at all. I had been out of high school for less than six months and I had already lost forty pounds. I felt naked. As light as I was getting, I felt heavier. What I had thought had been fundamentally me became an unfamiliar plurality, a weird confluence of thoughts and feelings and personas and

roles, all indistinguishable from one another. My shoulders were hunched and I was beginning to realize that the muscle had propped me up. I withdrew from the world. Without the desire to work out, I started reading more. I remember reading and re-reading the *Iliad*: my shield of Achilles. I think that's when I first thought of my workouts as a paradox, my muscles as a shield rim—triple-ply. Somewhere beneath was the whole of humanity—a core of death and dancing, youth and old age, beauty and pain, harvest and famine—it was comforting in a very real way, something I could only begin to accept.

After cleaning up the weights, I decided to leave for the day. I'm not sure why I still work out. Sometimes it feels as if I'm trying to slip back into a past life, when the unthinking made things easier, and sometimes a workout will help in that way, help bring me back to myself. Mostly, I show up at the gym when I need to escape the feelings for just a bit, when I want to pour them back into the weights, though it doesn't always work like it did when I was younger. But it is nice in a self-deprecating sort of way; I'll move from machine to machine, seeing my past in the pulleys and cables—bone of my bone—what a gag. But the joke isn't an entirely bad one; it is still evolving, a way for me to live in the world, this ridiculous comedy of ours. Literature helps in that way, in showing me how human the world still is. Writing gives me a way to move through the feelings and into something better in a way that working out couldn't. I'm still writing the book of my being—plunging the depths of sensed thought to translate myself for myself—and marveling over the sublime wordlessness of it all, creating a long lost unity among the repressed inner divisions of myself; and, most importantly, learning to smile at it all.

TEEN FAIRY TALE

“Jared, would you date me?”

My fork laden with the school’s rancid cafeteria “food” stopped halfway to my mouth. I turned and stared at Alex. She didn’t suddenly forget that I was gay, right? I mean, she was the first one I told back in 10th grade! Too bad this wasn’t the kind of question you could just weasel your way out of. So, I went to the old standby; when in doubt, paraphrase *Firefly*.

“Were I not a sausage fan I would take you in a manly fashion.” I quickly shoved the fork in my mouth so she wouldn’t expect me to elaborate, then started to choke. Oh God that was disgusting! It was like eating wet cardboard covered in Vaseline! How the fuck did this get past the health inspectors?

She slumped down next to me and glared at her sandwich. “Yeah, well, then you’re the only one. I just asked Bobby Conners to the prom and he ran away screaming.”

I winced. That was the third guy this year. It wasn’t that she was unattractive; even I could tell she was really pretty. Shiny blonde hair was kept back in a neat braid, which showed off her smooth, heart-shaped face. She had cupid-bow lips and light grey eyes with thick, curved lashes. But she also wore ripped jeans and her brother’s old T-shirts, and she just had this aura of “Back the Fuck off, Bitches.” Also guys tended to be a bit scared of her ever since she beat the crap out of Quinn Junta for calling me a fag.

So yeah, I couldn’t really blame any guy who wouldn’t want to be her prom date. Still, despite the whole Queen of Kickass thing she had going on, I knew she really wanted to go. Something about how prom was the one night where ev-

ery girl was a princess or some crap. Personally I thought the whole thing was stupid.

"Face it, Jar, I'm hopeless. Nobody could make me dateable," she pouted.

"Aw, you're not that bad! 'Sides, bet I could do it," I joked.

She snorted. "Jared, what the hell do you know about shit like this?"

I clutched my hand to my chest, right over the skeleton key I hung around my neck. "You wound me! Don't you know all gay guys instinctually know how to give girls makeovers? It's in our blood," I joked.

"Yeah? I'll bet you my new *Metallica* CD that you can't."

Ok, that was low. She knew damn well how much I wanted that CD. Thinking it over, I started playing with my skeleton key necklace. On one hand, if I helped her I'd lose all my rocker street cred and become the gay stereotype from girly movies that I'd hated for so long. On the other hand, I *really* wanted that CD. Looking at her sitting all sad and lonely, I came to a decision. Well hell, if she wanted to go to the prom, I'd get her a date, even if I had to use every crappy teen-makeover movie trick in the book! Just call me Fairy Godmother!

Two days later I had a plan. I'd watched every teen movie my sister owned, plus a few makeover shows, and I finally figured out the process to turn Elphaba into Glinda. Step 1: make her significantly less terrifying.

As we sat in the school courtyard, I told her that if she wanted to get a date, she'd have to be less scary and more sexy. She stared at me like I was an idiot. She'd promised to do all I asked, but that didn't mean she had to like it.

"Jared, sweetie, have you forgotten what I did to Quinn last year? Even the teachers change direction when they see me coming!"

"Look, do you want a date or not? Now, the first thing you've gotta do is give a guy *The Look*." I gave her my best Valentino smolder.

"Like this?" She gave an amazingly deadpan expression.

I shook my head. "No, you've gotta make the guy's heart race! Smile a little bit."

"Oh, then like this?" She then gave me the single most terrifying expression I had ever seen. It was a smile, but it showed off her sharp front teeth and her grey eyes seemed to darken into two pools of molten malice.

I barely bit back a scream. No wonder everyone was scared of her! I'd known her since we were in diapers, so I was usually exempt from her wrath, but man, this was not what I expected! "Sexy, not terrifying! Right now it looks like you're gonna kill me with a pickax or something!"

She sighed and looked down. "Sorry. I've just gotten kinda used to glaring at people by this point, you know?"

I ran my hand through my purple faux-hawk. This was going to be harder than I thought.

The next step was walking sexy. We sashayed up and down the halls, and I taught her to sway her hips and flip her hair. It took an hour, but she finally seemed to be getting the hang of it. Of course, then I had the brilliant idea to have her try it in six-inch stilettos. Ten minutes later Alex was in the nurse's office with a twisted ankle.

I tried to get her to laugh about it. "Well, at least now you'll know to wear flats with your dress!" When she gave the pickax face, I stepped back. "Sorry, but don't worry, the

nurse says you'll be off those crutches in a week! And I swear on your *Metallica* CD that you will have a date for the prom!"

Over the next week, I made her watch every movie my little sister owned where the unpopular girl becomes beautiful: *Cinderella*, *The Princess Diaries*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, and a bunch of others that made me feel like my Y-chromosome was being extracted with a pair of tweezers. Weirdly, she actually seemed to be enjoying them. I guess she was a little more feminine than I thought. I was her drill sergeant in all things girly: talking, eyelash-batting, flirting, giggling, the works. Meanwhile I scouted our classmates to try and find someone who didn't completely fear her.

I struck gold with Mike Johnson from gym class. The guy was dumb as a post and always wore sunglasses, even in class. I guess he thought he was Cyclopes from *X-Men* or something. But he was pretty hot and liked blondes, so I figured he'd be good enough. I casually mentioned that Alex was single, and he actually seemed interested. He'd been especially relieved that I wasn't asking him to prom. Yeah, so not my type! But my job was done; the rest was all her.

Friday morning came, and when Alex walked through the front doors I knew I wasn't the only one staring. She looked, well, girly. Gone were drab tomboy clothes, replaced by a fabulous white miniskirt and a low-cut pink blouse. No more braid, either; her hair fluttered about her shoulders in loose waves. She looked like a girl from any teen flick, and I could practically hear the sweet melody of her *Metallica* CD surrounding her like an angel's choir.

She sashayed up to Mike while I watched from a safe distance. They chatted for a bit, with her flipping back her hair and batting her eyes. Good, all those drills paid off. She

giggled sweetly at some joke he made. Finally he leaned down and whispered in her ear. I could tell from the bright grin that spread across her face that he had asked her. Victory was mine!

Then the moron grabbed her ass. I blinked, and he was down on the ground, clutching his face while his stupid sunglasses lay on the floor, split right down the middle with the lenses shattered. Alex marched, not sashayed, past me, but didn't say a word. She actually looked like she was gonna cry.

I stared after her long after she'd disappeared from sight. I still won, right? I mean, this wasn't my fault, I held up my part of the deal! So what if he ended up being a douche, she didn't say he had to be perfect! Besides this whole prom thing is stupid anyway!

Ignoring the commotion around me, I headed off to my first class. Ok, so maybe it was kinda my fault. Mike was an asshole, and maybe it was kind of unfair to set her up like that, but hey, she made the challenge, right? It was just prom, anyway.

I paused mid-step. Fuck. It was more than just prom. When we were little, she told me that she wished she could be a princess for just one day. She wanted to wear a beautiful ball gown, dance with a handsome prince, and just pretend that everything was magical and romantic like in those fairytales. And I just fucked up her chance, trying to wave my wand and make her something she wasn't. I lightly touched my necklace as a taste even worse than the cafeteria food filled my mouth. I was no Fairy Godmother, and I was no sassy gay stylist. It was time to find a new role in this story.

At the end of the day I waited by her locker. I hadn't seen her at lunch, and there was no way I was going to risk

searching the girl's bathroom. I'd spent all day coming up with a plan, but I couldn't carry it out unless she talked to me. When she finally showed up, I opened my mouth, but she held up her hand.

"Don't. It's not your fault, I was stupid for putting you up to this. The CD is yours." She handed me the case, but wouldn't look me in the eye. Her wavy hair hung around her face like it was trying to shield her from the world.

"I don't care about the bet. I wanna make it up to you," I said as she opened her locker.

"How?" She paused, then took out a small note attached to my necklace. *Princess, you hold the key to my heart. Will you go to the ball with me?*

When she stared at me, I grinned. "Hey, just because I like dudes doesn't mean I can't take the coolest girl to the prom, right?" I hugged her. "And as much as I hate those crappy teen movies, I do agree that in the end, the best friend should get the girl, since he loved her even before she was pretty. 'Sides, I suck at being a Fairy Godmother, so maybe I could be your Fairy Prince?"

She started shaking in my arms a bit. It took me a moment to figure out she was laughing. "Emphasis on *Fairy*?" she asked snidely, hugging me back.

Our laughter echoed down the hallway. "Duh. And hey, I'm less likely to grope you on the dance floor."

Calming down, Alex looked up at me, cupid-bow lips turned up in a smile. "I can't think of anyone I'd rather go with."

SCARLET NAILS

As Mr. Lenard was about to hit his unconscious daughter's head once more, a hand with long scarlet nails slashed his arm, causing him to cry out, and grabbed his hand with a quality of strength he had never encountered before. She opened her mouth, and a voice both tortured and sweet came out.

"Allow me to introduce myself, Mr. Lenard. I am Charlene. I am what happens when you hit a defenseless little girl one too many times. I am the product of a tormented imagination that wants to remain innocent but can't. Can't, because it needs to defend itself from the brutal force you so happily provide. You see, I am the part of her that has kept her going through the ruby droplets down falling her back and the pain of having clumps of blonde hair torn out of her head. I help her live despite the pain but most of all despite you."

At the end of the breath she threw him to the ground, causing a snap to come from his chest. His throes as he coughed up blood caused a Bible sitting on a bookcase shelf to come loose and fall onto a candle, making the "good book" a victim of immolation. She looked down at him with her black eyes and continued.

"Do you even remember the Bible verses you spouted when hitting her with a belt, scarring her? I do. I thought I'd share my favorite with you, with a little twist. I have walked through the valley of the shadow of death and came out the other end alive and well. And you know what? God wasn't my guide here, as you so emphatically remind us as you beat her. No, I carved my own staff and forged my own rod and led myself, because I'm also the part of her that can't believe in

fairy tales, can't believe in God. All because of you. And you think we fear you? You can't even look me in the eyes can you? These beautiful black eyes.

You thought you could break her, but you taught her, taught me, nothing other than sadism. These sharp scarlet nails of mine? They grew when you burned hers, one by one. These black eyes? They came from when you tried to blind her for seeing 'unclean' images. Every little deformed quality about me is just the result of what you wanted, what you believed in.

I was first born to help her grieve, Mr. Lenard, help her grieve for her dead mother. She hasn't stopped crying. She has never stopped crying. But you see, Mr. Lenard, I don't cry. I don't bleed either. You see me cutting my arm right now? No blood. I've got nothing left. You, however, still seem to have that most human of qualities. It appears you can cry, too. How fitting.

My only hope is that she doesn't keep me hidden like before after this, that she accepts me as her strength. But you won't let her, Mr. Lenard, will you? No, I don't think so, and so I must end you. Good riddance, Mr. Lenard."

And she was upon him.

Fatuma Hydara
Pace University

UNTITLED



Anne Gentile
Shepherd University

BOTANICAL GARDEN



OHIO

The road seemed to stretch endlessly in front of me, a dark valley of pavement creviced between walls of trees. The darkness was all-consuming, my headlights the tools of a surgeon, slicing through it carefully, just enough for me to see beyond its black, shadowy skin. My foot shifted heavily on the gas pedal, eliciting a louder hum from the engine, a slight increase in speed.

Rape, she had told me. On her long trip home she was approached by a wanderer, some sort of vagrant in the wilderness of the Ohio Highway system who first asked her for change. She was a kind soul so she leaned into her car to fetch him some. He pushed her into the back seat from behind, in the shadows of the lonely rest area, and had his way with her. Forced her at knifepoint, taking from her the one thing she was permitted to give at her own discretion. Come back, I told her as she cried into the phone. Home was still ten hours away, and here was only six. She had nobody there, but I was here. Come back.

Call the police, my mother echoed from behind me. The static-tinged voice, muddy with tears and unexpressed pain protested. She didn't want to go through all that. She just wanted to drive away and never look back. Wipe Ohio off of her mental map, an empty shield of blackness in middle America. Call the police, my mother said again, this time taking the phone from my hand. Whoever did this has to be caught, she insisted. Tell them everything, let them do what they do best, and then you come back here. I couldn't hear the voice, but my mother's face showed that she was getting through. Words exchanged led to a 911 call, and I sat alone

in my room, waiting for the next morning, for the dawn that would bring her back to me. She would drive all night to come back, and then I would take care of her.

I turned on the radio as the car sped on through the blackness. My eyes were stinging with tears unshed. Familiar voices carried a familiar lyric to my ears and I quickly shut it off. Everything was a reminder.

Before she left I told her we would wait until spring, find a place together. Winter was a cold and unforgiving time, not a good time to move. She agreed with an anxious smile. We would be together forever after that. The next time she came back, it would be with a rented trailer packed tight with her life, every hope and dream transplanted to a new home. A new life would take root. Spring would be perfect. Ohio made everything change. She drove back the next day, feeling ashamed and vulnerable. I would take care of her, not that I knew how.

A week she was with me, in my room in my parents' house. I went to work, she read advertisements for apartments. Winter wasn't here yet. Fall was a fine time to move. I insisted she stay. She had no one at home. This was her home now. I saw the worried glances between my parents and I only puffed my chest out further. This is where she needed to be. Not out there in the wilderness with the savages. Who would take care of her? What would happen when she drove through Ohio again?

The phone rang one night when we were out. My father answered. He listened, then called me. I need to talk to you, he said. I was out with her, and we were with friends. Couldn't it wait till I got home? No, he said. Now. Come alone.

We met in a parking lot, his car sitting silently in the corner by the time I got there. I pulled up beside him and

climbed into the passenger seat. He was upset, and suddenly so was I. Sadness hung like a cloud between us, something a father and son can share, without a word spoken. I want her out, he said. Tonight. Ohio, I said. Was a lie, he finished. The police had been called, and then called us. There was no evidence. No vagrant. No wilderness. Just an empty rest stop with a scared girl who would do anything not to go home. To make this her new home. she would defame an entire state. They were going to pick her up for making a false claim, for being raped by only her own imagination, for turning Ohio into a jungle. They would find her, here or home. This was not her home, my father said. He would not have police come to our house. He handed me a few crumpled up twenties with a shaking hand. Give her this, and tell her to go.

