SIGMA TAU DELTA JOURNALS
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

SIGMA TAU DELTA RECTANGLE

Journal of Creative Writing

VOLUME 98, 2023

SIGMA TAU DELTA REVIEW

Journal of Critical Writing

VOLUME 20, 2023

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2022–23 WRITING AWARDS FOR SIGMA TAU DELTA *REVIEW* AND SIGMA TAU DELTA *RECTANGLE*

Frederic Fadner Critical Essay Award
Mia Zendejas: "'But I am. *Soy dominicano. Dominicano soy*': Code-switching in *The Brief Maravillosa Vida of Oscar Wao*"

Eleanor B. North Poetry Award
Sofia Escobar: "Microaggressive"

E. Nelson James Poetry Award
Alexandra Rye: "Waltz of the Bees"

Herbert Hughes Short Story Award
Grace Worwa: "Pretty?"

Elizabeth Holtze Creative Nonfiction Award
Kostandi Stephenson: "No Name"

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Content Warning

Some of the manuscripts included in this publication address topics that may cause duress in readers; to prevent unnecessary duress, we offer this warning and address the humanity of our authors and our readers. We are grateful for the writers' transparency in addressing some of the most sensitive topics.

SIGMA TAU DELTA

RECTANGLE

POETRY

The Gardener

Rowan Beckford

A small white gem pinned in his right ear,
Bloated like cauliflower, the gardener hoists
His slacks just below his brimming waist, dusts
His hands of pollen, and swats large black flies
Whose million eyes send back the evening lights
That flicker on his stubble and mackle
His light-shaven cheeks.
Employed for twenty
Years, little-noted but for invisible services:
Hedges, grasses, and roses tended, crabapples
And chokecherries, flutes and bells of pink
Viburnum, the gardener, whose mother kept
Houses and whose father constructed them,
Is in his fiftieth year. The hair which falls
From his temples falls in dried-out roots,
And the air he tastes tastes of habit. He dries
His brow, his shirt soaking the sweat, rubbing
The salt built-up there, and goes back out into
The hot May air.
Another sleepless night last night
But for the few hours' sleep coming after

He drove his palms' heels hard into
The sockets. Mercifully, dreams came to him.
He stood among asphodels, rotten branches
Hanging low, and colorless pools to refresh oneself.
He tasted honey, heavy in hives tacked
To branches, the nectar of loping bees,
Syrupy-thick and gray, tasting sour
And tangy. Opposite him, seated on the instep
Of a gray-blue hill, a fox-faced man
Waved slowly, familiarly. He waved back, once,
Twice, before sound of a particular buzzing
And smell of a particular flower had come
To waken him from his dreams.
Flashing the sails
Of its inflorescence, in the wind, turning
And turning like semaphore, an open petunia
Receives a hummingbird. Monklike, persuasive,
Small, and ruby-throated, hovering on buoyed air
His spastic wings make, the hummingbird flits,
Stirs, and lowers his pointed mouth, the smooth,
Diamond-tip and searching tongue, downward
Into the petunia's searing, purpled core.

To be Untouchable

Ariane Campbell

Burned by sun—scorched by mistakes—
I watch shadows round the Cross
on the wall—they dare not graze
the scarred hands destined to drive them back.

Shadows envelope the framed photo
of my smiling five-year-old self
cupping an apple in my palms—
the first of many long Falls.

Google Image Search

Ariane Campbell

Blue skies and vulture eyes
hunker over honking traffic
as Mexican take-out wafts
in thick condiment currents
across Downtown.

Window washers look below
at the shifting toy cars
and yawning shades that
tickle the sea wall
as sunset towers over it all.

Palm fronds tremble,
frightened by Jaguar
engines that growl
when Corvettes venture close
with a playful hum.

Biker shorts and blouses
mingle on the sidewalk,

iPhones in everyone's palm—
pixels more entrancing
than crosswalk signs.

Bleak House

Kayla Conde

The fifth beer of the night does not go down easy
in this roadhouse of faux-leather jackets
and sedated square-dancing. My eyes flick
from dartboards to patrons and barmen

to the liquor-lined reflection before me.
Headlights pierce through the brown-glass doors
and my heart beats like a Greenwood score.
I fiddle with the change deep in my pocket

and finish the pint. With a groggy goodnight,
I stumble out for a curious cigarette beneath
the nauseating red neon sign. The fog swirls
with every slam of the man's station-wagon doors.

I make out a girl, no older than twelve, slumped
against the hatchback, thin hair draped over her face.
The man makes a call. I'm at the butt of my smoke
when a second stream of headlights burns through

the fog. This time, the low rumbling of a van door rolling open, then slamming shut. The girl is gone when I lift my eyes from the gravel. The night's stillness is louder than the buzz of paper wasps.

High-School Reunion

Kayla Conde

Rows of name cards stood like a battalion
on the reception table—soldiers eager
for combat, unaware of the mundanity

of war. Each waited to be plucked from the snow-
white tablecloth and sent to the front.
The balding and botoxed filed in, ghosts

of high-school sweethearts and almost drop-outs
floating from one idle conversation to the next.
I kept my eye on Mr. Smith, fetching as ever,

as his wife engaged the faculty in talk of marriage,
kids, and whatnot. *This one's on me*,
I joked to him at the open bar, like the class clown

he always said I was. Whiskey sours in hand,
we cheered old times and good sex,
the flush of his cheeks hinting at the doors

I intended to force open again. *Join me for a cigarette?*
(This apprentice homewrecker loves her cigarette.)
He followed like a dog out the back door.

Before he had the chance to reach for a pack,
I kissed him hard, letting his hands wander
over my hips, the way he used to.

He laughed at the first bite of his lip, bled with the second.
A blood-drop pinned his collar.
I adjusted my dress and swayed back inside.

if you met my family you would understand

Grace Cram

tarnished key,
slice of lime,
cigarette discarded
on the curb, by the gutter
for me to make sense of
a tantalizing amalgamation—
an appealing alternative—
to replaying dad's phone call over and over. . . .

an ant is making circles on the white tile floor
next to dad's foot
i watch it—
it is the most interesting thing in the world.
more interesting than
the doctor speaking through
the tinny iPhone speaker
about grandpa's health.

it's storming outside, but it's okay
i have built my life amid this swirling white chaos.
silent drive through the snow

but the headlights are not strong enough
to cast light on all of our problems.

driving and driving and driving on these icy roads
between the dashes on the freeway
between the lines i draw between us.
the summer melted away your morals,
unspoken baggage and unextended apologies
tangled in the backseat. not one to pry,
i shove the suitcases further out of sight
and just laugh at your old jokes instead.

Orchards

Jesse Cristoforo

Apples never fall far
from the tree they say,
but apples do roll down
steep, tall hills
away from our prized orchards. They have rolled so
far out of reach. Spoiled, shriveled, and sown are their seeds on new land,
subsisting on their own rot. How could ours have rolled so far from each other?
A friend told me once she liked Tropicana apple juice. How could I stand her way of
loving nature? Her flowers are incongruent with the beauty I want to see on her branches of
the malice-domesticated *Malus domesticae* she's planted. The feverish rosacea of her Rosaceae
yields fruits with a tincture like medicine and twice as acidic. Why pretend to have a taste for the
faux-tropical over the smooth sweetness of Martinelli's Honeycrisp brew, if she hadn't the same
astringent chokehold on conversation as her poison of choice had on the tongue? Embarrassing
how this bitterness could fertilize seeds for greater contempt. How far our apples have rolled,
that I've forgotten to thank her for sharing with me her love for, her conversation of, and
her *intérêt pour les pommes* (*et jus de pomme de terre* Tropicana), and for showing that
my apples are not ripe for harvest. It's worth only plucking them from the branch,
not to prevent more rolling. Give me some time until next season to grow
a brand-new batch so that, one day, we can stand in the same orchard,
and then we can muse over how funny it was that we found
a connection through a mutual love for apples.

Wanted

Jesse Cristoforo

Somewhere awaits a stone
by sandy shores; unsought
by collectors; surrounded
by shimmering shells; simple
by design; and intentionally worthless.

Somewhere, find a stone
and appreciate its pock-marked texture;
and appraise its crystalline heart;
and admire its brush stroke pattern;
and finally, return it to its gurgling waters.

One day, keep a stone
and an old friend will ask
"But isn't it worthless?"
But isn't it charming?
Isn't it interesting?
Isn't that good enough?

My heart has become stone.

Microaggressive

Sofia Escobar

no, there's no relation to
pablo, was engraved into my
script since the age of
thirteen. i laughed before
i answered. every time.
why did i find it
funny?

you can't be a real latina and
not listen to this, was the only
song in my headphones when
i said i couldn't listen to
bachata. my father's soundtrack for
me at six years old was me crying,
begging to call my mom but
getting thrown into a party at
two in the morning with the
music i should have danced
to. i can smell the
tempranillo on his breath

all over again
when i hear that song.

how can you be peruvian
and not speak
spanish, was mouthed in
disgust when i couldn't
say a sentence in a
different language. i
was never a
good
hispanic.

hispanic. his panic. no,
it was mine. why am i
so bad at being who
i should be? i am always
panicking. he made
me panic. manic. am
i even-

your dark hair makes
you look so latina, was
the best part for them
when the artificial
blonde went back to black. my
roots are so dark, though?
you didn't notice my
roots? the blonde stretched
out from the dark. *that shade*
is literally your color, of course
it is, it's natural. my roots
are peruvian. i wanted to be
home again. what the fuck
does that even mean?

i'm really into latinas, they're
hotter, oh, am i . . .
pretty? yes, yes, i am
peruvian, please don't go.
ah, i see now, it makes me
whole. he was the first boy to
love me. is that because i
didn't shudder at admitting i
was latina for the first time? he
loves me because i'm pretty,
because my skin color.
am I nothing more
than
lima? why don't you
question my italian
side?

they are such microscopic
comments, why do
they make me
aggressive? why
am i so quick to feel
as though i made a
mistake? my friends
say these words, my father,
my lover. how did i
not know what it
was?

—do not love your oppressor

Apodiformes

Sofia Escobar

I sat on the porch of the old
brown brick house where the
white wrap-around held me
back from the grass. A shear
tail flew up to the magnolias
as it perched upon them like
a baby to its crib. The sound
of a light piping echoed in the
neighborhood, and the words in
my journal dripped like a leak
from the kitchen sink.

A songbird was a better poet
than I was, measuring the tempo
and the feet and the meters like
a Shakespearean godsend. One
bird here and one bird there; they
all came together in unison of the
greatest writer. I wish to be that
songbird who puts such little care
in the process of a song.

I sat for hours on the porch in an
attempt to write my song poem in
a way that he did, but each and
every time I came up just a line
short or an inch too long; how many
feet is it supposed to be? How do
the other poets measure their words?
Oh god, is it the metric system? I
never understood that.

I want to be as poetic as the buff
bellied so the words can round my
stomach as if the poem alone could
feed my hunger. It was so beautiful,
the sound of making love from the
hum of their little beaks. Hum hum hum
hummmm, I can't get their song out
of my head.

Something about his musical performance
left me displeased, as if I was filled with
unease that a bird could be better than me.
The hums don't sound so beautiful now,
and I can't help but feel let down. Damn
you, bird, you've ruined my sound, and I
can't seem to put the pen down. Look
what you did, I just rhymed for the first
time. I can't be both a poet and an artist.
There we go, I broke the chain.

Broad billed, black chinned, ruby throated,
violet crowned; my white ears hear you
louder by the minute, but I can't write
of the love you once made that I so deeply
adored. I hate you, stupid bird. You remind
me of the way I am not a published poet,
but you hold concerts for the county

every day. I think of all the music artists
who are more accomplished than me, not
because they make more money but because
when you search for their titles, they have
a name.

Maybe one day I'll go back to the porch
where you taunted me and produce a piece
worth something, but for now I play back
the sound of your reminder that I am but a
poet. I knew you were the devil, shear tail,
it was always in your name.

Playing Jesus for the Parish Summer Camp

Caroline Geoghegan

I don't think they knew how much it would
affect me. I'm at recess handing out indulgences
like candy canes. Forget dying for free, I want
cash. I'm falling asleep in the pews dreaming of
angels. If it has six wings and is on fire, it's a
Seraph. Four faces and ox feet, and it's a
Cherub. Saints aren't angels but I draw them with wings
just to be nice.

Once you're broke, you are saved. Once you're dead, you can fly. It's not
so bad.

Nobody wants to play crucifixion so I lie on the blacktop
writing sermons. I staple ninety-five theses to my
math worksheet. I pull ten commandments out of a hat
each day. No meat on Fridays. I give up hopscotch and television and
ice cream. Stare at the wall until I swear I can see a halo
around my shadow.

Lucifer is all the boys who spit in my hair.

Judas is the girls who sneer from the monkey bars.
(Might as well kiss them; they already call me queer.)

"Blessed are the meek,"
for they will come to their mothers with tears in their eyes when
holiness is a tightrope a few notches too loose.
Baptized until their fingers prune and yet
Hell is a gaping hole on the basketball court: so easy to
crawl into, so easy to be pushed.

I try to forget the Bible. Now it's just me
in my room, alone on the cross.

History

Courtney Heidom

A teacher once told me that
studying history was not
about evading
the mistakes of the past,
but about getting the story
right.