I drove back, my insides clawing at my bones from within, making me ache in ways I had never ached before. I got her into the car and told her everything. She cried. They were wrong, she exclaimed. I did all I could to quiet her protests, to drive home (my home) to put her in her car and send her away. They are coming for you, I told her. They'll find you, and arrest you, and that can't happen here, at home. She screamed and kicked at the floorboards. Where do I go, she asked. It didn't matter. Here's money, find a hotel room. Go home, go to a friend's, but go. She drove away, wiping at her eyes, her tires screeching somewhere out of sight. I stood in the darkness.

Everything was a reminder. Her lighter sat in the seat beside me. I opened my window and threw it out into the night. The road stretched onwards. I didn't know where I was going. Away from her, and that's all that mattered. But I love her, I told my friend, the next morning after her departure. I know you do, he said, but you'll love again. The trust

was broken. Police don't make that kind of mistake, another friend had told me. They don't make accusations like this without knowing for sure. They knew for sure. I heard they had arrested her in Michigan. I heard she ran to a friend. I heard she was moving in with him when they came. I heard she paid a large fine, and went back with the word "Guilty" stamped on a form in some drawer in some courthouse. I heard she was pregnant with his baby. I heard they were engaged. I heard she still claimed it was all true, and the police made a mistake.

I drove into the night. Welcome to Pennsylvania, the sign read. I had to see for myself. Only one thing had yet to be done. I had to see Ohio.

LIQUID EXISTENCE

I watched my face as it flew, kicked, heaved, broke apart, and reformed its liquid existence. *I'm no better.* The wind blew hard through my hair, parting it down the middle and running down each strand. The gust came steady and forceful, pushing into my head. At that speed, the force of the wind numbs the skin.

The hull caught a pocket in the wave, skipping hard and quick across the top of the next rolling crest. I rose with the boat, a weightless second, before hitting hard against the flat fiberglass front of the bow. I watched my face reform through an involuntary cough. *Hello, Narcissus.* Everyone else was in the back of the boat, on the bench, talking

"Tate! What are you doing, man?" Nick yelled from the group.

I thrust my hand into the water and shattered the face. I let the pressure of the water, half solid at that speed, suck my hand over the surface before picking myself up from my pressure-reddened stomach and walking toward the stern.

"Nothing," I said, smiling, "Hand me a beer, would you?" I asked Courtney, Nick's current interest.

"Because I'm a girl? Typical guy," Courtney teased through a smile as she made an exaggerated effort to open the cooler. Her sunscreen-oiled hand brushed mine when she handed me a beer and, for a second, I could feel the explosive cold of the sequined ice-water, each droplet a landmine.

"Because you're sitting on the cooler," I said, "And by saying I'm a typical guy you realize you're no better, right?"

I bantered back before I snapped the top of my beer and pressed it to my lips.

I liked Courtney. We could go back and forth like that for a while: always playful, always light; I liked that. Whenever Nick and I would have our starry-night talks, lying on our backs after four hours of unsuccessful fishing, when we'd move on to talking about the girls—the many, the mean, the ones who stood out—I'd pause and say, "Hey... Courtney—Man, she's a good one. I like her. You should hang on to her." Then I'd snuff out the projection with a quick swig and close my eyes to see if I could still see the lights of the sky temporarily painted upon my eyelids.

"Tate, you're gonna be up first!" Luke shouted from the wheel.

It was Luke's boat. He lived out in Pine Island, a little I-shaped piece of beach and woods with two thousand people and two billion mosquitoes. Luke had lived on the island his whole life and I think it was fully a part of him now. He couldn't leave it if he wanted to. He had a quietly smiling way of looking at the world that relaxed the muscles somewhere between my shoulders and spine.

And it *was* a nice place to live, especially if you had a boat. I'm sure the owners of the lime-green houses lining the ocean—the homes they had paid their lives for—would say it was a nice place to live too. It was only bad when the hurricanes came and the owners fortified their windows with corrugated metal shutters; when they bought water by the gallon and food by the can, feeling that they should have firearms and ammunition too, but always resolving to get flashlights instead. The ones who lived in the lime-green houses almost never evacuated when the hurricanes came, deciding that if they couldn't fight off the storms themselves, then at least they would be there to go down with the house,

if it were to happen; but, secretly, they would hope that maybe God wouldn't take both them and the house, that if they forced Him to make an all or nothing decision, he'd step down.

I tipped my beer to Luke, received a hearty nod-smile, and squeezed past Courtney to the back bench of the boat, right behind the hundred-horsepower outboard. Lifting the seat top, I took out the wakeboard and the tangled mess of tow rope and sat down to begin unknotting it, thinking about the water under the boat, wakeboarding, and *la petite mort*. For the time you ride, you're on top of the water, on top. It is quick. The water is always moving beneath you, always changing, but you stay the same. It's just the speed; that's all that changes it. Maybe in real life that's enough to get to a person, but not on the ocean. The fast is slow there. It's manageable.

Luke weaved the boat through the shallow parts of the channel leading out to Pine Island Sound, a shallow body of water that extended into mangroves all around and, through outlets to the West, the Gulf of Mexico. In front of Luke, Rob cupped the left cheek of Tara's ass. None of us had ever met Tara. As far as we knew, she was just another girl who was not Rob's girlfriend.

By the time we reached the halfway point between the dock and the Sound, Courtney had decided to ask Tara how she and Rob met.

Rob answered Courtney, telling her about the microbiology class they had together the previous semester at USF. He hadn't known her parents lived in Fort Myers until he ran into her last night at one of the downtown clubs. They were down for the summer.

"Tara? Is that true?" Courtney asked.

Shadows flickered at the hinge of Rob's jaw as he shift-

ed toward the water, and there was a hint of nervousness in Tara's laugh as she said, "Uh-huh. All true. I was always terrible at remembering all the names of the bacteria."

Courtney smiled. "Me too," she said, "Rob offered to help me out a few times. He has always been good with that sort of thing."

Tara nodded.

I went back to tightening the bindings. There is a rhythm in wakeboarding: symphonic pressures, constant flux.

"Court, why don't you come sit by me?" Nick suggested from the front of the boat where I had been lying just a couple of minutes ago.

Rob stood up as Courtney did, walking past her toward the back of the boat. He reached around Luke to grab a bottle of sunscreen from the mesh net under the wheel before sitting on the bench next to me. Rob flipped the cap of the tube, squeezed a bit hard and poured too much into his hand. He cursed under his breath as he started to rub it in.

"Never again," Rob said, half to himself, half to me, "Never again."

"What's that," I asked.

"Courtney. I'm never coming out with Courtney again."

"Oh." I stared at my toes poking out from under the edge of the bindings.

Rob dropped the sunscreen at his feet after he had covered his tattoos. He scratched at the sunscreen between his nails, "What the hell is her problem?" Rob exclaimed, almost breaking his whisper, "You heard, Tate. 'Is that true?' I mean, what the *fuck*?"

"I dunno," I said, "Maybe you should ask her." Maybe you should answer the questions you refuse to ask yourself.

"I don't even want to talk to her," Rob snarled, "As far

as I'm concerned, she can go to hell. I can't ever be around her without being forced to stand neck-deep in her bullshit."

"Maybe she still likes you," I suggested.

"Likes me? She sure has a hell of a way of showing it if she does," Rob said incredulously, but not unwilling to accept the idea, then added, "All that bitch wants is revenge."

"Maybe," I said as I traced the lines on my palm with my thumb.

"Christ, Jake. Look at her," Rob said, and I knew he was watching her and Nick at the front of the boat, even though I couldn't see his eyes through his sunglasses and it seemed like he was just looking at the bottom of the boat, "She's sitting on his damn lap with me right here. One of the best friends I've ever had, and she's over there sitting on his damn lap."

"I don't think Nick ever knew anything happened between you two," I said, looking to the water while Courtney played with Nick's hair. Metal shutters. Corrugated metal shutters.

"No, I know. That's the worst part. He's over there loving it, thinking about how wonderful she is, and I don't even have the heart to tell him," Rob said, "Playing with his hair for Christ's sake. Right out of a damn movie. Hell on earth, she likes to paint with pretty colors."

I smiled at that. "Yeah, she is something," I said.

"Something? Yeah, she's *something* alright," Rob asserted. He picked up the tube of sunscreen and rolled it around in his hands before adding wistfully, "Don't close your eyes, Tate. Don't ever close your eyes."

"So what about Tara?" I asked, "Do you like her?"

"Tara? She's okay," he answered.

I'd finished strapping my feet in a while ago. Luke hadn't asked me if I was ready yet; he just kept driving the

boat, looking straight ahead without saying a word. He had probably heard some of what we'd been saying over the sound of the wind, but if he had, I couldn't tell.

"It's a good thing I've never brought Ashley out here," Rob affirmed. Ashley was the girl Rob had been dating for the last six years. We didn't talk about her much. I had only seen her a couple times, but she seemed really nice; pretty, too. It was easier for everyone to pretend she didn't exist, "I guess I haven't because I know Courtney would say something," Rob said with an air of finality.

"Yeah," I said, "She might." She might deliver us from the ultimatum you've created: tell or feel the guilt for you.

Luke rolled off the throttle and brought the boat to a slow idle, while Rob picked up the tow rope I'd laid between us and threw it behind the boat, far to the left and away from the spinning propeller.

"Have a good run, buddy," Rob said. He sat back down and whispered, "Hopefully I won't snap while you're gone."

I smiled and looked up at Courtney who was still playing with the hair at the nape of Nick's neck.

"Hang in there buddy," I said to Rob, and put my sunglasses into his outstretched hand. Metal Shutters. I'm no better.

It was hard not to squint; I hadn't realized how bright it was.

JOB SECURITY

Like any other job, the heating and air conditioning business has it's highs and lows. One day's work involves digging through a smut-filled crawl space, the next an insulated attic, murky with asbestos. This particular mission involved the latter.

J.C. Cramer and I arrived at Arbors Retirement Community around 7:00 a.m. The building's duct work had begun to spring leaks. "Alright, Alice," J.C. called me Alice. I called him Juice Pickle or Juicy or just Juice. The name was assigned before I started the job. "Lets get up there before the heat comes. That attic will get hotter than a sonofabitch come 10:30," he said with the flick of a cigarette.

"Whatever you say, Juice Pickle" The job was minor: go to the attic, wrap the leaks with metal tape, leave before it gets hot. We walked into the janitor's office (closet) to meet Mike, a chain smoker with multiple sclerosis, and a man with "Scorch" stitched into his uniform and a USMC tattoo on his arm. "I'm assuming y'all are here for the ducts," Mike wheezed. Scorch stood silently beside the boiler.

"Yes, sir. The name's John Cramer. This here's Alice, I mean Alex. Pleased to meet you." Juice was an artist of bull shit.

"Right," Mike said. "Scorch, grab that ladder and show these boys to the attic. I'm gonna smoke." With a nod of the head, we followed our silent leader to the depths of senility and human excrement—the smell of confused death, desperate cries for help.

"They're murdering me!"

"You stupid cunt I don't want any peaches!" Somewhere between death and dementia, seniors revert to angsty

teenagers with shit-filled diapers and yellow-stained fangs. Arbors was a drop-ceiling, fluorescent purgatory.

Silently, Scorch placed the ladder, removed a section of the ceiling, then turned the light switch. A humble hand gesture beckoned us upward.

"Mind your step. We gotta go all the way back," Juice said as he motioned me to follow him down the A-frame corridor. The attic floor was packed so heavily with insulation that some of the floor joists weren't visible. I would come to discover that there was nothing more than a thin sheet of drywall, drop-tile ceiling, and mounds of pink insulation between the nursing home's inhabitants and my 190-pound frame.

Juice was fast at work while I gained my bearings. It was roughly 7:30. I am not a morning person. Balancing on floor joists is a late-afternoon activity at best. I did not understand the vertical extent of the situation.

"Watch your step, Alice. There's no floor between those joists." After a mere seven steps through the attic, each more confident than the last, I missed.

"Jesus Christ" I screamed as my right cheek caught the brunt of my frame on a lone beam. From the floor, two dangling boots attached to paint-stained khakis were all the wheelchair bound creatures could see. From the gaping hole I created, a feeble man of 90 or more sat covered in drywall and insulation. If not for my ass and the floor joist, I would have been charged with involuntary manslaughter.

"Jesus are you all right?" Juice wasn't mad, but awe-struck. "You're lucky you didn't pop a nut on that joist. I've seen it happen."

"Glad you're concerned for my nuts." We laughed. There was nothing else we could do.

Mike hobbled down the corridor as Juice began to pull

me from the hole. He looked up from the ground. “Never in my twenty years” was all he could garble between disheveled coughs and head shakes.

As I made my way down to the collateral damage, I locked eyes with my insulation-covered victim. Before I could turn my head to address the mess, he grabbed his chest and began making dull grunts of exasperation and pain. I was shocked. *I’ve given this man a fucking heart attack!* After the color drained from my face, the old man pointed his finger with a toothless cackle and my pride was vanquished.

T.S. ELIOT'S BREAKING POINT

Without reading deeply into the footnotes of *The Waste Land*, it could prove difficult for the average student to infer that T. S. Eliot was seriously questioning the virtues of society. After researching the alluded texts from "The Fire Sermon," his doubt becomes painfully clear. The abundance of interwoven allusions coupled with their seamless placement implies deep-seeded meditation that was undoubtedly given to the topics within this section of *The Waste Land*. Using Gotama Buddha's "The Fire-Sermon" as the primary basis for analyzing Eliot's "The Fire Sermon," this essay will prove that Eliot ironically juxtaposes the teachings of Buddha with the failings of society to demonstrate his lack of faith in humanity.

The strongest incident of irony can be found in Tiresias's observation of the typist and her nouveau riche visitor. At the beginning of Buddha's solution in "The Fire-Sermon," that is, the attainment of freedom through aversion to worldly temptations, we are told that the "noble disciple conceives an aversion for the eye, conceives an aversion for forms" (55). The typist and the house agent's clerk are miles away from "aversion for the eye" or "aversion for [physical] forms" because their sexual encounter is the product of man's lust and woman's apathy for personal physical integrity. The lines, "Flushed and decided, he assaults at once; / Exploring hands encounter no defence; / His vanity requires no response" destroy Buddha's philosophy in less than twenty words (lines 239-241). The man, overwhelmed or "flushed" by the woman's physical appearance, proves captive to the fires of sight by conceding to his lust at the sight of her figure (54). The woman's actions equally conflict with Buddha's teachings in that her "body is on fire," in the sense that she appears apathetic when molested by the man (54). The above-mentioned line, "Exploring hands encounter no defence" is descriptive enough to prove that this woman cares not that she is used. The fact that she is "Hardly aware of her departed lover" once he is

finished ravaging her creates such apathy for their sexual encounter, it cannot technically be considered rape. Given the selfish tones of character action, the creator of this description is definitely looking at humanity with judgmental eyes.

Towards the end of this gross sexual rendezvous, Buddha's teachings are further contradicted when describing the typist's actions after she engages the young carbuncular: "When lovely woman stoops to folly and / Paces about her room again, alone, / She smooths her hair with automatic hand" (231, 253-255). Not only do these lines allude to fire of the body in that she has no respect for her own, but the typist is consumed by "lamentation, misery, . . . and despair" (54). She doesn't convey a sense of sorrow for her actions of "folly," but for the recurring onset of boredom that is implied by her lonely pacing. Beyond self-pity, the typist's situation is miserably desperate because she is a victim of her environment who appears to be stuck in the same "automatic" sequence of events. The core of Buddha's sermon is to find freedom through aversion to and divestment of worldly passion. Clearly, the victim typist resides at the opposite end of the enlightenment spectrum, thus drenching "The Fire Sermon" section of *The Waste Land* in cynical irony.