My soul thinks that is
needlessly arduous.
To get the story faultless, so precise
that there are no lies, no hyperbole
seems contrary to the longing for antiquity.

I do not want a textbook
to show me the
bleached bones of humanity.
Because what is humanity if not
full of heavy flesh of
spirit, soul?

Tell me how you felt;

Tell me what you held;
Tell me what you smelled;
loved;
grasped;
breathed;
hoped.

I refuse to believe that
truth can be traced within
a few select words,
meticulously picked.

It is rather
a flowing stream of
crystalline tears,
lamenting, cascading over us.

Tell me your story.

Your heart tells me
everything.

"Plea to Hector"

Maya Jacyszyn

(Inspired by Book 6 of the *Iliad*)

Their babe in her arms,
he reaches for the red plume,
silk feathers in line.

Bowing to his son,
the helmet tickles his skin.
The lovers smile, but

her eyes turn to glass—
my father, mother, brother
and husband, please stay.

His lips burn goodbye
as he departs toward the man
with the weakened heel.

Peach

Ashleigh Kennedy

Little globe
of soft fire. Syrup star.

Temple mound. Craters
all my fingers carve.

Sundrop. Coral clay. Cavity
and its christening, candying

each sun-dress day. Oh, prism, serum
supple in my hands. What must I do to become

cavernous, rim my teeth among
your sands? I want to plum

each pound of flesh
I hold, to sing your sugar, too—

smooth stream, to suckle in
each summer's note:

butter, nectar, honey,
cream.

Somebody Told Me

Lexi Merring

that I found light
in dark corners,
in between cracks
in the wall, nestled
behind shadows.

when the sky
painted dark,
I took a brush
of sunlight,
made storms
become golden.

oh, the fire,
it fueled me,
as I made flames
dance at lonely
campsites,
smoke mingling
with tree limbs.

now
let me create
constellations
in your darkness.

Common Obstacle to Cerebration

Annabella Nordlund

It is sharp and slow as I swallow,
unnatural,
menacing yet delicate.

One is multiplied,
pried apart,
lied to my face.

It cuts slits into
the grooved ridges of
my fingertips.

Imprinted by enamel,
it absorbs the raw
force of a jaw.

Sonorous, like the
echo of a coin
in a gutter;
resonant, like

eleven seconds after
strings under hammers.

Stomach mimics
those foreign mornings
aboard a boarded boat;
sea-green wallpaper
mocking the virginal victim,
parched and powerless.

Anticipatory actions take place.

The inhabitants of the
intestinal maze make way
for the intruder

in vain.
It is still up above,
lodged and refusing,
fusing to the white,
merging with the red.

It is hard to contemplate
anything
when there is a slivered
almond stuck in your teeth.

The Attic

Rachel Ouellette

An erasure from Chapter 1 of *A Wrinkle in Time*

Was / her / attic / frenzied? / The sky / shook.
Afraid of weather, / of me, / she said
Stay back. / She / said
Always.

And / her / books / told her
what / must hurt her / always.

Madly / awake
so many nights, tiptoeing
up the attic stairs,

she told her / monster, / the mirror,
a mouthful of / cold / talk.

She left her little / shadows—
now I'll have a bruise.
She walked into / the attic,

she stood still, / she tiptoed / again,
as though / the dark / was snoring.

This time, then,
I / won't / greet / her.

Deep River

Sarah Pouliot

The spine of an aged binder
mended with translucent tape
rests in my palms, bursting
with sheets of songs outstretched—
pages worn by the litany of fingertips
tracing dancing notes like braille.

I stand in an ensemble, forming
a small circle in the choir room,
learning how to breathe the vitality
of anonymous African prose.
Lungs expand—holding
the sacred air in our chests
until heads bow in harmony,
signaling the release of deep breath.

Together, we succumb
to the deep music—
spattered patterns of notes, swinging
on ink bars now swelling in song,
the melding melody ascending like mist.

Eyes shut
focusing on the rhythm
of bodies leaning in,
meditating on the longing lyrics:

Deep River,
My home is over Jordan.
Deep River, Lord.
I want to cross over into campground.

Voices strengthen,
a wave of surging sovereignty
until the dissonance gently resolves,
the cry of canticles fading
softened hums
sinking into silence
resonating in the room
minds renewed as we listen
to deep voices echoing on tile.

ants

Sarah Pouliot

i stare at ants crawling
in eroding sidewalk crevices
spattered with orbits of hardened gum
sucking viscous, caramel rivers
flooding from plastic coffee cups
abandoned
        half-drunken
spilled expresso staining
shoe soles, java footprints
left to dry by the road

i examine how ants scurry
between feet slapping concrete, scampering
to the beat of stilettos, sneakers, and chukka boots—
the mazes of lonesome metronomes
& jarring temblors, watching
elongated limbs leisurely touch
the summit of cement mountains

i memorize monotonous square patterns
engraved in walkways

riven with sinuous fractures—
the tedious trail
        interrupted by unintended cracks & divots
nature's mistake?

i watch ants cling to potholes
submerged in an asphalt abyss, hoisting
crumbs on arched backs as they
weave easily between
your pounding steps—
yet my voice tremors
in the raucous vibrations of vocal cords
rubbing like tectonic plates
& mine—wings of crickets;

you can hear if you listen
to the swing of my head
slumped downwards, observing
pearlescent stains
like gasoline streams, coruscating
in the presence of florescent light
                listen to heat
gathering in the estuary
of crimson-stained cheeks
with eyes reddened and blurred
like streaks of car lights at night
in rainy windows

listen
to the delicate drum of insects' claws
prancing on pavement
as i stare at ants
and you glare at me

Does My Brown Skin . . .

Yvette Regalado

Does my brown skin . . .

Does my brown skin confuse you?
Does my brown skin make you uncomfortable?
Does my brown skin seem exotic, sexy, or even dangerous?
Does my brown skin make you think I wasn't born here, a foreigner in my own land?
Does my brown skin make you think I need to explain myself to you, so you know I am doing it right?
Does my brown skin make you feel sorry for me?
My brown skin makes me aware of everything around me.
My brown skin makes me thankful for my ancestors and their struggles with oppression that they went through because of their brown skin.
My brown skin is perfect, and I am thankful for all the things it has protected me from and gone through with me.

I love my brown skin. . . .
Does my brown skin . . .

Does my brown skin affirm you?

Does my brown skin make you feel comfortable?
Does my brown skin seem natural, friendly, and familiar?
Does my brown skin show that you belong?
Does my brown skin empower you?
Does my brown skin standing in this position bring you hope?
My brown skin sees your brown skin, and I acknowledge your power and your oppression.
Know that if my brown skin is in this space, your brown skin is welcomed.
Your brown skin is perfect, beautiful, and needed.

St. Joe

Hailey Rose

[This poem shares my experience when I visited the historic town of St. Joseph, MO. I was shocked at what I saw, and this poem reflects my interpretations of this town, honoring its historic memory and legacy. Furthermore, my ancestral relation to Jesse James ignited my interest and passion to write about this town and what happened to it as America advanced in its modern and technological ways.]

Oh, St. Joe,
Once you beamed with life, prosperity, hope
Now you lay still, desolate, hopeless

Once the center of travel, legends, and communication

Home of the Pony Express
Home of Jesse James' infamous death
Home of the transcontinental telegraph

Oh, St. Joe,
Now life has abandoned you, without looking back
On to something new

Bigger, better, faster

Amazing architecture—Dynamically crafted—Now crammed with the unwanted
Astonishing antiques—Holding untold, ancient stories—Now dusted, ripped, and ruined
Awe-inspiring avenues—Leading all the way to California—Now untouched and rarely used

Oh, St. Joe,
Stripped of your vibrant, luscious natural landscape
Cemented with a gray, brackish industrialized landscape—permanent

Life rerouted away from you

"We need a bigger bridge," they said.
"We need a better route–better than those old, bumpy bricks," they said.
"We need a faster interstate," they said.

Oh, St. Joe,
There you rest—in peace—with no disturbance or life
Bearing the carcass of the past—no longer admired or appreciated

What's left to tell your story?—your evidence is tattered.

You are history, written in the books—to be closed
You are history, laying on the road less traveled—to be forgotten
You are history, I will remember—it's long overdue.

St. Joe, this one's for you.

Waltz of the Bees

Alexandra Rye

I.

I came in
with the sunshine
and slight turbulence;
all my strength's spent
flying steady.
shimmering pollen
on fuzzy legs
catches my eye.
Lead the way, I say;
I want to rest my head
on a marigold bed.

II.

Cutting my bangs felt like a rite of passage. The mirror in my childhood bathroom was dirty. When I wiped it clean, the reflection in front of me still looked distorted. The end of undergrad loomed overhead as a precipice I was unwillingly thrust towards. The heavy weight of it was numbing in the way a pressure cuff at the doctor's office leaves your skin tingling.

formative years could be categorized by which life-changing event was happening at the time, so I've become sentimental about strange things. my mother tucks one of the new face-framing strands behind my ear and tells me I look mature. I asked her why I felt more grown up at eighteen than I do now; I asked her what I should do. she didn't have an answer for me. Looking wearily back at the woman I've become, I could hear my Scottish ancestors: *Ask the wild bee for what the druid knew.*

III.

outside of my window a cluster
of honeybees swarm in unison.
it was Aristotle who noted the ways
honeybees communicate;
in buzzing blurs, these gatherers
soar in careful choreography
between flower boxes blooming in windows
and nearby budding meadows to worship
yarrow, dahlia, and zinnias.
when i was sixteen, i wrote something about
wishing humans could be more like honeybees.
i envied their resilience at a time
when i had none of my own.
Van Frisch's theory recently yielded proof
that honeybee ensembles of aerial arabesques
provided direction for the ones who stray
when the wind knocks them from their path.
directions come in the form of figure-eights
and the sporadic flutter of wings
that transcribes beacons of sacred knowledge
that i must travel to the western isles
in order to seek.

Name Here

Cameron Short

I was feeling stressed.
Spiders threaded loose nooses off my ears.
I dressed in only 30-pound sandbags.
I used binoculars to search empty wallets.
I wrote *Name Here* at the top of assignments.
An architect used me as a reference for a stone gargoyle and a pond rock.
I once mistook the tap of computer keys for my voice.
I bent my spine into the letter *S*
to show the kids on Sesame Street.
I nailed my grocery list to a statue of Jesus.
When I stole a stranger's phone to call myself,
I went to voicemail.
The rats in my dorm vents looked down on me.
I take notes on the backs of all my letters, titled: *Deans List/*
Rent due/Gracie died/PA lottery
I have nightmares about showing up dressed to class.
The *PA Powerball!* hit me.
A professor assigned me as homework yesterday.
I applied for positions with the campus squirrels.
I once had a funeral procession wake me from a nap
after mistaking me for their long-lost cousin's corpse.

we speak each other

Zoe Talbot

Sometime after three o'clock today
(*you pointed out how the clock chimed*),
cross-legged on a bench and eating two lbs. of Twizzlers
(*I pointed out how much I liked them*),
you offhandedly mentioned that
"we speak each other."

At first, to me, this meant
references
mannerisms
expressions.

> *A hesitation (n.)*
> 1. "I don't know what to think, and I need more time."
> 2. "I'm uncomfy but would rather you're happy."

However, as you and I grew entangled with one another,
more and more enamored with the words both spoken and not,
I came to know that our graciousness found homes anywhere and
everywhere.

> *A palm on the small of my back (n.)*
> 1. "I'm here. I've got you. I love you."

Like *Valyrian* or *Klingon* or even *Latin*, we have simultaneously
invented and taught one another a native tongue that is useless to
any other individual that ever was and ever will be. If this union dies,
our private prose passes with it, no people to preserve such a
pretty piece of passion.

we speak each other, and that is

> *Understanding (n.)*
> 1. "I've never known a love like this."

You Will Want to Survive This

Jessica White

Persephone swallows down pomegranate seeds
in the hopes that she can take root
somewhere else. Somewhere everything else isn't.
The underworld is quiet here, and Persephone
thinks of hibernation.

Hades' hand catches around her wrist,
and she has barely begun to notice
by the time he pries her jaws open.
Hades scrapes the seeds out, hands red
and gentle as he whispers:
This place is a prison.

So hold me, Persephone whispers back.
Hades is crying, but he does,
and the quiet thing in Persephone lets go just a little.
She thinks about the surface, and the sun.
Persephone allows herself to think
about wanting. She pushes her hands
into Hades' hair and admits that she wants

to want something. Hades says softly,
with the confidence of centuries,
You will.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

Miles and Miles

Emily Clemente

The Who has a song called "Summertime Blues" on the deluxe version of their album *The Who Sell Out*. It's originally an Eddie Cochran song, but I like their version better because it's grittier and more resentful. The crux of the song is that everything is hopeless: there ain't no cure for the summertime blues. I show it to you, and you laugh at the absurdity of the album cover. One man is holding a giant stick of deodorant and another sitting in a bath of baked beans.

We've been stuck inside our houses for weeks that have turned into months that have turned into the sugar-crusted heat rot of summer. It's flour gravy, like the soupy biscuits we eat in your southern kitchen that taste like the color gray. I hate it enough to want to peel off my skin like wallpaper.