Another passage of "The Fire Sermon" that demonstrates irony can be found in the short stanza that explains the desires of "Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant" (209). This stanza caters to the fragment, "mind-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the mind are on fire" (54). Analyzing Mr. Eugenides's appearance, he is of a lowly profession, his country of origin is war-torn, and he is "Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants" (210). Having an unkempt appearance and subsisting on inexpensive food is enough to argue his impoverished status. What violates Buddha's sermon are his requests: "Asked me in a demotic French / To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel / Followed by a weekend at the Metropole" (212-214). Although he asks in a commoner's dialect, he wants to dine at the "Cannon Street Hotel" and relax at the "Metropole," though he knows both places are for affluent types.

These requests violate Buddha's sermon because Mr. Eugenides is consciously aware of his low social status, yet the "impressions received by the mind" have lead him to believe that he deserves to relax luxuriously. To want for more than one is capable of affording is the opposite of what Buddha's sermon preaches. People should strive for "the absence of passion" and freedom from material society (55). By illustrating Mr. Eugenides's digression away from Buddha's teachings, Eliot reaffirms his lack of faith in humanity.

A final, powerful example of the intentional irony within "The Fire Sermon" can be found at the section's beginning. The lines, "The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" are significant because Eliot describes his heart's desire (and the Buddha's desire) that Thames be cleared of its common earthly garbage (5-6). In reality, the river is cluttered with the very things Eliot lists. Interesting here is that Eliot voices the main lesson of Buddha's sermon. If only Thames, a metaphor for the common man, were rid of its earthly garbage, all of society would improve and there would be no need for Eliot to voice his doubts of humanity. Unfortunately, the river does have "empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs etc..." and this is likely a metaphor that partially explains the source of Eliot's mental breakdown.

Although obscure allusion-filled, close reading and analysis of "The Fire Sermon" and "The Fire-Sermon" reveal the source of Eliot's utter discontent with the state of humanity during composition of *The Waste Land*. Although the true intentions behind this section of *The Waste Land* could never be known without interrogating Eliot, close readings of his text and the alluded text reveals that irony was undoubtedly employed to convey his contempt for society and could arguably prove a source of his mental break.

Works Cited

Eliot, T. S. *The Waste Land*. Ed. Michael North. New York: Norton, 2001. Print.

Warren, Henry Clark. *Buddhism in Translations*. Cambridge: Harvard U P, 1922. Print.

STEPHEN'S SURVEILLANCE: FOUCAULT AND A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AT A YOUNG AGE

James Joyce's 1914 novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* traces the intellectual and artistic development of Stephen Dedalus, a young man navigating through the religious and social constraints of Ireland in the late nineteenth-century. Beginning with Stephen's infancy and ending with his flight from Ireland to pursue his artistic ambitions abroad, the work follows his changing worldview from a sensitive, precocious child to a rebellious young man. Stephen's progression throughout the novel can be illuminated through the ideas of French philosopher Michel Foucault, particularly his works *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*. Foucault's writings on power, knowledge, and discourse demonstrate how Stephen's notions of morality and sexuality throughout the novel are largely informed by the power of dominant social institutions, particularly the Catholic Church and the schools he attends. These bodies of power can be seen as regulating, disciplining, and surveilling Stephen's behavior, and Foucault's writings ultimately serve to question whether Stephen's rebellion from society can ever be a complete one.

One of the main subjects of Foucault's work is the relationship between power and knowledge, which is created through what he called 'discourse.' A discourse is something that produces what it purports to describe, and thus has no relation to any sort of real or outside truth. Instead, discourses create culturally internalized expectations that people believe come from their own thinking, and are used as a means of domination and control. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison System*, Foucault argues that discourses are spread throughout society through organizations that regulate behavior and beliefs. His studies of prisons revealed that the regulation of behavior to meet a "norm" comes through surveillance and the punishment of deviants, which ultimately leads to prisoners policing their own actions and becoming "docile" (1491). He then explained that this technique has

been transported “from the penal institution to the entire social body,” and thus viewed society as a sort of prison that normalizes people through the proliferation of dominant discourses (1494). In addition, he saw that power is diffused in a decentralized fashion to enforce normalization on a day-to-day basis.

In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, the regulating effects of dominant discourses influence Stephen starting at an early age. For example, when a young Stephen expresses his desire to marry Eileen Vance, a Protestant girl living next door, his extremely Catholic family demands that he “apologize,” and threaten that “the eagles will pull out his eyes” if he does not (6). This shows that even outside of traditional institutions, surveillance has a regulating effect, and in Stephen’s case begins a discourse that classifies right and wrong. Similarly, digression from the norm is discouraged during a heated political argument at his family’s Christmas meal. This was a time of turmoil in Ireland, with a strong nationalist movement led by Charles Stewart Parnell. However, Parnell was condemned by the Catholic Church after a scandal erupted over his affair with a married woman, resulting in his political downfall. Though Stephen was too young to fully understand the nature of Parnell’s plummet, he has internalized that this sort of transgression against the church’s teachings is wrong and is thus critical of the nationalists because he does not understand why they would be “against the priests” (30).

This sort of regulating surveillance is intensified at Stephen’s boarding school, a Jesuit school called Clongowes Woods College. Clongowes represents the sort of decentralized power that Foucault describes, with priests enforcing and molding submissive behavior. Even the miniscule details of Stephen’s life at Clongowes fulfill what Foucault called the “carceral continuum,” with supervision used to impose norms (1497). For example, Stephen hurries at night because “he had to undress and then kneel to say his own prayers and be in bed before the gas was lowered so that he might not go to hell when he died” (15). Stephen’s fear of punishment is so great that he performs this routine of

his own will, showing the beginnings of self-surveillance and docility. In addition, any sort of deviancy is depicted as ineffectual and as reinforcing the dominant discourse. For example, when Stephen complains to the rector about being unfairly punished by Father Dolan, the prefect of studies, he is seen as a hero. However, Stephen sees himself as unjustly treated due to what he was taught in school about the Greek senate, showing that his feelings on morality are still routed in Clongowes' authority. In addition, it is later revealed that instead of the rector scolding Dolan for his unjustness, the two "had a great laugh" over Stephen's complaint (63). Ultimately, this seems to discourage any sort of transgression and reasserts the authority of the priests.

Foucault also wrote extensively about the relationship between discourses and sexuality, and in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, he argues that the dominant discourse on sexuality is used as a means of control and social regulation. Additionally, he sees that the enunciation of a category as perverse or 'other' heightens its presence. Thus, by labeling aspects of sexuality as prohibited, society creates what it condemns. This leads Foucault to call this an "age of multiplication" of "perversions" (1513).

In Chapter Two of the novel, Stephen's burgeoning sexuality leads him towards behavior that the dominant discourse and the Catholic Church would define as "other," such as masturbation, sexual fantasizing, and visiting prostitutes. The power of self-surveillance and culturally internalized expectations can be seen throughout these interactions, as Stephen, while experiencing distance from the church, is still overwhelmed with guilt and recognizes his actions as sinful. For example, when he sees the word 'foetus' carved into a desk, it reminds him of his sexual perversions and makes him "loathe himself for his own mad and filthy orgies" (80). In addition, when Stephen wanders the streets of Dublin before his first encounter with a prostitute, he expresses his desire "to sin with another of his kind" (87). This emphasis on sinning before performing the sexual act helps to display another feature of Foucauldian philosophy; the idea that sexuality is viewed as

a fundamental aspect of self in modern society, and therefore actions come to define identity. Thus, Stephen's sexually perverse actions lead him to define himself through the identity of a sinner.

While Stephen views his sinful actions as breeding more sin, he still finds "pleasure" in feeling "his own condemnation," and begins asking difficult questions about church doctrine at Belvedere, his school (92). However, despite the moral rebellion this suggests, Stephen still experiences acute fear when it is revealed that he will be attending a religious retreat in honor of St. Francis Xavier. The retreat features sermons on "death, judgment, hell, and heaven", and the effect that this has upon Stephen ultimately shows the true control of the church's discourses and the threat of punishment (96). One sermon emphasized that one should confess their sins and repent while they can, making Stephen, as a sinner, feel that "every word of it was for him" (101). This literalizes the idea that to avoid punishment, in this case being the horrors of hell, one must submit to surveillance and regulation by the forces of the Catholic Church through confession (Streit 40).

Ultimately, Stephen's perversity leads him back towards a system of excessive self-surveillance to normalize his behavior, showing the power of discourses to regulate. After the retreat, Stephen develops a scheme of extreme piety with "his daily life...laid out in devotional areas," showing a conscious surveillance of his own actions (28). He begins a systematic mortification of his senses and becomes extremely docile to the doctrines of Christianity, following these rules compulsively and no longer asking questions to challenge them. As a result of his piety, he is asked by Belvedere's director if he has considered becoming a priest. Stephen reveals that he has fantasized about a life of priesthood and is particularly titillated by the idea of having the "secret knowledge and secret power" to hear confession (139). However, while the idea of becoming part of the surveilling force of the church appeals to him, he ultimately decides that this is not the vocation he will follow and that "his destiny was to be free of social and religious orders" (141). This decision seems partially motivated by the correspondence Stephen

makes between priesthood and Clongowes, and he thinks about their dormitories while making his verdict. The fact that he decides to pave his own way suggests he is beginning to understand that institutions like Clongowes have been responsible for his thoughts and actions, and that he instead desires to develop himself outside of these discourses and have freedom.

However, the very nature of discourse suggests that Stephen's rebellion from society cannot be absolute due to his deep internalization of these ideas. While Stephen wants to gain freedom from predominant social institutions by following the vocation of an artist, several things suggest that these discourses continue to regulate his beliefs. This can be seen when his friend Cranly makes a heretical statement about Jesus. While Stephen claims not to follow the doctrines of the church anymore, he is not free enough from their rules to hear this without experiencing shock. Cranly also asks if Stephen plans on becoming a Protestant, to which he replies "I said that I had lost the faith, and not that I had lost self respect" (215). This statement, reflecting the idea that Protestantism is inherently bad, can be traced back to the surveillance performed by Stephen's family when he expressed an interest in Eileen as a child, showing that this discourse has now become a part of his own internalized thoughts. The aesthetic theory that Stephen explains in chapter 5 also suggests that the teachings of the church continue to regulate Stephen's behavior. He proposes that good art generates an "aesthetic stasis," meaning that it should not induce attraction or revulsion but instead have an arresting affect upon the observer (181). In theory this goes against the church, as art was being utilized at this time in Ireland to provoke reactions towards religion. However, aspects of this relate heavily to church doctrine, such as when Stephen sees the artist as a priest-like figure mediating art to the world, saying that "the artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork" (189). Thus, while these ideas are his own, they are still routed in the discourses of the church.

James Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

tells the story of Stephen Dedalus and his intellectual and artistic development from adolescence to adulthood. Stephen, growing up in late nineteenth-century Ireland, must steer his way through various social and religious constraints in order to eventually leave his homeland to pursue his artistic ambitions. The work of philosopher Michel Foucault can be used to shed light upon Stephen's development, illustrating that Stephen's notions of sexuality and morality are largely the result of internalized expectations coming from predominant social institutions, particularly the Catholic Church. The surveillance of Stephen's behavior by these institutions has a profound effect on his thoughts and actions and ultimately, his split from society can never be an absolute one.

Works Cited

Foucault, Michel. "The Carceral." *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1975. Excerpted in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2010. 1490-1502.

Foucault, Michel. "Part Two: The Repressive Hypothesis." *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, An Introduction*. 1976. Excerpted in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2010. 1502-1521.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2007.

Streit, Wolfgang. *Joyce/Foucault: Sexual Confessions*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2004.

LACK OF WISDOM IN THE BOOK OF JOB

The Book of Job's wisdom is derivative of its complete lack of wisdom. The book explores the utter confusion of reconciling suffering and spirituality, offering little resolution to the theologically disturbing narrative of Job's trouble. Job asks many questions that God declines to answer based on his authoritative position as a deity. God's assertion that Job has "spoken right" of God is strange then, as Job spends most of the book questioning God's motives and incurring his anger. God conveys that Job has continued to adhere to the power of God's will. Even in Job's questioning and dissent, he never turns away from God or shows disloyalty to the hierarchy that God expects. When God appears, Job immediately submits. Even when Job is angry and bitter towards Yahweh, he acknowledges that Yahweh can obliterate his existence at any moment. Job accepts the possibility that God can be wrathful, and Yahweh believes this is speaking right of God. Job's submission and God's approval show that God cares more for recognition, respect, and obedience than morality and altruism.

Job maintains a clear attitude of submission throughout the Book of Job, even when he is angry with God. The way in which he questions God is frequently an inferior looking for beneficial advice. Job says "Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have gone wrong" (6:24). Job's uses a very bitter tone here, as he cannot fathom what his misgiving is. However, bitterness and disrespect are not synonymous. He feels bitter *because* he respects God and his rules. He views God as a superior being worthy of eternal understanding and didacticism. When he says "teach me," he assumes that God possesses the answers that humanity cannot. Job desires to obey his deity. He wants to improve so that his life improves. However, his improvements and the system that he measures his actions against are still in the bounds of God's established morality. He asks how he can better serve God's will. Job speaks as a servant asking for an evaluation of his own

performance, accepting his subservient position and looking for the inside information from the more knowledgeable party, maintaining God's position as omniscient.

Job's continuing questioning of Yahweh contains more submissive language, but as he speaks more candidly, his anger is multiplied because of how God uses his infinite power. Job says:

Though I am innocent, I cannot answer him; I must appeal for mercy to my accuser. If I summoned him and he answered me, I do not believe that he would listen to my voice. For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my wounds without cause; he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness. If it is a contest of strength, he is the strong one! (9:15-19)

Job's tone is bitter here yet again, but he continually recognizes his smallness compared to Yahweh's almighty power. God's position as an "accuser" transcends a simple inferior/superior relationship into territory of an abusive relationship. Job asserts that he is "innocent" but that he is punished anyway, which he feels is extremely unjust. Job's position is entirely futile, as his position forces him to adhere to whatever Yahweh wants. He mentions that he cannot communicate with his superior at all, but is instead forced to remain miserable and ignored. This position would be acceptable and even beneficial if Yahweh always had Job's emotional wellbeing in mind. However, a good life for Job is secondary to many other of Yahweh's agendas, including betting his life for sport with Satan. Job continues to speak right of God because he accepts the futility of his existence when compared to his deity. Yahweh perceives Job's bitter questions as compliments because they reinforce his strength and omniscience. He complains about how little power his human existence has and how Yahweh's will becomes reality, which still maintains the hierarchy that God created between himself and humanity.

In the final pages of Job, Yahweh finally speaks to Job about the preceding events in the book. His speeches offer little explanation or justification for Job's mistreatment, but instead assert his

power as an omnipotent deity. Yahweh says:

Who is this that darkens counsel by word without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me. Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements-surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its based sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy? (38:2-7)

God speaks with clear condescension here, showcasing his advanced understanding of the universe. Yahweh's intentions are to make Job feel small and insignificant as he lists magnificent achievements that only deities are capable of. Job's issues are insignificant when compared to any single action of Yahweh's, which cements the futility of Job's pleas to Yahweh. In addition, Yahweh's sentences are imperative. He makes demands and gives instructions. When his sentences are interrogative, they convey a bitter subtext of arrogance and boasting authority. Yahweh does not expect answers to his questions because he uses them rhetorically. The God portrayed in this speech is insecure and protective of his authority. Even though Job adheres to God's power throughout the text, Yahweh treats him as if his questions affront his authority. God lists his achievements because he is concerned that Job does not fully recognize their significance. If Yahweh was secure enough in his actions and position, then his discomfort would be minimal. If Job's questioning and ranting is the product of an underdeveloped, narrow-minded view, then why even bother convincing him otherwise, especially if you are God? Yahweh cares most about recognition from his creation, as he would not spend time convincing Job of his achievements if it was insential.