This song's awful, you say, which really means that you like it. You hate how close it comes to how you feel, the idea that the summer is massive, enigmatically beautiful, and unable to liberate anything because none of it is for you.

Good, I say, because I want you to hate it.

When I don't call you, we turn our heads to talk. My car is the only place where we can safely sit inside, without the widows. She's red. I named her Maureen when we were both still in high school, when you were my best friend and we drove to the public library so you could find periodicals

about abandoned buildings in the Southern Gothic style and I could find autobiographies written by British rock musicians.

I'm glad you like the song, I say.

Their live version is good too, the one they performed at the University of Leeds Refectory in 1970 with John Entwistle's growling filling in the responsory lines. But I don't share that one with you because I'm not sure if you're ready yet. It's too angry, too real. You don't like to wait, and the tempo is just slow enough to make you feel like nothing's happening despite the screaming.

My bedroom smells like enclosure and feels like too many idle relics mixed together: dusted ceramics shaped like fairy-girls in dresses, canopy gauze that drapes the skirted edges of my bedframe, knitted blankets strewn haphazardly over a desk chair.

It suffocates me. When I open a window, the humidity makes my floor sticky and curls my hair into package-dried noodles—the cooked kind, the ones that are artificially moistened with tap water and microwave heat—turning mouths flavorlessly slimy. Remember how many of those noodles we ate that summer?

I look outside and find myself indignant when I realize how beautiful the sky is. I draw the curtains tight so I won't have to see it. The air that seeps in almost tastes fresh, like a semblance of someone else's summer, and I don't want it. You don't want it either. Who wants something they don't get to have?

I look away and move a string of hair from my face and decide I'm going to draw something for you. I'm going to draw sunflowers. I decide this because I love them, but as I form their petals with my pencil, I realize what I'm doing is ironic, hypocritical even, because sunflowers never turn away from the beauty of the sun.

You and I are driving as far away as we can because we have nowhere else to go. We pass through long stretches of road with overgrown tree-tunnels and abandoned houses and gas stations still selling firewood in the heat of July. There are horses near a lake, and I wonder if any of them have names. On the left, someone is having a garage sale in front of their split-level.

There are churches all over this road, and I suggest that we stop at one of them, just for the chance to leave the car, but the ones we pass don't have parking lots.

How do people get there on Sundays, you ask.

Maybe they walk, I suggest, but I have no idea either.

We never consider that people can park in the grass, that they can part through the Oxeye daisies in their loafers and heeled pumps as they wait for the bell chimes, only for the stems to restore themselves when their feet reach the steps.

The air conditioning is cold and tastes like nothing.

Your dream is to one day visit your favorite abandoned buildings and document their liminality, the ways their humanness stagnates. These molded calendars and splintered tables are cemented permanently to their date of expiration while the rooted limbs grow toward eternity, reclaiming breaks in shattered windows and slatted floors until what remains is something stuck deep in the uncanny valley not of man, not of nature, not of anything.

There are plenty of places like this where we live. They litter the roads, the woods, the fenced-off parking lots behind mini-marts, and empty subdivisons. I sometimes wonder if we live in one of those towns with more vacant buildings than those that are functional. Out west, they call them ghost towns; up north, it's rust-belt decay. Here, they call them nothing. Here it just is.

It's called urban exploration, you tell me, this deliberate visitation when people bring their cameras, their recorders, and their glossy-eyed excitement, but I don't like it when you say that. It sounds too pristine to me, too sterile. Where's the sadness, I want to say. Isn't there supposed to be abandonment?

We're listening to "Baba O'Riley," The Who's teenage wasteland song, when I stop at the Exxon near Windsor Point. It's not a song you particularly like, but you tolerate it because we're in my car.

It was supposed to be a part of their second rock opera, the one that was never finished, the one that was meant to be scripted organically through live performances and audience responses in South London's Young Vic Theatre, but it was scrapped for being deemed too complex and

unexplainable. Some people say The Who sang it because of Woodstock, because they saw all those young people looking dazed and misguided and passionate over nothing. It was really going to be about a dystopic future where every aspect of living is artificially programmed, and real life can only be restored when a musical rapture brings back the near-extinct power of rock-and-roll back to the programmed masses in a singular, nirvana-like "celestial cacophony" at a post-apocalyptic concert festival called *Lifehouse.*

Hey, I say when I get out at the Exxon. Why isn't this working?

You roll down the passenger window. What's not working, you say.

The gas pump won't turn on.

You get out of the car with me. We look around.

Oh, you say. And then, oh, I say back. At the front of the station, there's nothing on the sign, no prices on display. The newspaper stands are empty. There's no wire attached to the pay phone. All the lights are turned off at the little Food Mart behind us.

It's closed. . . . This place has been closed for years.

It's funny, in a way. We pass by this place every day, its jagged pavement stained with oil and its white-painted tigers faded against the blue edges of the gas pumps, and we've never had any idea. We've always thought it just looked like this, that this was just how it existed.

We get back in the car. As we drive, you tell me about the abandoned honeymoon suites in the Catskill Mountains. You've never seen them, but you've watched videos of other people exploring their rotted interiors.

They were so romantic, you say. Everything was red and heart-shaped. Even the hot tubs. They're still there without the water. It's amazing.

I think they sound lonely, these hollowed shells of ruined colors and purposeless decorum that someone once had, and then no one had. But you love them, so I try to, too.

I want to go to the sunflower field, you tell me one day. The summer is almost over, and I tell you we shouldn't go because it belongs to someone else, but I'm bad at saying no when I want the same things as you. I park at the edge of a neighborhood, and we stand outside of the car, overlooking a stretch of tall grass. It's late afternoon, and the sky is hesitant and thick with burnished clouds.

Come here, you say, and I follow you through the grass, and we stand at

the edge where the bristles tickle our ankles. The speed limit on this road is forty-five, but I know that the cars like to go sixty, seventy miles-per-hour around the curve. All of the road signs are dented.

Here, you say, take my picture. I hold your camera and tell you to run across the street, and then to run back, and to smile, like we're not on a neglected road in North Carolina but another place. Somewhere we'll never go in our lifetimes, somewhere we can pretend to see, and somewhere that questions get answered and the air tastes real.

I look ahead of me, and there are sunflowers everywhere. It's overwhelming, this hopeless kind of inundation. They're staring at something, but I'm not sure what—whatever sunflowers look for in the absence of the sun.

I think of another song on *The Who Sell Out* called "I Can See for Miles." It's a song about being deceived by someone while still understanding something that they don't. Most people have to be in the right mood to listen to it; the guitars sound like they are being pressure-cooked, and the drums are strained and unapologetic. Pete Townshend claimed to have written the song just for this very purpose. He wanted it to sound ugly.

I wonder how far back the sunflowers go. I can't imagine that it's for miles, but because I can't see, it could be anything. They could stretch on infinitely, I realize, and I would never know.

Sunflowers could easily be ugly if we didn't think they were beautiful. They could just be grainy circles on a stem, framed by asymmetrical fans of erratic yellow. I love them, though, just like I love The Who.

When I pause from taking pictures of you, I realize that the sun is gone. I could leave you here, and you'd probably be happy.

Let's go back, you say, I think it's going to rain.

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Down in the Valley

Sydney Emerson

> "I had been thanking the gods too long, and thanking them for nothing. I wanted to put a lament in my record, without even the background of the Euganean Hills to give it color."
>
> —F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Crack-Up"

My dad and I are driving the back way to Meadville, to college. (This phrase implies that there is a front way—there is assuredly not.) Through the Allegheny National Forest, past the Kinzua Dam, around a horse-and-buggy or two, listening to Bruce Springsteen because we prefer to steer into the skid of cliché.

My dad tells me that he's happy I'm only a couple of hours away.

"Are you?" he asks, turning down the music.

"Am I what?"

"Happy. With how it turned out."

Cow pastures and bare trees whir past as we climb through the hills.

All roads lead back to the valley. They're not great roads. Most of them are dappled with potholes and crumbling on the shoulder. Some of them—okay, a lot of them—are dirt. They're dusty and steep and treacherous and,

no matter how far you travel, they come back around and you're still in the hills, almost sure that you had tried to leave.

The valley of ashes in *The Great Gatsby* always reminded me of Bradford. It's a place of utility: a flyover town in a flyover state, a place to stop for McDonald's and gas before continuing on to Buffalo or Pittsburgh. In *Gatsby*, the wealthy must pass through the valley in order to reach the splendor of the city. It's a place that must happen to you before you transcend, a kind of unwilling purgatory until the freedom of choice raises you up.

I often think about all of the things that had to happen for me to be in that rusted-out little valley with its rusted-out pumpjacks. Immigration to the golden land. Decisions made by candlelight two centuries ago. I had no say in where I am now. I didn't decide the quality of my education, my class, my voice, my understanding of the world.

Location, location, location. Where you're from is everything.

In 1936, F. Scott Fitzgerald was separated from his wife, spiraling into alcoholism, and repeatedly hospitalized. It was the seventh year of the Great Depression; nobody found his decadent stories to be amusing anymore. Lonely, drunk, and depressed, he wrote a trilogy of essays called "The Crack-Up" in which he compares himself to a broken plate (Fitzgerald).

He wrote, "A man does not recover from such jolts—he becomes a different person, and, eventually, the new person finds new things to care about."

These jolts are inevitable; no life is going to be a smooth ride. The seismograph will never remain still. Most of us live with some vague recognition of that fact—the faint, subconscious acknowledgment that someday we will encounter hardships and will overcome them through Strength in The Face of Adversity and Good Character. But it never truly sinks in. We're eternally optimistic—or perhaps just foolish.

Because until that earthquake actually happens—until the jolt knocks us off of our feet—we all secretly believe that maybe, just maybe, we are the exception to the rule. We are untouchable, protected by some sort

of karmic shield of pure will. We can be the first to make it through unscathed.

Colonel Drake struck oil in 1859, and northwestern Pennsylvania would never be the same. By 1881, Bradford would produce 83% of the United States' oil output and 77% of the world's. Saloons, hotels, homesteads, brothels, and most importantly, derricks sprung up overnight. The sound of barkers echoed through the hills like packs of greedy dogs. The rich got richer. Men could come to Bradford and buy their way into the business, then buy themselves a wife and a family and a mansion on Congress Street.

Solomon Dresser, a titan of industry, staked his claim on Jackson Avenue with his palace: Parisian woodwork and furnishings, an English library, and a German rathskeller. The crown jewel, a delicate French ballroom, was paneled with mirrors that bounced the incandescent light and glittering jewels upon guests' throats from wall to wall into infinity. Like Gatsby, "in his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars." The ceiling, my grandpa recalls wistfully, was painted with cherubs in a cotton candy sky. He used to deliver hospital beds there after it was converted into a hospice center.

Around Dresser, Bradford boomed. The Case brothers moved down from New York and started selling their pocketknives; the Holley brothers took their carburetor from Main Street to Henry Ford's factories. George G. Blaisdell, more than just the namesake for my elementary school, invented a lighter that would extinguish the rest: Zippo.

It never stays, though.

The Holleys followed the money to Detroit. Their father's hotel still stands on Main Street, decaying. Twenty-eight years ago, Zippo bought out Case in what one can only assume was an attempt to corner the market on convenient handheld supplies for drifters. My great-grandma used to work at the factory, polishing lighters every day before they were shipped out to London and Berlin and Tokyo and all the far-off places I think about visiting.

On February 28, 1986, the Dresser Mansion unceremoniously burned down after several hours of the fire department's valiant efforts. My dad and grandpa stood on the sidewalk and watched. Officially, it was such a cold night that the hydrants froze, rendering them useless. Grandpa says

the department actually had sucked the lines dry with their giant hoses. Three hours into the blaze, they hooked into a line near the bottom of the hill and finally had enough water. It was too late.

The next morning, the smoldering shell of the Dresser home sat eerily silent. Icicles hung from what remained of the structure. Dozens of elderly residents, many of whom could still faintly remember the days of Solomon Dresser and ballgowns and jewels and carriages, were left homeless.

College was my only hope. In grade school, I was the type of ennui-filled child that adults loved to bombard with platitudes:

Just a few more years.

You'll find your people in college.

You're older inside.

You'll really flourish once you go to college.

You'll be happy.

I believed them. I had no evidence to the contrary. I filled out the Common App for the first time—for practice—in seventh grade. I completed the PSAT for the first time in eighth. I moved on to high school and, inch by inch, the specter of college infected my brain until my entire identity was the list of schools scrawled on the inside cover of my notebook.

So, at fourteen, my *Weltanschauung* revolved around the belief that small-town life was the surest sign of human failure. In accordance with this philosophy, I knew exactly what I was doing for the rest of my life. Something glamorous, something that would propel me to New York and Los Angeles and London. I was going to film school at NYU. It was a given.

Against all my better judgment, I had to believe in myself. It was the vision that kept me going through bitter cold winter days and smoggy mornings. Someday, somewhere, I could be doing something better. Then everyone would see that I was right—that I could make it on my own. That I overcame the rust and oil and snow and made something of myself.

"His heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night."

I was Gatsby. I would reinvent myself. I would become more.

Success is measured starkly in small towns. You have a tiny window during your young adulthood in which to achieve success as defined by the panel of retirees named Joe who swill coffee in the diner. One day, your case will emerge on the docket without any notification. It's time for your evaluation, like it or not. Moving away from home with no plan; a relationship lasting longer than two years without marriage; a marriage lasting longer than two years without a baby are all automatic disqualifiers.