Furthermore, God's anger is only curbed when Job concedes in complete submission:

I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonder-

ful me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes. (42:2-6)

After Job explains this, God abandons his anger and even compliments Job, stating that he speaks right of God and his companions have not. The first time Job speaks to Yahweh, Yahweh continues berating him because Job still questions him. This creates a connection between submission and benevolence from Yahweh. Only when Job completely surrenders to Yahweh's power does God begin to treat Job fondly. Job's friends characterize God as a peer that is capable of a working relationship. They tie good deeds to benevolent treatment from Yahweh whereas Job realizes that acting within God's expectations does not guarantee a life devoid of complication and hardship. The way Job's friends treat Yahweh is not as one treats a superior, as they expect things in return for actions. God's anger towards them also creates a connection between submission and God's grace. Job's friends' religious philosophies disrespect God's power. They cannot accept that Yahweh's will does not have rules, and that they are not free from suffering. Their philosophy of a working relationship with Yahweh diminishes his power as a deity as it presumes that God adheres to distinct rules, and consequently Yahweh punishes them with wrath.

Throughout the Book of Job, Job and God exemplify the distribution of divine power. Job, even in his anger and questioning of authority, never disavows the hierarchy that Yahweh has established between himself and humanity. God compliments Job at the end of the book because Job realizes that he is insignificant in God's perspective. Because of this, God's actions reveal his feverish intentions to assert power and dominance over his creation, developing anger against Job's friends for assigning rules to God's divine actions and appreciating Job for his obedience and respect of power. The Book of Job portrays God as childish and abusive more than any other story in the Bible. If God views human life as expendable and insignificant, what is the value of re-

specting God at all? Despite the fact that Yahweh is more powerful than human beings, isn't some human life worth respecting and valuing? Job provokes many more questions than it does answers, but questions are precisely the point. Job's wisdom lies in the fact that suffering is unexplainable, even under God's supervision. Its wisdom lies in that Yahweh may be as selfish, sensitive, and impetuous as humans. Its wisdom lies in the inability to reconcile events and order, in the acceptance that fate is random and both happiness and misery cannot be tied to actions.

Works Cited

"The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version, College Edition / Edition 4 by Oxford University Press, USA." Print.

GLASS GHOSTS: THE GHOSTLY DESPAIR OF FRANNY GLASS

J.D. Salinger's narrative of the Glass family explores the spiritual and physical pursuits of life. This narrative begins with "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," set in the year 1948, which chronicles the suicide of Seymour Glass. Seymour, the oldest of seven siblings, becomes the central focus of the short stories concerned with the Glass family. Despite his physical absence from most stories, Seymour's ghost permeates the thoughts and actions of his younger siblings. John Wenke points this out in *J.D. Salinger: A Study of Short Fiction*, stating that "the Glass stories are ghost stories" (81).

The Glass narrative finds an end with *Franny and Zooey*. Although these began as distinct short stories, read together they tell the story of how the youngest sibling, Franny, comes to terms with the spiritual beliefs she picked up from Seymour as a child. "Franny" shows the reader the aspects of physical life Franny rejects; "Zooey" names her desire as her dead brother. Moving away from physical life toward an idea trapped in the infinity of death proves to be crippling for Franny's body. She spends most of the story in a state of despair, manifesting in bodily failings such as fainting spells, rejection of food, and her lying helpless as a corpse on a couch for almost the entirety of "Zooey." The only thing Franny can say about her state is, "I want to talk to Seymour" (Salinger 151). This line comes so late in the story that it is clear Franny does not know exactly what plagues her, all she can do is acknowledge a drive for the presence of her absent brother.

While her issues with studies at school are what Franny refers to most, her relationship with Seymour is the determining factor in her bodily failing. Seymour's suicide has caused Franny to become obsessed with the absence of his spirituality. A desire for a privileged spirituality that resembles Seymour's beliefs motivates Franny to categorically reject bodily pursuits such as studying English or Theater; the more

obvious conflict in *Franny and Zooey*. Franny's rejection of such bodily pursuits results in a degradation of her own body. As the physically inept Franny tries in vain to reach the physically absent Seymour it becomes clear that she is just as ghostly as Seymour. *Franny and Zooey* is a ghost story because Franny's obsession with a ghost causes her to completely withdraw from social interaction as her body slides further into non-existence. She is dying from the impossibility of reaching Seymour. Like the tree that falls in an empty forest, Franny and her body cease to exist in that they fail to exhibit a physically substantial nature during the story. Franny's desire to reach out to a ghost is making her body fail, causing her to become ghostly as well.

At the beginning of "Franny," Franny's spiritual beliefs, which heavily privilege the spiritual over the physical, make it difficult for her to participate in her life at college where she studies English and Theater. Franny's beliefs come out during a long conversation with her boyfriend, Lane. Throughout this conversation there is an unnerving description of Franny's physical deterioration. The physical descriptions of Franny show her to be increasingly pale and physically debilitated as the lunch goes on. While Franny's physical symptoms appear to be caused by her distress about school, it is her rejection of earthly pursuits that blows back into her body, draining the life out of her. When she pauses while ranting about her professors, Salinger describes her physical condition, "for several minutes now, she had seemed to be losing color in her face. Suddenly, even her lipstick seemed a shade or two lighter, as though she had just blotted it with a leaf of Kleenex" (18).

The more Franny focuses on her issues at school the worse her condition becomes. School itself is not sapping her strength; rather it is Franny's desire to find a spirituality that lives up to the standards Seymour set that is so draining. The first reference to death comes after Franny has taken an unusually long bathroom break, "'God, I'm sorry,' Franny said. 'Did you think I'd died?'" (25). Franny ties herself to death, the first hint that the problem is less about getting away from school and more about getting toward something that is impossible to

reach. Franny's comment is more telling than just a passing joke. Death is where Seymour lies, making it both the source of her beliefs and the one place she knows would have the answers she needs.

The only positive thing Franny refers to is her brothers. Her respect for them establishes them as an ideal. Specifically their standards for art, including Theater, are influential, "It was just that I would've been ashamed if, say, anybody I respected-my brothers, for example-came and heard me deliver some of the *lines* I had to say. I used to write certain people and tell them not to come" (28). Franny seeks to live up to her brothers' ideals. Seymour's absence makes this impossible as he is the brother she looked up to most. In Franny's mind, death and her brothers are synonymous.

The climax of "Franny" is brought about when Franny's body fails entirely. Her condition is tied to her ghostly image, which is the first time the word "ghost" is used, "She used a compact mirror and quickly, lightly blotted her brow with a leaf of Kleenex. 'God. I look like a ghost. How can you stand me?'" (31). Once again, Franny's comment is more than a passing turn of phrase, it hints at what is actually plaguing her that she cannot give voice to. Continuing to deteriorate, Franny goes to the bathroom again, but she does not quite make it, and pauses at the bar, "She put her right hand on the bar, then lowered her head-bowed it-and put her left hand to her forehead, just touching it with the fingertips. She weaved a trifle, then fainted, collapsing to the floor" (41).

"Zooey" begins a few days after the end of "Franny." "Zooey" sources Franny's spirituality in Seymour, thus tying her failing body to her desire for her dead brother. Eventually it becomes clear that Franny has failed to grasp the entirety of Seymour's teachings, and it is her desire for a false version of his spirituality that is turning her into a ghost. This revelation comes from Zooey, who is able to help Franny work through her issues.

"Zooey" contains a reprinted letter from Buddy Glass, the second oldest, to Zooey. Buddy explains why he and Seymour insti-

tuted the religious education that influences Franny and Zooey when the two were still very young. This religious education is the source of Franny's beliefs. The description of an ideal spirituality in Buddy's letter definitively locates Franny's desires in the memory of Seymour. Buddy explains that he and Seymour wanted Franny and Zooey "to know who and what Jesus and Gautama and Lao-tse ...etc., were before you know too much or anything about Homer or Shakespeare" (66). Simply put, Buddy and Seymour wanted Franny and Zooey to be aware of God before they were aware of everything else. This is what is so important to Franny that she has come to reject her studies and physical life altogether. Franny finds no God in the practice of acting or her literary studies. This lack of God, or spirituality, equates to a lack of Seymour's spirituality, since he is the original source of her beliefs. Franny rejects earthly practices because they fail to live up to the standard of the absent brother whose spirituality is so desirable that its very absence spreads into Franny's body.

Franny's condition only worsens as time passes. After collapsing Franny's body does not recover, she is hardly present. Bessie Glass, their mother, tells Zooey that Franny is "laying there by the hour crying her eyes out if you say boo to her, and mumbling heaven knows *what* to herself... I tried-not half an hour ago-to get her to take a nice cup of chicken broth. She took exactly two mouthfuls, and that's *all*. She threw *up* everything I got her to eat yesterday" (83-5). Bessie wants to get one of the siblings to speak to Franny to help, and repeatedly mentions Buddy and Seymour as being ideal. This elicits a strong reaction from Zooey. His response strongly identifies Seymour as not only as a ghost, but a ghost that is distinctly haunting his surviving family. Zooey does not distinguish between Buddy and Seymour. They are both ghosts. Although Buddy is still alive, he lives alone in the woods and spends most of his time writing about Seymour. Buddy is half-dead because of his dedication to Seymour and Seymour is half-alive because of Buddy's dedication to his memory. Franny has fallen into a similar trap; she is so enamored with what she remembers of Seymour's spirituality that

she is now turning into a ghost as well. Zooey sees Seymour's influence as debilitating on the living, declaring that, "Buddy, Buddy, *Buddy*... Seymour, Seymour, *Seymour*...I'm so sick of their names I could cut my throat...This whole goddam house stinks of ghosts. I don't mind so much being haunted by a dead ghost, but I resent like *hell* being haunted by a half-dead one" (103).

Franny eventually admits her wish to talk to Seymour, openly tying herself to an infinite emptiness by desiring something that is dead. Franny desires to reach something that is infinitely distant from her, an impossible goal that is slowly sapping the life from her body. In *Signifying Loss*, Nouri Gana explains what happens to someone who is tied to death in such a way.

what is worse than death is precisely the suggestion that death comes to put an unsurpassable end to any kind of communication, dialogue, with the dead: what is worse than death...is the tendency to translate the *finitude* that death instantiates into the *finitude* of the *infinite*. Death ushers us into infinity, and from a finite relationship with the other we move into an infinite relationship. (Gana 140)

A desire for something located among the infinity of death kills the living, leaving them just as ghostly as the dead. The despair Franny is experiencing throughout *Franny and Zooey* is a sickness unto death. The resulting ghostly condition represents her desire for something that is unattainable in bodily life. A deadly infinity occupies Franny, keeping her somewhere between the living and the dead. This slow death manifests itself in Franny's ghostly image and inability to nourish her body.

It is necessary for Franny to establish a relationship with the physical world to survive. Physical withdrawal, the most telling symptom of her despair, is also the condition of despair that needs to be cured. Treating the symptom of ghostliness may also cure the disease. Zooey is only able to bring Franny back to life by showing her that a desire for Seymour is unnecessary, that the spirituality she seeks can

be found in bodily life as well, “the only thing that counts in the religious life is *detachment*...the only religious thing you can do is *act*. Act for God, if you want to” (198). Zooey is showing Franny that she does not have to be a ghost to be spiritual. Although the surrounding environment may never live up to her standards, she should judge her own conduct. Finding spirituality within the bodily realm allows Franny to reestablish a bodily presence so that she may be alive with Zooey rather than a ghost with Buddy and Seymour.

Works Cited

Gana, Nouri. Signifying Loss: Toward a Poetics of Narrative Mourning. Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2011. Print.

Salinger, J.D. Franny and Zooey. Boston, Little Brown. 1961. Print.

Wenke, John. J.D. Salinger: A Study of Short Fiction. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991. Print.

FROST'S NATURE POETRY: BLURRING THE BOUNDS OF THE ROMANTIC, MODERN, AND POSTMODERN

Robert Frost's nature poetry often causes him to seem more closely aligned with romantic poets than to his more modern contemporaries. He follows romantic tendencies through figurative devices to project human emotions on the natural world to create comparisons with human nature. However, his depictions of nature at times uncover a profoundly modern point of view as well. While romantic poets, such as Wordsworth, are more likely to idealize nature, and to encourage the merger of human consciousness into the natural, Frost resists this in a characteristically modern way: he presents the natural world as a mirror of human nature, without merging humanity and nature. Frost's poetry can often transcend destructive forces; humanity, by mimicking nature, may also learn to do so. In a modernist sense, humanity can overcome the confusions of the world. In a romantic sense, we can learn to mimic nature's transcendence. Most of Frost's nature poems blur modern and romantic categories; some, however, as exemplified by "The Most of It," resist the notion that nature is a mirror for human nature. The natural world is thus presented as completely other. This acceptance of difference and multiplicity of views indicates that Frost may be a precursor to a more postmodern point of view. I will trace Frost's view of nature as it blurs the bounds of the romantic, modern, and postmodern sensibilities by examining ways in which Frost presents human nature in relation to the natural world.

The natural world in Frost's poetry often is more resistant to destructive forces, and serves as a model to help humanity to resist these forces. Two of Frost's poems, "Range-Finding" and "Hyla Brook," follow his general paradigm of simple image to a gradual building of an extended metaphor. The natural world is often able to resist destructive forces, as in "Range-Finding." In "Hyla Brook," nature, despite an ugly outer appearance, inspires love. Humans similarly are encouraged to love in an unqualified way, without regard to outer appearances. The

natural world exemplifies this transcendence and offers a paradigm for humanity. In a romantic way, Frost values lessons that nature can teach. His poetry does not imply that nature is superior to humanity; rather, his poetry encourages the self-improvement of humanity through mimicry of nature. "Range-Finding" and "Hyla Brook" depict the predominance of nature over destructive forces and the effects of time, respectively. In this sense, nature is a model for humanity.

In "Range-Finding," the natural world prevails over forces that seek to destroy it. "Range-Finding" involves the practice of shooting artillery before battle to ascertain the distances one must shoot when the battle has begun. The battle disrupts the natural world, even in the range-finding stage: "The battle rent a cobweb diamond-strung / And cut a flower beside a ground bird's nest" ("Range-Finding" 1-2). Nature is adversely affected by the actions of humans, even before the battle affects the humans themselves. Yet, nature is able to transcend these petty battles: "And still the bird revisited her young" (5). The poem is not a mournful description of the destruction of nature; rather, it emphasizes nature's ability to resist destructive forces. Nature is originally presented as separate from the human world, as John F. Lynen notes: "The upland pasture contains two distinct worlds, the battlefield where the human struggle is played out and the realm of the bird, the butterfly, and the spider. Though man's world is superimposed upon theirs, he cannot ever penetrate it" (149). Yet, Lynen continues: "the world of nature comes to serve as a commentary on the human world, as we see in the way the spider responds to the range-finding bullet" (Lynen 149). The final image is of a spider running to greet a fly, which is in actuality a bullet. The spider retreats "sullenly" upon the realization ("Range-Finding" 14). Through projection, Frost implies the idea that humans can also, though "sullenly" (14), overcome destruction as well by continuing with their lives in the face of disruptions. Frost aligns with a modernist perspective in this poem because the referent here, and for modernists, is always the human. His ruminations on nature are intended to uplift humanity and reveal its fullest potential. In a romantic

sense, Frost looks to nature as a restorative model for humans.