They nod and slurp their coffee, then move on to the next motion. If you pass, your parents are granted modest bragging rights. Someday, you may also apply for a seat on the panel.

Senior year came around. I loved four schools and decided that getting in was more important than what I did there. The years of swirling doubts had finally gotten to me; I caved to the scrutiny of the Panel of Joes and applied as a history major. Less artistic. Safer. I could always switch majors, but I only got one shot at this. So, I threw the film portfolio out, put my soul onto paper, and paid for other people to judge it.

I don't remember ten days of my life. I've reconstructed it through the memories on my phone and what my friends have told me. Over the first weekend, I got rejected from Barnard and Northwestern while I was competing at Model UN with my friend who had already been accepted to her dream school in New York. By Monday, my dad convinced Allegheny College—my mom's alma mater—to accept a late application. I scratched out some essay responses on Tuesday evening and sent them in, heart in my throat.

There is no evidence that Wednesday, March 20, ever existed.

On Thursday, I got rejected from NYU. This was the big one. The target my guns had been fixed upon for years. The one I had visited, loved, prayed for, daydreamed about, cried over, set all of my happiness upon. The future. It was so certain until it wasn't.

Friday. I had a somber panic attack in the school bathroom, got a haircut, and saw a movie with a friend who got me into the theater for free. During the end credits, she gave me a hug and told me that I would be okay. We weren't very close—that's just how news travels in a small town.

On Saturday morning, Carnegie Mellon dealt the death blow. I went

home and got into bed. A little while later, I felt the edge of my mattress sink down. My dad held out an acceptance letter from Allegheny, and I cried some more—not from joy, but because I hate being proven wrong.

"The Crack-Up" says: "On Shaw's principle that 'if you don't get what you like, you better like what you get,' it was a lucky break—at the moment it was a harsh and bitter business to know that my career as a leader of men was over" (Fitzgerald).

We were watching *Goodfellas* one night. Ray Liotta lit a cigarette, and quietly, my dad said, "I bet my grandma polished that lighter."

The valley traps you, but your spirit goes everywhere—even if you don't know it, even if you never made it to New York, even if you've been dead for over thirty years. To me, it always felt exploitative. You're sentenced to be here forever, but somewhere, inexplicably, a movie star is briefly holding your hand. Scorsese calls "action."

The I-told-you-sos weren't spoken; they were implied. Everybody felt free to offer their opinion, though. The one I heard the most is that I had no name recognition. The biggest concentration of Bradford Area High School graduates is in Bradford. Nobody in admissions was going to recognize their alma mater on my application. I heard that I should've taken AP World History and Latin and all of the classes that my school didn't offer. That no school in my county offered.

In the end, it was easiest for me to blame Bradford. My own personal curse. I couldn't help where I was born or where I had gone to school.

Fitzgerald wrote: "By God, if I ever cracked, I'd try to make the world crack with me. Listen! The world only exists through your apprehension of it, and so it's much better to say that it's not you that's cracked—it's the Grand Canyon."

If this was my fault, I'd make the world shoulder the burden. This was my crack-up.

Home. I know it sounds idyllic; I know it's safe and warm and comfortable. I know that I don't know how to feel, and I doubt that I ever will. Against my will, this place has carved itself into my heart. I speak its language; I know its streets and hills and trails and families. I care about it; I'm fascinated by it. Enraptured. I'll fight until the day I die for everyone to take my backward country people seriously.

Home, which I can never shake off. Home, which I have only grown closer to by being further away. Home, where I'm from—like it or not.

I met up with my parents about two weeks after I started college. They were with some family friends—people who had tried to guide my journey to college and had watched apprehensively as I latched onto and backed away from my dream. They all told me that I looked happier than they had ever seen me. I hadn't noticed, but they were right.

College is the best and the worst I've ever been. I love being a student. I love writing and thinking and trying my hardest to do well. I second-guess myself daily. There's the pervading sense that I'm a pace behind everyone else, running a little faster to keep up with the pack. The conversations with friends about school trips to Europe and art history classes and acceptance letters leave me in the dust. Above all, I wonder how much harder it would have been if I had gone further.

Cows and churches and crumbling barns and old powerhouses and dead raccoons and leaves go past. I hesitate.

The dice rolled in my favor, I think. But, like a vase glued back together, the crack-up remains. Hidden, but there nonetheless. In my younger and less vulnerable years, I was a bulletproof tank. Now, I can't speak about my dreams any louder than a whisper for fear that the universe will make a special effort to thoroughly wreck them.

I cracked up. I'm still cracked up—the post-jolt man of new interests, as Fitzgerald described, but rattling around inside nonetheless.

It left me shaking and weak and angry and ready to turn Bradford on itself—to flick open a Zippo and set alight the oil-soaked hills that I blamed for the highway accident of my plans. There's that specter of yokel-ness over my shoulder, no matter how much I shed the accent or vote blue or travel

or read or think. It could've been anywhere else, and the world chose here. The world chose this.

"Yeah."

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Powdered Sugar Sands

Jedidiah Graham

In Florida, the tropical sunrises look like SweetTarts, and the ocean is shaded in the blue and green hues of a liquid Jolly Rancher. That is where, for the first time in my life, I laid eyes upon the sea. Awestruck, I walked alone along the powdered sugar sands of Opal Beach, where tufts of wild grass sprung from the barrier island's dunes like candy-apple Twizzlers.

Storm Surge

The beach stood empty beneath a dull gray non-stick cake pan sky. The ocean surged in photogenic swells. I walked with my body braced against the wind, while granules of sand peppered me in a constant exfoliating barrage. A subtle hint of salt, just a pinch, seasoned my every inhalation.

Life on the Edge

Willets, sanderlings, plovers, and pipers sung their seaside songs. Terns pitched headfirst against the gale. Squadrons of pelicans skimmed the waves in formations of twos and threes. Beyond the horizon raged a not-quite-hurricane, a not-so-quiet tropical onslaught miles to the west.

Singing Sand

Opal Beach sang with each step I took. Each grain of white quartz crystal had been perfectly sized by millennia of ocean currents and roaring waves to give the sand its distinctive voice.

Where the Water Flows

Walking on the wet sand was like walking atop a cake. It gave way to my weight, grudgingly. It was a soaked graveyard littered with skeletal remains of sea scallops and the fractured bones of sand dollars. Sandpipers darted in and out of the wet zone in an intricate dance with the waves. The water met the land in a tumultuous mixer bowl of life and death—a barren, eroding strip of grayness where the raw, violent power of nature was seen, tasted, and touched.