Similarly, "Hyla Brook" concerns nature's transcendence of the effects of time. The poem again moves from the natural world, which is presented as a sphere separate from humans, to the human connection through metaphor. The speaker reflects on the brook, which had previously, in spring, run merrily. Now, by June, the brook has dried up. Its past brilliance is merely a memory: "Like ghost of sleigh-bells in a ghost of snow" ("Hyla Brook" 6). The brook now consists of "a faded paper sheet" and "dead leaves stuck together" (10-11). These images of decay strengthen the irony or surprise of the final line: "We love the things we love for what they are" (15). The speaker here orchestrates the seemingly meaningless images of death and decay into a metaphorical statement concerning the meaning of love and beauty in terms of human nature. The speaker cannot explain why he or she loves the now-dead brook, but its beauty is revered, if only in memory. Human nature can transcend an ugly outer appearance, possibly through the aid of memory alone. The larger metaphor refers to the nature of human love. Ideally, we love people for who they are intrinsically, not for what they have become outwardly. The brook exemplifies decay and loss, but we love it for its existence as it is. George F. Bagby depicts the notion that the natural world is again a mirror to reflect human nature: "we love the things—and the people—we love in just this way—because we give them a breadth of vision which enables them to exist not just in their present selves, but in their past selves . . . and in their future selves" (79). Through this vision that extends to a person's past, present, and future self, humans have the capacity to transcend the destruction caused by time, despite old age and the decay of the body.

This same paradigm is present in many of Frost's other poems, including "Acceptance," in which nature gracefully accepts of life's difficulties-- death, old age, danger, and so forth. The wisdom of this poem is the idea that humans should imitate nature in a half-resigned, half-peaceful acceptance of even the darkest uncertainties in life. In both "Hyla Brook" and "Acceptance," Frost as a modernist indicates that

the self-improvement of humanity is the end goal of these analyses of nature. Yet, again, his romantic tendencies originally allow him to look to nature as a paradigm for humanity.

However, Frost may realize now and again that he is imposing too much on nature. Sometimes in Frost's poetry, nature is presented as completely other. This notion portrays recognition of difference and subtlety not often noted in Frost's nature poetry. Lynen cites "The Most of It" as an example that "shows us the gulf separating man from nature in bold outline" (144). He notes that for this reason this poem has been ignored by critics. The poem, in its depiction of nature as other, portrays "how awesome a view of reality the contrast between man and nature expresses" (Lynen 144). The speaker in the poem yearns for a meaningful sign of love from nature (144):

He thought he kept the universe alone;

For all the voice in answer he could wake

Was but the mocking echo of his own

From some tree-hidden cliff across the lake.

Some morning from the boulder-broken beach

He would cry out on life, that what it wants

Is not its own love back in copy speech,

But counter-love, original response. ("The Most of It" 1-8)

The speaker wants a response of love from nature, Lynen notes, "yet he is wise enough to realize that what he wants is 'counter-love, original response' rather than a mere reflection of his own love" (144). Original response of love would be of more value to humanity than a

mere reflection. However, nature can only reflect the love of humans.

Later in the poem, a magnificent buck swims across the lake to the man. The buck is “‘the most of it’ – all that nature can give” (Lynen 144). The buck is such a strange image of nature’s response that the man cannot even recognize it (144). The image of the buck climbing up out of the water refuses to allow for the extension or the reflection of human nature in the natural world. The buck was all that nature could offer, and the speaker interprets nature’s “remoteness” (144). The natural world for Frost is often a mirror for human nature and indicates humanity’s potential, but Frost here also recognizes that nature is limited at times. “The Most of It” exemplifies the poems in which Frost depicts nature as completely other than humanity. Frost accepts this difference in theme, which is out of step with mainstream modernism. Frost here may even be seen as a proto-postmodernist due to his acceptance of difference. He does not attempt justification of this poem with a universal theme.

Frost, as part-romantic, part-modernist, and part-postmodernist, blurs the bounds of these eras. His vision for humanity hearkens back to the romantic era, when writers looked to unification with nature as a restorative process. However, Frost merges romantic considerations of nature with the more human-centered ideology of his modernist roots. For Frost, the natural world, in its brilliant resiliency, serves as a model for humans to overcome hardship. In this modernist sense, Frost does not call for unification with nature; rather, he intends humanity to recover its immense potential via mimicry of the natural world. Yet, Frost can be seen as a proto-postmodernist as well in his acceptance of the limits of his metaphors. He does not stretch the notion of nature as a metaphor for humanity in all poems, as exemplified by “The Most of It.” Rather, Frost accepts the notion of difference and indicates that, at times, nature and humanity are completely other. Frost’s nature poetry reminds us that, in all things, we are both products of our historical legacy and precursors of our future perspectives.

Works Cited

Bagby, George F. *Frost and the Book of Nature*. Knoxville, Tennessee: U of Tennessee P, 1993. Print.

Frost, Robert. "Acceptance." In *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*. Eds. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson. New York: The Library of America, 1995. 228. Print.

---. "Hyla Brook." In *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*. Eds. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson. New York: The Library of America, 1995. 115-116. Print.

---. "The Most of It." In *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*. Eds. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson. New York: The Library of America, 1995. 307. Print.

---. "Range-Finding." In *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays*. Eds. Richard Poirier and Mark Richardson. New York: The Library of America, 1995. 122. Print.

Lynen, John F. "The Pastoral Art of Robert Frost." *Chapter 5: "Nature and Pastoralism."* Frost Free Library, n.d. Web. 20 April 2011.

MOTHERHOOD AND SLAVERY: THE SORROWFUL CONDITION IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED

Children are born to mothers every minute of every day. In most cases, mothers enjoy their children and raise them to adulthood. Unfortunately, there are other situations that lead mothers to give their children to adoptive parents or other family members. It seems the second option would likely be difficult and painful for a mother. However, during the times when slavery is an institution of America, enslaved mothers face problems that are profoundly difficult to comprehend. For male slaves, the agony of work, a fear of death, and an inability to live free and successful lives are all elements of their unjust state. In the novel Beloved, written by Toni Morrison, there are countless examples of the sufferings of slaves. Her novel also depicts the plight of women who are slaves. These women represent those who must live a life of slavery that comes with added dimensions when compared to their male counterparts. They are mothers as well as slaves. For a slave woman, motherhood can be a sorrowful, limiting, and painful experience. Morrison speaks for these mothers with women like Sethe and Baby Suggs. They are examples of this terrible condition otherwise known as motherhood.

For slave women, motherhood is quite often a commodity for their masters. In some cases, they are regularly impregnated for the purpose of producing more workers. For a mother, bringing a slave into the world is a terrible event; she knows the way it feels to be a slave, and in turn, she is responsible for another slave who will endure the same devastating fate. Baby Suggs, a freed slave describes the hardships of motherhood multiple times in the novel. Although she is close to one son, Halle, she has many others that she has to let go because of slavery. As she recalls her children, she exhibits the pain that results from being a mother to children who, aside from Halle, she can, "never see change into adulthood anyway" (Morrison 163). Suggs brings seven

lives into the world. It is that many times she, “held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own- fingers she never saw become male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere” (163). However, with all the pain and loss she feels, Baby Suggs allows her one close son to work for her freedom. She lives with the fact that her son remains a slave in order for her to be free. This truth is what seems to make her a very different mother from Sethe, Halle’s wife. Clearly, Sethe can never stand to see her children as slaves.

Sethe is a slave of the Garner family and, although she lives under slave conditions that seem better than the “norm,” she must deal with many hardships as a mother in the face of slavery. In addition, she is a slave daughter whose mother also faces limitations and pain. Her link, or lack thereof, to her mother is the driving force behind the mother Sethe comes to be. When she is a child, her mother, who needs to work, leaves her to be breast-fed by another woman. This detail about her experience as a baby is very crucial to the way in which she needs to be with her own children. In her article, “Spitting Out the Seed: Ownership of Mother, Child, Breasts, Milk, and Voice in Toni Morrison’s Beloved,” Michelle Mock comments on Sethe’s needs as mother and daughter: “For Sethe, this circle is broken as a child and again as a mother, despite her persistent attempts to fulfill it and keep what rightfully belongs to her. Her enslaved condition prevents participation within this sacred circle. A slave cannot own- not her mother and not her child “ (117).

Because she feels a loss as a child, she is determined to do all that she can to be a mother who is present in her children’s lives. Sethe runs from slavery in order to ensure the freedom of her children. Despite her need to do what her mother does not, Sethe believes that her mother has no choice when she leaves her because after all, “nobody’s ma’am would run off and leave her daughter, would she?” (Morrison 240).

Unlike her mother and Baby Suggs, Sethe decides to run to

freedom for herself and her children. She endures extremely painful and difficult conditions as she travels at the end of her last pregnancy. Having sent her three children ahead, she is determined to get to them. For a mother who is not a slave, it is unthinkable to, as Jean Wyatt states in her article, "Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*", "send her nursing baby ahead of her to Ohio," as Sethe did (Wyatt 476). When she delivers Denver, she clearly faces unthinkable circumstances and danger due to slavery. Her desire to be with her children in a free environment means, "Sethe would not compromise with absence, overlooking the potentially life-threatening lack of food for her baby" (476). Slavery forces Sethe to make decisions that pit one evil against another and decide on the lesser of the two. Although she and her baby survive the birth and the trip, the risk and struggle remain. The relief and happiness she feels with her family in freedom is very brief. While facing the horror of her children being caught by the slave owner, she feels she has no choice. She decides to "take us all to the other side where my own ma'am is" (Morrison 240). To Sethe, death is a better fate than slavery for herself and her children.

The horrific decision that Sethe makes in the face of slavery, is an extreme example of the terrible struggles slave mothers face. This condition of motherhood that Morrison exemplifies in her novel is seen throughout the history of slavery. Frederick Douglass is a slave who escapes and lives his life in danger while advocating emancipation. He describes the relationship he has with his own mother in his book, My Bondage and My Freedom. He tells what it is like to be the son of his mother's master. His first-hand account demonstrates the hardships that come with the condition of being part of a slave family. As he recalls his mother he states: "I cannot say that I was very deeply attached to my mother; certainly not so deeply as I should have been had our relations in childhood been different. We were separated, according to the custom, when I was but an infant, and, of course, before I knew my mother from any one else" (Douglass 42).

He goes on to describe a time when he has a visit with his mother. This event, and the knowledge of her existence, makes him very happy. Unfortunately, the meeting is very short. He sadly recalls, “I dropped off to sleep, and waked in the morning only to find my mother gone” (45). Douglass and countless others experience the very pain and agony that Morrison portrays throughout her novel. The beautiful act of becoming a mother turns so tragic for Sethe due to slavery. Her family suffers terribly. Sethe seems particularly unique, in her struggle to defy the odds, keep her family together, and find a way for her children to be free. Unfortunately, despite her best efforts, she cannot avoid the destruction that slavery brings to her family. According to Wyatt, Sethe, “extends her rights over her own body- the right to use any means, including death, to protect herself from a return to slavery- to the ‘parts of her’ that are her children, folding them back into the maternal body in order to enter death as a single unit...” (Wyatt 476).

Typical mothers never imagine themselves committing Sethe’s unthinkable act. It is important to remember that Sethe and other slave mothers do not have the same experiences as those of typical mothers. They endure an added torture of the heart simply through their anatomy. They face added abuses such as rape, and the potential loss of a child or children. One of the most cherished parts of being a woman is a source of great pain and sorrow. Slaves are unfairly thrust into a life of injustice, unfairness, abuse, and loss. However, enslaved women-mothers and potential mothers- endure an added terror of slavery that is incomprehensible. In her novel Beloved, Toni Morrison illustrates the terrible, torturous, and painful elements of slavery. Within the story are countless examples of courage, strength, and character. Enslaved mothers are represented in women like Baby Suggs and Sethe. Throughout the story, the reader takes a journey with women who must make painful, difficult and perhaps, otherwise impossible decisions regarding their children. Sethe’s condition is the sad story of women like the mother of Frederick Douglass. His mother’s story reveals the traditional order of mothers and children who are separated due to slavery.

Individuals who are not slaves, particularly free women, are not walking in the shoes of women like Sethe. For these lifelong free mothers, they must make daily motherly decisions such as the best care, safest modes of transportation, and the best schools for their children. Many women will agree that decisions of that nature are difficult enough. However, these typical responsibilities of motherhood can never be compared to the impossible decisions of the enslaved mother. Given the terrible situation of a mother like Sethe, is anyone truly capable of judging her? Can anyone say without any doubt, that they blame her? Can any woman who faces the responsibility of sending her child into slavery say with conviction that they can never do what Sethe does?

Works Cited

Douglass, Frederick. My Bondage and My Freedom. New York; Penguin Books, 2003.

Mock, Michelle. "Spitting Out the Seed: Ownership of Mother, Child, Breasts, Milk, and Voice

in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." College Literature 3 (1996): 117-126. EBSCOhost. GCU

Library. 12 March 2011

Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York: Random House, 1987.

Wyatt, Jean. "Giving Body to the Word: The Maternal Symbolic in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*."

PMLA 108 (1993): 474-488. JSTOR. GCU Library. 12 March 2011

RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS IN JOYCE'S A PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

Because here's something else that's weird but true: in the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships. The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship -- be it JC or Allah, be it YHWH or the Wiccan Mother Goddess, or the Four Noble Truths, or some inviolable set of ethical principles -- is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.

-David Foster Wallace, "This Is Water"

In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Dedalus is divided between several conflicting ideas and related life choices. As Frank D. McConnell explains in his essay "Words and the Man: The Art of James Joyce," Stephen is frequently at a loss for where to turn for guidance. "*A Portrait* is the story of Stephen Dedalus, a poor Dublin intellectual who comes to dedicate himself to the life of art after exploring, and rejecting, other possible "fathers": family, country, and church" (180). Stephen is frequently in a state of cognitive dissonance between what he wants and what his family wants, what his experience tells him to be true and what his upbringing has dictated, and what he is religiously forbidden to do and what he desires. In these ways, the novel follows the formula of an archetypal bildungsroman.

Religion is explored throughout the text as a source of constant aggravation and contemplation for Stephen. The novel deals with religion in a uniquely critical fashion. It epitomizes the idea of Catholic guilt and fire-and-brimstone-type of religious ideology, while simultaneously exploring the affects of this mentality on individuals exposed to it. Stephen's ultimate rejection of religion, as well as the anguish he experiences along the way, indicates that the novel's stance is one of

fervent disapproval towards this manipulative method of employing belief. Stephen's journey is representative of what Joyce is conveying about religion in the text. The novel portrays religion as antithetical to natural, immutable feelings and compulsions that are paired with being human. For instance, Catholic ideology, which is the philosophy Stephen is exposed to throughout the novel, dictates that sexuality should only take place in marriage, and even then purely for reasons of procreation. This forceful manipulation suppresses desires that are innate to human emotion, desires that cannot be eradicated because they are biologically incontrovertible. Catholicism, as it is portrayed in the novel and as it exists in reality, is an experiment designed to fail because of unreasonable expectations. It is simply impossible to erase humanity from humans, and this is shown through Stephen's struggle between his ideology and his desires.

The central event in relation to religion in the novel is the infamous, painfully long hell sermon in Chapter III. Though Stephen's upbringing and education reinforced many religious principles that remain constant throughout the book, the sermon is a particular circumstance that is able to summarize and epitomize the typical rhetoric at the time. In her article "James Joyce's Hell-Fire Sermons," Elizabeth F. Boyd finds that many passages from the sermon closely resemble or even replicate actual sermons the Jesuits performed:

"The third chapter of *A Portrait* is the story of young Stephen Dedalus's encounter with the full force of that Catholic tradition. It helps the emotional intensity and the logic of the story that the Church should present hell fire in this classic form. It is not some modern, lukewarm, parochial version that Stephen must face, but the great tradition of the Church in full armor at greatest intensity" (571).

Boyd's statements serve as an appropriate summary for the third chapter's significance in relation to the rest of the novel. Stephen has to face this spiritual trauma in order to realize how the church functions in Ireland and his life.

At the beginning of the retreat, Father Arnall outlines exactly

what he expects from Stephen and his peers. "And remember, my dear boys, that we have been sent into this world for one thing and for one thing alone: to do God's holy will and to save our immortal souls. All else is worthless." (96) This quote serves as the foundation for the entire retreat, as well as the expectations that Father Arnall has for everyone involved. He literally states that religion is the only meaningful aspect of existence, and that anything else is entirely worthless. This type of extremist view leaves little room for compromise or varying philosophical growth, an integral aspect of adolescence. For ideas such as these, Stephen blames himself whenever his mind strays from the exact track that his superiors outline for him. He walks home with his friends, contemplating the words of the preacher until a "faint glimmer of fear began to pierce the fog of his mind" later that night. (98) As Alan Warren Friedman explains in his article "Stephen Dedalus's *Non Serviam*: Patriarchal and Performative Failure in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," Stephen takes every issue to a particularly deep level. He is never seen fooling around or participating in joyful boyhood mischief, but instead the novel chronicles trauma after trauma.

For each encounter with religion Stephen has, he frequently reflects on it some pages later, attempting to find an appropriate compromise between the ideology of the church and the desires in his heart. In his essay "Towards a Critical Text of James Joyce: *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," Hans Gabler calls Stephen's inner thoughts "intensely painful self-torture" (39). He is consistently unable to find any compromise, leading to intense bouts with guilt and self-loathing. These events imply that the religious philosophy he is exposed to is antithetical to his needs, bodily, spiritual, and otherwise. In his essay "The White Peace of the Altar: White Imagery in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*," Steven R. Centola further supports this notion about Stephen Dedalus: "Ignoring lessons from his past, Stephen hopes for a new life in the Church, even though that life necessitates that he repress his feelings and extinguish his desires" (99).

The sermon, at its manipulative core, is designed to scare lis-

teners into obeying the rules of the church. This is shown through the specific word choice and rhetoric of the speaker. “It is impossible for any human being to do that which offends so deeply the divine majesty, that which is punished by an eternity of agony, that which crucifies again the Son of God and makes a mockery of Him.” (117) This loaded statement puts an extraordinary amount of weight on the shoulders of the listeners. Words such as “eternity” give the statements intended gravity, denoting that the fate of everyone’s eternal soul is on the line with every decision in their lives. It demands that people ignore their instincts and critical thinking skills if they aren’t synonymous with God’s law. Also adding gravity to the statements is the usage of words that cut deeper than simply stating the case. For instance, Father Anall can simply say that sins offend the Lord, but instead the sins offend “so deeply.” Distinctions such as these present the very dramatic oratory in the passage. It quickly moves from a typical sermon to a speech in the realm of willful manipulation.

In addition, it explains that a single deviation from the law of God would be interpreted by the deity as a direct insult, punishable with “an eternity of agony.” It denotes that even if one is completely devoted to the religion, mistakes are completely unacceptable. This seems at odds with human nature at its core. Common phrases such as “I’m only human” make humanity synonymous with mistakes. It puts Stephen in a position where transgressions, whether minimal or incalculable, cause his soul to be “foul with sin.” The orator specifically mentions that even cardinal sins are so offensive to God that they cannot be forgiven or forgotten. It seems extremely unreasonable that even single mistakes result in an afterlife as torturous and hellacious as described in the sermon. It serves to further a platitude that dictates humans be so virtuous that sinning is inevitable, because it’s practically impossible not to make a mistake even when one is completely devoted to this ideology.

As if the introductory statements weren’t enough to communicate the unrelenting hopelessness of a sinner’s future, Father Anall details what to expect when spending an eternity in hell. He presents

many unforgettable and excruciating details, such as the efficiency of the lake of fire: "...but the lake of fire in hell is boundless, shoreless, and bottomless. It is on record that the Devil himself, when asked the question by a certain soldier, was obliged to confess that if a whole mountain were thrown into the burning ocean of hell it would be burned up in an instant like a piece of wax." (106) These statements follow the themes and rhetoric shown previously. The lake of fire in hell as described here is completely unfathomable to the human mind. Father Anall uses every conceivable geometric exaggeration when describing this location. In these descriptions, the true motives of the Catholic church are revealed yet again. In its horror being inconceivable, it becomes obvious that this is yet another scare tactic employed to manipulate the boys at the retreat into leading pious lives. He uses words that denote and connote a quality of unfathomable size, such as "boundless" and "shoreless." It is designed to trigger images of a seemingly endless pit of fire that stretches far beyond the reaches of sight. In addition, instead of repeating the word "lake" he switches to "ocean," which is obviously a much bigger body of water. Subsequently, the reader is forced to imagine this huge body of water instead of simply imagining a lake, which can have bounds or limits. This further adds to the notion of exaggeration in this quote. Essentially, the descriptions are so horrific and unspeakable that the orator means to convey that living a pious life is entirely worth avoiding this unthinkable horror.

The idea of scare tactics is further supported in Paul Riquelme's article "Uncoiling the Snakes of Ireland in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: From the Souls in Hell to Lacoon: "During Stephen's adolescence, the Church that ministers to his soul encourages him to imagine both the origin of sin and its consequences as viperous." (134) This article is particularly interesting because it follows the image of snakes or snake-like descriptions in the novel, and it equates the denial of religion within Stephen to how Catholicism views the serpent. In this way, Stephen's feelings of inadequacy and guilt in regard to religion are further indications of the completely one-sided, manipulative nature that it uti-

lizes. Catholicism as it's portrayed in the novel would paint these desires as snake-like, but they are not in fact the snake that corrupts the minds of the innocent. Instead they epitomize the natural desires and conclusions of a free minded individual.

The sermon in the Chapter III leaves the reader to decipher what Joyce was actually conveying when writing about religion in this fashion. In his essay "James Joyce: Moralism," Ellsworth Mason argues that Joyce's criticisms are constructive:

"Another good example of Joyce's detailed moral commentary has repeatedly been used to brand him a blasphemer and Anti-Christ. Catholics generally take Joyce to be anti-Catholic, gnawing on the hand that reared him, but his criticisms of the Church are always broad criticisms of Christianity, just as his criticisms of Dublin are directed at the whole of modern civilization" (200).

As shown in the quote, Joyce isn't arguing against religion as much as he is showing the effects of how some use religion to further their various discriminatory views. In many cases, religion demands that people repress the feelings and desires that epitomize what it means to be human. This is seen throughout *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* as Stephen Dedalus is thrust into a spiritual world that wants to extinguish his life choices, claiming that any pursuit that does not directly involve his deity is utterly useless. Stephen's journey is emblematic of anyone who has had to mend opposing views into a blended philosophy, and particularly of how religious values often demand expectations impossible to meet.

Works Cited

Boyd, Elizabeth. "James Joyce's Hell-Fire Sermons." *The Johns Hopkins University Press* LXXV (1960): 561-571. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Apr. 2011.

Buttigieg, Joseph. "The Struggle against Meta (Phantasma)-Physics: Nietzsche, Joyce and the "Excess of History"." *boundary* 2 9/10

(1981): 187-207. Print.

Centola, Steven. "The White Peace of the Altar: White Imagery in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*." *South Atlantic Review* 50 (1985): 93-106. Print.

Gabler, Hans. "Towards a Critical Text of James Joyce's: 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'." *Studies in Bibliography* 27 (1974): 1-53. Print.

Mason, Ellsworth. "James Joyce: Moralism." *Twentieth Century Literature* 1 (1956): 196-206. Print.

McConnell, Frank. "Words and the Man: The Art of James Joyce." *The Wilson Quarterly* Winter (1982): 176-187. JSTOR. Web. 20 Apr. 2011.

Toolan, Michael. "Analyzing Conversation in Fiction: The Christmas Dinner Scene in Joyce's 'Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'." *Poetics Today* 8.2 (1987): 393-416. JSTOR. Web. 20 Apr. 2011.

Wallace, David Foster. *This Is Water*. New York: Little, Brown, 2009. Print.

AN EXPLORATION OF DR. SUSAN CALVIN'S ALLEGIANCE TO HUMANITY

I, Robot by Isaac Asimov is a collection of short stories telling of the interactions between humans and robots. The author particularly emphasizes the relationship the character Dr. Susan Calvin, a robopsychologist, has with the latter. Throughout the stories that she occupies a pivotal role in, she is presented as an individual who is adamantly in favor of the construction, continuation, and advancement of the manufactured beings. She heralds them as a "cleaner better breed" than people. However, while Dr. Calvin is largely presented as a person who perceives humankind as inferior, there are moments in the novel where she expresses otherwise. Through her actions and behaviors influenced by her discourses and experiences with both men and robots, she reveals herself as a person who is more concerned with the existence of people than the welfare of machines.

Dr. Calvin displays apparent contempt towards robots and preference for humans when she becomes involved with the mind-reading robot Herbie. When she questions whether he knows of the feelings and affections she harbors towards the man Milton Ashe, the machine tells her, "But of course, I know about it, Dr. Calvin. You think of it always, so how can I help but know?" (116). The "it" he speaks of refers to Dr. Calvin's love for Mr. Ashe. The assertion that she "think[s] of it always" suggests that her love is something she is frequently preoccupied with. Herbie discloses to her and the reader in this passage that she is capable of caring for another person. She never claims nor is she shown as being in love with a robot. Her most tender passions are reserved for people. After she realizes she has opened up emotionally she asks him, "What do you know about it anyway, you... you machine. I'm just a specimen to you; an interesting bug with a peculiar mind spread-eagled for inspection" (117). Dr. Calvin is implying that Herbie does not understand her feelings when she says, "What do you know about it anyway, you...you machine." She is clarifying the difference between

humans and robots in the aspect that all humans have emotions and therefore empathize with other humans, while robots, being stripped of this ability cannot emotionally indentify with them. She stresses the impossibility for him to make sense of what and how she feels for Milton. In exposing herself as a "specimen" available for "inspection" by Herbie, she is portraying people as victims, demanding sympathy for them, and presenting machines as uncaring creatures that utilize humans for the sole purpose of study. Dr. Calvin does not exercise sympathy for Herbie, nor for any other robot she encounters.

Susan's reaction to Milton Ashe's revelation demonstrates that she has feelings for humans which she does not have for robots. After Ashe tells her that he is marrying another woman, the narrator observes how "Susan Calvin motioned him away weakly... Things had begun spinning again... The words were a mumble, as she stumbled blindly out the door. It had happened with the sudden catastrophe of a dream—and with all the unreal horror of a dream" (127). Her hearing Ashe's words as a "mumble" illustrates the disbelief, or refusal to believe that his being engaged to another person is true. Moreover, the "spinning" of "things" suggests that she is made dizzy and weary by his words. The narrator implies she is experiencing heartbreak, and she cannot physically function properly nor maintain mental calm as a result. It is because she loves Ashe, a person like herself, that she behaves this way. She does not show or feel love for Herbie. Machines occupy a secondary significance, if any, when the matters of Dr. Calvin's emotions are involved. The narrator makes known Susan's frustration with Herbie when she tries to cognitively collect herself: "Just how she came to her senses, she never knew—but it was like passing from a world of unreality to one of harsh sunlight. She pushed him away from her, pushed hard against the steely arm, and her eyes were wide"(128). The state of "unreality" she occupies before she gathers her mind is one in which she is crest-fallen. A man, and not a robot induces her to feel so. When she "push[es]" Herbie, she "push[es]" him "hard;" this action informs the reader that she is angry with the robot. Dr. Calvin does not physically

hurt people in this fashion, but she seems to hold no reservations when she tries to harm Herbie, a machine.

Dr. Calvin's further maltreatment of Herbie reveals that she cares very little for robots. She tells the characters Dr. Lanning and Dr. Bogert, "He knew of all this. That... that devil knows everything—including what went wrong in his assembly" (132). The word "this" refers to the machine's knowledge of all the humans' inner workings, which he utilizes to manufacture lies and half-truths to tell the characters in an effort to make them happy. Her defining Herbie as a "devil" removes him from the high pedestal she establishes for robots, bringing him on a level beneath people. One may infer that he encapsulates evil from this contention. Dr. Calvin's interrogation of Herbie causes him to break down. She tells Lanning and Bogert when they blame her of killing him, "I confronted him with an insoluble dilemma, and he broke down. You can scrap him now—because he'll never speak again... He deserve[s] it" (134). Herbie's inability to find a way to make people happy without lying—the "insoluble dilemma"—shows that he is a failed robot. He does not succeed in helping mankind, and inflicts more pain upon them instead, although unintentionally. Susan's suggestion to "scrap him" upholds the notion that she views Herbie, and perhaps all robots as expendable. She does not advocate the same to be done to humans.

Dr. Calvin acts indifferently towards machines during the investigation of a missing NS-2 model robot with a modified First Law positronic brain.¹ To resolve the issue of the lost robot, she proposes to Major-general Kallner to "Destroy all sixty-three, and make an end of it." (141).

The First Law of Robotics states, "A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm." The positronic brains of all robots have this and the other two Laws of Robotics firmly impressed upon them. However in the case of NS-2, the First Law has been changed slightly so that the robot only "may not harm a human being." The rest of the First Law regarding humans being injured as result of a machine's inaction has not been programmed into NS-2's brain.

For a person who claims to be an advocate of machines, this resolution suggests otherwise. Her recommendation to “destroy all” shows that she places no value on each individual robot existence, and proffers that as a collective they should be rid of. Although her idea is not realized, there is an implication in this statement that she does not want to be bothered with the arduous task of finding the seemingly unrecoverable machine. She desires to expend little effort tracking it down.

Dr. Calvin displays some concern for the human race in a conversation she shares with Dr. Bogert. When she discusses the modification of the First Law in the missing Nestor 10, she tells him, “Physically, and, to an extent, mentally, a robot—any robot—is superior to human beings. What makes him slavish, then? *Only the First Law!* Why, without it, the first order you tried to give a robot would result in your death” (145). Although she is acknowledging a machine’s physical prowess as being superior to that of a person, in the mental faculty, she still finds that people generally have the upper hand. Her words “to an extent” indicate that only in exceptional scenarios, and in some cognitive offices are robots indeed smarter. She heralds humans as having a greater intellectual capacity, asserting that machines are largely inferior beings in this respect. Her mentioning of mankind’s ability to render robots “slavish” with the First Law of robotics further establishes the former as the dominant race. Robots do not have this advantage to mechanically or scientifically ingrain laws within the human mind. Dr. Calvin argues that “without” a First Law, humans potentially risk “death” at the hands of machines if they try and deliver them a command. Through this statement, she is conveying a sense of concern for the fate of all future generations of people. It is apparent she does not want her kind to meet an inevitable end. In ensuring that each robot has the First Law built into its positronic core, she believes humans will continue to exercise control and subordinate their mechanical creations. Susan sides with the preservation of humanity.

The robopsychologist further communicates her fear of unpredictable robots, showing that she is less afraid of people. Dr. Calvin

says to Bogert, “I don’t want any unbalanced robots in existence. We have one Nestor that’s definitely unbalanced, eleven more potentially so, and sixty-two normal robots are being subjected to an unbalanced environment. The only absolute safe method is complete destruction” (164). While she can be read here as being cold-hearted regarding her preferred action of “complete destruction,” she is instead revealing a sense of urgency and worry over the adverse consequences the unstable machines may have on people. She is clearly not a proponent of human genocide, but she vehemently demands an annihilation of robots.

Susan Calving attributes her finding of Nestor 10 to the mental supremacy of mankind. She discloses to Major-general Kallner, “And just for a moment [Nestor 10] forgot, or didn’t want to remember, that other robots might be more ignorant than human beings. His very superiority caught him” (173). She presents not only to Kallner, but to the reader as well, that machines are capable of having egos, or a sense of self-importance which results in their underestimating of the minds of people. As a result of this “ignorance,” humans are still in the position of power and authority over them. By acknowledging robots as beings given to error, “unbalance,” and imperfection, Dr. Calvin is wrong in her definition of them as the “cleaner, better, breed.” In both her interactions with Herbie and Nestor 10, she a human, mentally overwhelms them. Though she does not explicitly divulge her love for humanity, she still infers that she champions people as the presiding race.

In *I, Robot*, Asimov uses the character of Susan Calvin as both a proponent of robots and humans. Through placing her in difficult scenarios demanding the use of her brain, her intelligence, the reader is permitted to interpret her as a protector of people. In showing Dr. Calvin coming to terms with the flaws of mankind’s mechanical creations, the reader also realizes the imperfections inherent within robots. Humans are depicted as the more important and stronger species from the perspectives of Susan and Asimov’s audience.

Works Cited

Asimov, Isaac. *I, Robot*. 1950. New York: Bantam Dell, 2004. Print

LOVE, OBSESSION, AND DEFINITION OF THE SELF:

ADAM'S MOTIVES IN MILTON'S PARADISE LOST

As complex and intricate as the preceding books of *Paradise Lost* are, the most important event in the poem occurs in Book IX: the fall. The entirety of *Paradise Lost* either lays the foundation before the fall or shows the effects of it. Even the title references this singular event, indicating its significance in the poem as well as theology in general. Adam's motivations for participation in the fall are fairly clear, but his reasons imply larger issues about his psychology and Milton's portrayal of the first marriage. Adam's love for Eve transcends normal behavior into territory of unhealthy obsession and frequently delusion. Adam defines himself and his purpose through Eve and her actions. Adam's actions are completely devoid of autonomy and free will, further complicating the casual misogyny throughout *Paradise Lost* because Milton's Adam is not a sign of strength and fortitude but instead submission and dependence.

Before even examining Adam's decision to taste the fruit, it is necessary to establish Adam's obsessive relationship with Eve. Adam's descriptions of Eve characterize his extremely hyperbolic emotions towards her. He typically begins addressing Eve with several lines explicating his devotion to her and attributes this to her perfection as a living being. For instance, in their conversation about taking separate ways in their duties that day, Adam addresses Eve by saying "Sole Eve, associate sole, to me beyond / compare above all creatures dear..." (Book IX, 227-228). Here Adam essentially names Eve the most wonderful creature on Earth, in his mind. In isolating this one quotation, this may seem romantic or affable, but the indication that Adam is too invested in Eve appears when accounting for how often this occurs. In the next instance where Adam addresses Eve, he says "Daughter of God and man, immortal Eve, / For such thou art, from sin and blame entire..." (Book IX, 291-292). This quote accounts for Adam's notion that

Eve represents perfection. He finds “sin and blame” to be unfathomable in relation to Eve. This occurs a mere 60 lines later in the poem, within the same conversation as the previous quote. The ubiquity of Adam’s affection indicates his obsession but also his unrealistic expectations. When he says that Eve is not capable of blame or sin, Adam also shows a fundamental lack of understanding of her. Adam is taking Eve’s personality and appearance and projecting his ideal partner onto it. If he had a more accurate understanding of Eve, he would realize that she is capable of sin, and thus the fall comes as more of a shock to Adam and has a more devastating effect on their relationship.

Directly before Adam falls, he defines himself according to his relationship with Eve. He says:

“So forcible within my heart I feel
The bond of nature draw me to my own,
My own in thee, for what thou art is mine;
Our state cannot be severed, we are one,
One flesh; to lose thee were to lose myself” (Book IX, 955-959).

Adam’s devotion transcends romantic love into a higher concept: his definition of himself and his companion. He uses a number of connective images in this quote, alluding to the nature of their relationship in the transformation of two separate entities into one combined entity. Adam’s definition of self has little to do with himself. It is a reflection of his relationship with Eve. When he says “to lose thee were to lose myself,” he is literally saying that he would not have a concept of himself without Eve. The loss of Eve would result in his loss of identity. This is reinforced elsewhere in the quote, such as when he says he is “drawn to his own” but his own is within Eve. Not only does this further establish his extreme attraction to Eve, but it also shows his process of understanding himself is through Eve.

Adam’s dependence is further supported by Michael Schoenfeldt in his essay “Obedience and Autonomy in *Paradise Lost*.” He writes “Adam feels they would be stronger together; Eve feels that her strength cannot be manifested unless they are apart. Adam even characterizes

his separation from Eve with a surprisingly violent verb – sever – suggesting the near-physical pain it causes him” (369). As Schoenfeldt explains here, Adam is extraordinarily dependent on Eve while Eve desires to transcend her role and to find her strength independent from Adam. Essentially, Milton switches the roles that one would expect from the genders. Adam is dependent, loving, and nurturing, never desiring to be separated from his companion and constantly doting over her perfection. Eve is independent, trying to climb the hierarchy and find a place for herself that is more powerful than her current position. As David Mikics says concisely in his essay “Miltonic Marriage and The Challenge to History in *Paradise Lost*,” “For Adam the forbidden, mysterious object that his life depends on lies within Eve; for Eve in Book 9, for a few crucial and disastrous moments, this object is the fruit” (32). Adam’s lack of desire to challenge authority and push boundaries can be seen as weak and potentially emasculating, while Eve unabashedly defies authority. As much of *Paradise Lost* is casually misogynistic, such as blaming Eve for the fall of humanity and saying that she was weak to be corrupted, what is to be said for Adam’s complete lack of courage? Perhaps Milton’s switching of genders was not intentional, but Adam dependence on Eve causes just as many issues for humanity as Eve’s tasting of the fruit.

Because Adam needs Eve for understanding himself and his world, the fall becomes an event guided by fatalism. Adam says:

“And me with thee hath ruined, for with thee
Certain my resolution is to die;
How can I live without thee, how forgo
Thy sweet converse and love so dearly joined,
To live gain in these wild woods forlorn?” (Book IX, 906-910)

In this quote, Adam shows no indecision at all when deciding to fall with Eve. As soon as Eve reveals her sin to him, he realizes that he must partake in the same sin to remain with her. The implications of this are staggering, especially for a poem where the stated intention is to “justify the ways of God to men.” In participating in the fall with Eve,

Adam shows that he prefers to stay bound to Eve rather than obey God's will. This also means that his loyalty lies more with his relationship than with his creator, which is a testament to how much he loves Eve. Adam does not have any desire to dissent to God, but it is necessary because his priority is remaining with his companion.

Considering Adam's dependence on Eve, free will seems entirely absent here. Adam's love for Eve is so strong that there is never any question of what Adam will do once Eve tastes of the fruit. His inability to separate himself from his partner forces him into a place of psychological fatalism. Arguably, free will is the ability to make a decision where all solutions can be given equal weight and contemplation. In addition, the situation and environment allows for any decision to be made. Adam does not possess that here. His decision is immediate and instinctual. He is not capable of contemplating other choices because he could never be separated from Eve. For this reason, it's difficult to really pinpoint when exactly Adam falls. The obvious answer is when he tastes of the fruit, but because of the lack of free will in Adam's position and psychology, his fate was decided far before that happened. Adam's fall occurs when Eve tastes of the fruit. With prior knowledge of Adam's proclaimed devotion for his companion and their future together, Adam's fate was cemented when Eve essentially chose their future for them. Adam would follow Eve to wherever she wanted to go because he cannot bear to be separate from her. He followed her in allowing humanity to fall and disobeying God, and that's the highest level of devotion that one can fathom in a Miltonic universe. Therefore, Adam's fall happened at the same time as Eve's fall because remaining with Eve, even in banishment and disgrace, is the only decision Adam would make for any circumstance.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Adam is extremely dependent on his companion Eve. His dependence is not one of normal co-existence, but instead a continuous inability to fathom a world without her. Milton switches traditional gender roles as Adam frequently acts with submission and dependence, following Eve in her whims of in-

dependence and challenging divine authority. Adam's psychological constraints also indicate that free will is not possible for him, as his only motive is continuing a life with Eve. Milton's motives in portraying the first parents this way are difficult to decipher, but his gender politics are alternately radical and conventional at different parts of the poem. Milton's frequent endorsement of free will in the text is brought into question considering how many of his characters are trapped in mind-sets that will only yield defiance. Adam and Eve's separate desires and psychologies are not uncommon, but they are enormously constraining. A cynical reading of this poem would suggest that all of humanity's decisions are immutable because they are only capable of one resolution, and unfortunately that's not an unreasonable interpretation. *Paradise Lost* forces readers to struggle with how much is truly in their control, as wherever God's divine order isn't dictating the future, fatalistic psychological desire certainly is.

Works Cited

Mikics, David. "Miltonic Marriage and the Challenge to History in *Paradise Lost*." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46.1 (2004): 20-48. *Project MUSE*. Web. 27 Nov. 2011.

Milton, John, and Alastair Fowler. *Paradise Lost*. Harlow, England: Longman, 2007. Print.

Schoenfeldt, Michael. "Obedience and Autonomy in *Paradise Lost*." *A Companion to Milton* (2001): 363-79. Print.

THE FEMININE ESSENCE AND IRIS MURDOCH'S A SEVERED HEAD

In Iris Murdoch's 1961 novel *A Severed Head*, the romantic entanglements of several refined, middle-class Londoners are satirically depicted in order to reveal that these individuals are not as civilized as might be imagined. The protagonist, a wine merchant named Martin Lynch-Gibbon, is told that his wife is leaving him for another man, setting forth a chain of events that will expose him to lust, adultery, incest and an emotional re-education. However, the main female figures in the novel – Antonia Lynch-Gibbon, Martin's wife, Georgie Hands, his mistress, and Honor Klein, a strange, demonic figure that Martin finds himself inexplicably drawn to – can be further illuminated through the theories of French feminist and existential philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir's 1949 treatise *The Second Sex*, particularly its section "Woman: Myth and Reality," outlines the idea that "essence does not precede existence," rejecting the notion of a pre-determined female spirit and instead arguing that the 'myth' or otherness of women is one that has been constructed to serve men and a patriarchal ordering of society (1263). In *A Severed Head*, the feminine essences of Antonia and Georgie can be seen as constructed through their relationships with the various male characters, as well as a distinctive emphasis on their heads and hair. On the other hand, Honor, as an extremely androgynous figure, is depicted as entirely independent and is focused on as a strong physical presence. Ultimately, Honor's 'severed head' more closely reaches Beauvoir's goal of a woman becoming "a full human being" (1273). This allows her and Martin to achieve a successful relationship as equals at the end of the novel.

A Severed Head features many inversions to gender and sexuality, pointing to an examination of their assumed boundaries throughout the work. For example, at one point Martin discusses his feelings as being "of no normal intensity" and "homosexual" for his wife's lover, Palmer Anderson (114). A generalized confusion of gender

can also be seen in the names of Antonia and Georgie, both of which are derived from those of men. Iris Murdoch herself is known for writing from a masculine viewpoint, as seen in such novels as *Under the Net*, *The Black Prince*, and in *A Severed Head*, Martin takes on this role (Turner 117). Thus, Murdoch performs her own gendered inversion, seemingly reflecting her view that as men and women reach a higher spiritual level, they become more androgynous (Grimshaw 165).

Although Murdoch is not considered a feminist author and did not regard herself as one, she openly admired Simone de Beauvoir's heavily influential feminist treatise *The Second Sex* (Grimshaw 74). In this work, particularly the section "Women: Myth and Reality," Beauvoir argues that women have been reduced to objects and seen only as "an absolute Other" to men, losing their subjectivity as a result (1266). In addition, she sees that women have been endowed with the quality of "mystery" through the myth of the "Eternal feminine" and are thus seen as "unique and changeless" (1265, 1268). As an existentialist, Beauvoir argues that existence precedes essence, or that one becomes a woman as opposed to being born one, and sees that people are shaped by their choices. However, she views the myth of woman as having become "endowed as absolute truth," leading women to internalize this ideology and see themselves as Other (1265). Ultimately, Beauvoir argues that the myth of femininity should be discarded in order for men to regard women as "fellow creatures," and for relationships between the sexes to be founded on concrete reality instead of idealization (1272).

In *A Severed Head*, the head can be seen as representing the construction of the 'feminine essence' that Beauvoir outlines. The novel is filled with various forms of 'head-hunters'; Alexander, Martin's brother, is an artist fond of 'collecting' heads through sculpting them, and Palmer works as a psychoanalyst. Both men serve as guiding forces and lovers to the main 'feminine' figures in the novel, Antonia and Georgie, and in particular, Alexander's role as the maker of heads supports the idea of gender as a construct. For example, while Alexander sees that "heads are us most of all" and that "the best part of being

God would be making the heads,” Martin expresses that he does not like “a sculpted head alone” and sees it as representing something incomplete (43). In addition, when Martin interrupts Alexander and Georgie engrossed in conversation, a precursor to their romantic relationship, Alexander touches her head and asks if hers “was the head [he] was waiting for” (103). This implies that she is an object to be possessed and that he can only see her as a ‘head,’ or the feminine myth, as opposed to a complete human being.

The creation of femininity visible through Alexander’s sculpting is also evident in Martin’s impressions of Antonia and Georgie. For example, he describes them both in terms that invoke the “eternal Feminine” described by Beauvoir, calling Georgie a “river goddess” and seeing Antonia as possessing an untouchable, inhuman glow (9). In addition, Martin is constantly observing, describing, and touching their hair, an extension of their highly gendered heads. Martin even admits to preferring “women with long hair,” and both Antonia and Georgie’s tresses are illustrated as “heavy,” implying that their hair overwhelms the rest of their bodies (16, 8).

In addition, the hair of both women is affected by the actions of the men around them, showing the loss of subjectivity that Beauvoir depicts in *The Second Sex*. Throughout the novel, Antonia is shown as passive and positioned by the actions of the men around her. For example, she decides to go back to Martin only after he attacks Palmer, and her love for Alexander is rekindled after he becomes engaged to Georgie. Her hair seems to respond in a similar manner, changing in accordance with male action. For example, she is described as possessing “graying gold hair” when Palmer is distant after Martin catches him incestuously with Honor, only to have Martin ponder later that “I could not think how I had seen her as growing old” (139, 186). Similarly, Georgie attempts to commit suicide and cuts off her lengthy tresses in response to both Martin and Alexander rejecting her. However, this reveals the truly constructed nature of Georgie’s feminine identity and she is described as appearing “anonymous” and “having quite

lost the semblance of her usual self” when Martin finds her without her hair (172). While he describes her in “pieces,” noticing her breasts and legs, once her hair is cut off he can no longer “apprehend her as a whole” (173, 177). This shows that he can only understand her as an essence, as opposed to a human being. In addition, when Georgie gets an abortion, he chooses not to speak of it afterwards and is unaware of how this has affected her emotionally. This exemplifies what Beauvoir described as men being “unable to penetrate [a woman’s] special experience through the working of any sympathy,” using her ‘mysteriousness’ as an excuse to not communicate with her (1268).

On the other hand, Honor Klein, as an exceedingly androgynous figure, is depicted as a fully physical force and represents a more integrated person. Her distinctive androgyny is portrayed throughout the novel: she is described as carrying “too many guns” and “seeming the female Don in person,” being “very nearly ugly,” “animal like and repellent” and even having “black hairs on her upper lip” (83, 7, 95, 55, 111). This creates a highly masculine image, one that is in direct opposition with the decidedly feminine descriptions of Antonia and Georgie. She is a more integrated gendered figure, proving that the “secret essence of femininity” Beauvoir protests to is indeed based on choices and is not inherent (1270). For example, Martin identifies the moment he began to love Honor as when he “glimpsed the curving seam of her stocking,” emphasizing not that she is feminine but instead exaggerating her indeterminate gender (125). In addition, while she could be grouped with Alexander and Palmer as a ‘headhunter,’ being an anthropologist who studies primitive peoples, she might be viewed as more of a decapitator who separates the myth of the head from the reality of the body. This can be seen when she, using a Japanese samurai sword, cuts Palmer and Antonia’s napkins into two. The slashing of the napkins can be seen as representing Honor criticizing the civilized façade created by them, and she is described as literally “decapitating” one (97). This implies that Honor is separating the head, or the constructed feminine essence, and the body, or a person’s reality.

As a result, the book seems to endorse the ‘severed head’ found in its title, or a rejection of the constructed feminine myth in favor of a gender based on reality and choice. For example, Honor’s body is described in great detail and she has a particularly strong physical presence. This can be seen when Martin drives her home from the train station and says that “her body sagged and jolted beside me like a headless sack” with her head hanging outside the window (57). Her full body is also portrayed very clearly when Martin catches her and Palmer in a scene of incest, showing her as more of a complete body as opposed to simply a head. This draws a parallel between incest and androgyny, both of which defy cultural norms. As a result, Honor symbolizes the transcendence that Murdoch found in androgyny (Grimshaw 167). Subsequently, her relationship with Martin becomes a model for what Beauvoir saw as an ideal one, involving “the mutual recognition of free beings who confirm one another’s freedom” (1266). Martin himself realizes that his inexplicable attraction for Honor is far different than the “warm and radiant” love he has for Antonia and the “tender and sensuous and gay” love he has for Georgie (126). His love for her is not romanticized due to the cultural transgressions she represents, which allows him to seek a relationship with an equal and takes away her mystery. Martin views her as “touchingly mortal” with her “demon splendor quenched,” and as a result, their final encounter becomes one between two equal human beings, as Beauvoir endorses (198).

Iris Murdoch’s 1961 novel *A Severed Head*, depicting the life of Martin Lynch-Gibbon after his wife leaves him for another man, illustrates that those thought to be civilized do not always act as such. Through illustrating the intertwined relationships of several high-class Londoners, Murdoch reveals their barbarism through portraying adultery, incest, and obsessive love. However, the main female figures featured in the novel, Antonia, Georgie, and Honor, can be greater understood through the writings of existentialist and feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir’s seminal work *The Second Sex*, specifically its chapter “Woman: Myth and Reality,” outlines the idea that the ‘myth’ of

the feminine essence is one that has been created to serve patriarchal society, and as a result it is not natural, pre-determined, or necessary. In *A Severed Head*, the essences of Antonia and Georgie can be seen as constructed through their relationships with male characters, displayed through an emphasis on their heads and hair. Honor, as an androgynous figure, is shown as a 'decapitator' of the constructed feminine head and thus entirely independent. Ultimately, Honor comes to represent what Beauvoir called "a full human being," and as a result she is able to develop a relationship with Martin based on equality.

Works Cited

Beauvoir, Simone de. "The Second Sex." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Vincent B. Leitch. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2010.

Grimshaw, Tammy. *Sexuality, Gender, and Power in Iris Murdoch's Fiction*. Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005.

Murdoch, Iris. *A Severed Head*. New York: Penguin, 1961.

Turner, Jack. "Murdoch vs. Freud in *A Severed Head* and Other Novels." *Literature and Psychology* 36.1-2 (1990): 110-21.

CONTRIBUTOR BIO'S

Amy Woody, Editor-In-Chief, Westfield State University

Amy's life mostly consists of mommying, studying, and working, but she occasionally finds time to pretend she's a master wordsmith and partake in the glory of being an "English nerd." She is a graduate student at Westfield State University and hopes to one day be a college professor.

Crystal Lanucha, Assistant Editor, Westfield State University

Crystal likes squirrels (and sometimes English) but mostly squirrels and poems about squirrels.

Rachel Van Campenhout, Layout Editor, Assistant Poetry Editor, Duquesne University

Rachel Van Campenhout is a senior at Duquesne University with majors in English and Philosophy. She has worked on staff for :lexicon, Duquesne's Literary and Arts Journal, for four years and has served as layout editor for the past two. She is honored to be a part of creating another quality collection of the written and visual arts.

Lyndon Seitz, Poetry Editor, Westfield State University

Lyndon Seitz is a sophomore from Westfield State University who was thrilled to be the poetry editor for Mind Murals. Why, you ask? It is because he loves poetry as the sun loves the moon (ok, that's terrible, let's try again). It is because he loves poetry as he loves life itself (nope, that's no good). It is because he loves poetry like the best simile ever created involving someone loving something.

Jessica Thelen, Assistant Poetry Editor, Westfield State University

Jessica (JT) lives in the Ely Library and spends her free time reading, writing, going to concerts and listening to Phish.

Austin Hall, Assistant Poetry Editor, Westfield State University

Austin has a lot of things to say when walking down the street and listening to his iPod, but quickly forgets it when he sits down to actually write.

Walter Merryman, Prose Editor, Bowling Green State University

Walter Merryman is a senior at Bowling Green State University majoring in English with a minor in American Culture Studies. He enjoys studying J.D. Salinger and Friedrich Nietzsche. He spends his free time playing guitar, waiting for the next season of Dexter, and thinking about Star Wars. He has applied to various graduate programs in English and American Studies and anxiously checks the mail every day.

Amanda Hebson, Assistant Prose Editor, Westfield State University

Amanda is a voracious reader, and lover of dinosaurs. These two things tend to distract her from school work and friends but somehow she always pulls through in the end.

Allison Bennett, Assistant Prose Editor, Westfield State University

Allison Bennett enjoys fantasy novels and movies, and lives by the expression "I'll sleep when I'm dead." She holds a special place in her heart for science fiction and loves listening to her relatives tell old family stories. She loves animals, particularly dogs, horses, and tigers, and likes taking long walks in the woods. Her favorite movies are *Labyrinth*, *The Lord of the Rings* Trilogy (she's watched all 3 Extended Editions back-to-back-to-back), *10 Things I Hate About You*, *The Muppets*, and *Finding Forrester*. She is known amongst her Sigma friends for her awesome hats, particularly her fedora.

Jared Senatore, Assistant Prose Editor, Westfield State University

*Through no fault of his own, Jared was unable to get me his bio in time for publication. So, I thought I would just take some space to tell the reader that besides helping us with our prose section, Jared also

designed the cover art, and is an all around cool person. –Amy Woody

Leigh Koonce, Academic Editor, Shepherd University

H.S. Leigh Koonce is a senior English and Political Science double major at Shepherd University. He serves as the President of the university's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta and as the Senior Literary Editor for *Sans Merci*, the campus literary magazine. His favorite authors include James Joyce, Neal Cassady, T.S. Eliot, and Denis Johnson. He has found working with Mind Murals to be a thoroughly rewarding and enjoyable experience.

Brad Phillips, Walsh University

Brad Phillips is a senior majoring in English at Walsh University, with minors in writing and creative writing. He is editor of the university's literary magazine, *Raison d'être*, and president of the Walsh Literary Society. At the 2012 Sigma Tau Delta Convention, he presented a critical essay on a work of Amy Lowell. His poetry often examines nature, and is influenced by American and British modernism. He intends to pursue a career in editing, while continuing to write creatively and critically.

John Alex Barnes, Shepherd University

As a senior, creative writing major, I have a deep appreciation for the significance of the written word and it is my life's goal to issue manifestations of my lucidity onto white (perhaps yellow) paper so that my benefactors may profit from such absent minded wisdom.

Geoffrey Troup, Southern CT State University

Geoffrey Troup will graduate from Southern Connecticut State University with a B.A. in English. He is the Secretary of the university's English Club and the Fiction Editor of *Folio*, the campus's literary magazine. Though he considers Modernism his primary concentration, he also enjoys Cormac McCarthy, Philip Larkin, David Foster Wallace, and the greats of 19th century Russian literature.

Jennifer McCurdy, Mercyhurst University

Jennifer McCurdy studies English at Mercyhurst University. She hopes to join the publishing world as an editor upon graduation in 2013. Poetry and time spent with her cats make her days brighter, and it is through poetry that she explores themes such as religion, sensuality, and the transcendence of daily struggles.

Paige Gelsimino, Mercyhurst University

My name is Paige Gelsimino and I am a Sophomore at Mercyhurst University in Erie, Pennsylvania, where I am an English Major and Asian Studies Minor. This trimester I will be studying in Ireland. At college I participate in the Wind Ensemble where I play the French Horn. In my spare time I create costumes for and attend Anime Conventions. I have won several awards at these events. Writing is my passion and it is an honor to have some of my poems appear in your publication!

Roxanne Estes, Shepherd University

Roxanne Estes, 23, is an undergraduate English/Creative Writing major, Business Administration minor at Shepherd University and a member of Sigma Tau Delta. She is originally from the Philadelphia area, but currently resides in Martinsburg, WV. She is working on a novel, a collection of poetry, and nonfiction shorts. She enjoys cooking, science, philosophy, and cinema when she isn't reading or writing. Everything she writes and all her successes are in memory of her father, Mark Estes, who passed away from cancer in 2010.

Lorien Campbell, Georgia College

Lorien Campbell is a Masters of Teaching graduate student at Georgia College. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Creative Writing with specializations in Poetry and Fiction. For the past eight years she has been writing, presenting, and publishing poetry and short stories in various literary forums. After graduation she hopes to teach English Language

Arts in secondary schools and inspire another generation of writers to express themselves creatively. Most of her work advocates for social justice and a wide range of human rights. This piece was inspired by Richard Wilbur's "A World Without Objects is a Sensible Emptiness".

Maria Conti, Walsh University

Maria Conti will receive her B.A. in English from Walsh University in May 2012. She serves as the Vice President of Walsh's Sigma Tau Delta chapter, and she participates as a Presidential Scholar in the Honors Program. She will pursue her master's degree in literature in the fall, and she eventually plans to earn a Ph.D. and teach at the university level. Maria's critical interests include social justice in literature and criticism, 19th-century American protest novels, and cognitive literary theory. She will present this paper at the Sigma Tau Delta 2012 International Convention in New Orleans.

Cecilia Amador, University of Kentucky

Cecilia María Amador was born and raised in Guatemala City, Guatemala. She graduated from Valle Verde High School at the age of 17; afterwards she went to live to Regensburg, Germany for 5 months with the intention of learning German. At the age of 19, she is currently a Creative Writing major in the University of Kentucky.

Cecilia's first experience with poetry writing was at the age of 9. She had to write a Haiku poem for her grammar class and it was featured in her school's bulletin. Ever since then, writing has been an important aspect of her life.

Sarah Price, Mercyhurst University

As an English major with a focus in creative writing, I will graduate from Mercyhurst University as part of the class of 2012. I hope to publish my own creative work outside of what is considered academia,

with fantasy as my chosen genre and, in the future, attend graduate school for a Masters in Fine Arts, with a focus on that genre. My writing is usually inspired by specific images or texts, usually dark in nature and I shall, with any fortune, continue to be motivated by great incarnations of the fantastic in poetry and fiction.

Matt Chelf, Shepherd University

Matt Chelf is a junior at Shepherd University. A student of literature and history, he likes reading in cafes, writing late at night and groove-stomping on his radio show every Friday night.

Kirk Richardson, Walsh University

Kirk Richardson is an English major at Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio. Kirk's creative outlets are numerous and include piano, guitar, fiction and nonfiction writing, literary criticism, and chess. A native of Florida, Kirk feels more at home in the sea or on the streets of Key West than in a classroom, though he writes, "I carry the classroom within myself. I realized the classroom was never the proper container for me, but I for it. My desire to be the liberator of the people I meet sustains my aspirations for academia, like a double helix.

Ann Gentile, Shepherd University

My name is Ann Gentile. I live in Martinsburg, West Virginia with my husband Dave, two children (Laura and Joe), and my cat Nutmeg. I am working on my prerequisite classes in order to enter the Master of Arts in Teaching Program at Shepherd University. My goal is to teach middle or high school English. I hope to start my graduate classes this summer. I love to garden, and I have a passion for photography. I have a Nikon and it goes with me just about everywhere. Sometimes you just get lucky taking pictures.

Rosemarry Mazzara, Georgian Court University

Rosemary Mazzara is a senior English/Education student at Georgian Court University. She is Dean's Scholar, and is a member of *Sigma Tau Delta*, and *Kappa Delta Pi*. Before entering *Georgian Court University*, she received her Associate of Arts degree from Brookdale Community College and graduated Phi Theta Kappa. Upon graduation in December 2012, she will be a teacher of Elementary Education, Middle School English, and Special Education. Rosemary is honored to have her work, "Motherhood and Slavery," included in this year's publication. Ms. Mazzara is a resident of Marlboro, New Jersey, and a proud mother of three children.

Hannah Fulton, Mount Vernon Nazarene University

I'm from southern West Virginia and a long line of story-tellers. I grew up listening to my friends and family use language to weave beautiful images and new ideas. I suppose poetry is something that has always been a part of me, and there are few things I enjoy more than sharing it with others. I'm currently a senior Integrated Language Arts Education major at Mount Vernon Nazarene University and I cannot wait for my chance to bring the study of English to the next generation.

Roland Coffey, Stony Brook University

I am currently an undergraduate at Stony Brook University, majoring in Art History and English Literature. I am also a member of my institution's Alpha Nu Zeta English Honor Society and Golden Key Honor Society chapters. I have participated in book drives, blood drives, and The March of Dimes Walk. I plan on applying to both Art History and English graduate school programs this fall, and will graduate next spring in May of 2013.

Kathryn Justus, State University of New York at Oswego

Kathryn Justus is a senior at the State University of New York at

Oswego where she is studying English and History. She is the public relations officer of the Alpha Sigma Eta chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. After graduation, she plans to pursue a graduate degree in Library Science.

John Faugno, University of New Haven

John Faugno is a 37 year old English Major at the University of New Haven and an aspiring writer. He returned to college as a full-time student after working many years in retail management, deciding he needed a better course for his life. He will be finishing his Bachelor's in English next Spring, and will be attempting to go on to obtain a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. He served as Assistant Editor of the premiere issue of *The New Sound*, UNH's own literary journal. He is the Treasurer of UNH's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta.

Fatuma Hy dara, Pace University

Fatuma Hy dara here! For as long as I can remember words have always been an important aspect of my life—as a means of expression, exploration, and power. So, everything I involve myself in is related to literature in some way. I'm a third year English Education major at Pace University – Pleasantville, who hopes to one day become the Greatest English Teacher to Ever Live. I am also the Poetry Editor of Pace's *Vox Art and Literary Magazine* and a tutor at the Writing Center, in addition to being a member of Sigma Tau Delta.