A Shard of Glass

Knotted clumps of seaweed the color of licorice and strands of mossy green sea slime, like a gummy bear that had been in the sun too long, was deposited by the tide. They were crusted with nut-like nuggets of shells and debris that made them appear like oversized candied treats from hell. I walked from one glob to another, probing for something interesting and instead, I found plastic candy wrappers, bits of wood, and a shard of glass, circular and brown—the remnant of a carelessly discarded beer bottle.

Seeking the Magic

Several miles into my walk, the storm surge had taken its toll on my body. My movements slowed as exhaustion crept in. My vision blurred. My joints groaned in protest. My skin turned raw from the ceaseless sand-laden winds. Yet, I pressed on. I sought something special along the shoreline, without knowing what it was.

Unexpected Encounter

My bare feet connected with something strange. In those few milliseconds it took for recognition to occur, I was hit by waves of revulsion and fear. I found myself shackled by a lifetime of mid-western living, coupled with those ancient map legends that claimed with a grizzled sailor's growl, "Here, there be monsters."

In that fractional measure of time, horrid images enhanced with the steroids of fertile imagination flashed and flitted through my mind. Cthulhu, discarded leather, jellyfish stingers, a ball of wadded paper, a human body part, or the poisonous secretions from the skin of some yet-to-be-discovered creature who'd been forced ashore by a polluted habitat.

I jumped, took a double take, then stared. My curiosity blunted my alarm. What was the strange object? I had to know. I withdrew a broken scallop shell, red and white striped like a piece of peppermint candy, from my bag and nudged it gently.

To my delight, the odd form unfurled like the wrapper on a chocolate truffle, and I stood face to face with a crab. It extended its two claws, one larger than the other. Both were a ghostly white with hints of pink and blue and wicked serrated edges. It watched me with, two black eyes set in the corners of its face above a frown made perpetual by the shape of its mouth.

Satiation of Discovery

I left Opal Beach, filled with magic moments to savor. I'd tasted the raw power of nature and found it to be as colorful and delectable as a bag of candy.

Running

Roman Knudson

When he asked if I wanted to come, I said yes. It was a tradition in the family that went back generations, and I wanted to be a part of it.

I took the safety classes; I got my license; I found the gear; I chose my gun.

Nothing prepared me for when I actually took the shot and killed her.

I remember sitting in the tree stand, and when she came into view—good size, beautiful coat—I raised my shotgun and took aim. I did what he said and let out a slow breath as I pulled the trigger. I hit her, but as her fight kicked in, she ran. She kept running until she couldn't. We all run until we can't.

He had told me that when either of us took a shot, I needed to wait in the tree until he came and got me. After a moment, I saw him walking towards me as he waved me down. Slinging the weapon across my back—safety on, always—I climbed down. I was shaking. I had fired guns before but always at a paper target or a piece of wood. Never at something with a heartbeat. Never at something so gentle, so beautiful.

We followed her blood trail and found her a hundred yards from where I first saw her. She was gone.

Perfect shot. Good job.

I felt sick. I wanted to turn away and leave, but that would be disrespectful.

She deserved better. I had already robbed her; I couldn't just leave her in this field.

You wait here. I'm going to get the four-wheeler and my knives.

So I waited as he left. It was a few minutes. I felt her coarse, thick coat. I touched her ears. I pulled away, thinking, *This doesn't feel right*.

When he came back, he unpacked the supplies and pulled the knife from its sheath.

Do you want to try? Enter here, go down—. . . .

No, that's okay. I'm not strong enough to break through anyways.

He nodded and began the process. He had been doing this since he was my age. It was tradition.

It started as survival. What was done for survival turned to habit, to ritual, to tradition, to religion.

As she spilled out and bled onto the dirt and broken corn stalks, I could picture myself worshiping her. I thought, *She gave herself to me*.

But she didn't. She didn't ask for this. She walked out of the timber for food. I robbed her. She wasn't a martyr. The application of the term *martyr* implies that she knew what she was doing when she died. It implies that she walked out of that timber with a mission that went beyond a simple meal and that she had a grand idea of the good her death could do. It implies that I killed her because I had a grand mission beyond a good meal and a good pelt.

None of this felt good. None of this felt right.

That was the second to last time I fired that shotgun. It was the last time I ever killed something.

The last time I fired, I wasn't aiming to kill. I wasn't even aiming to hit.

It is the next weekend but the same clothes, same gun, same tree stand. However, this time, it is a beautiful buck that marches out from the timber. He's big, bigger than her, and he carries himself with pride.

He's almost too far away for a perfect shot, but I know I can do it. Physically, I can pull that trigger and do the process over again. But I can't. I raise the shotgun and look at him through the scope. I see nicks on his coat here and there; I see a living creature with a history. I take aim well above his body and towards the right. I want him to run into the timber. I want him to run and never stop.

I think of the taxidermy bucks hanging on the wall in our living room back home. I think of their eternal gaze as we all sleep and eat and live and

continue. I think of their eyes glinting in the night, even when there's no light source. I think of an altar, but I don't want to be the one to put him on it despite the appeal of worship.

I do what I did before and let out a slow breath as I pulled the trigger.

He runs right for the timber. His strong body breaks through the bush and branches as he clumsily pushes through all of it as the fear and adrenaline power him. I have a faint idea of how he feels. How it feels to be running and crashing and breaking despite not knowing what exactly you're running from. But I never thought I would be the one forcing others to run away.

I never went back into that tree stand, and I never picked up that shotgun again.

I started running the moment I took her. I will until I can't.

An Open Letter to My Childhood Fears

Hannah Paczkowski

Long paint-splattered rotting staircases that twist and creak lead to a dark damp drywall-infested basement. As soon as your feet touch the ground, you must flip the light switch; that's the indisputable rule. If you don't, the monsters will crawl out of the corners of the room, with their greasy black claws, and drag you, kicking and screaming, through discarded Christmas decorations and forgotten Barbie furniture until you are tossed into the cramped 4x4 horror film lit room where the septic tank lives, never to be seen again. Just an anecdote for your parents to mention in a passing dinner party conversation.

"We had a kid once, until they forgot about the Light Switch Rule."

But you know that Mom needs paper towels. So you run, barefoot on freezing concrete, and complete your mission, waiting until the very last second to flick the lights off and leap back onto the sagging stairs, sprinting, heart pounding, but safe. For now.

A few years later, Mom lets you get an email account to talk to your friends from school. You like to send Mary Kate pictures of baby animals and word puzzles that you came up with for her to solve. You are set up on the old whirring dinosaur desktop in that same basement. It was a

compromise. You wanted a cell phone. You received access to a lagging whirring time capsule from 2005 instead.

You receive your first piece of chain mail. It permeates your mind with gore and ghosts and gut-wrenching terror. It keeps you up at night, wrought with guilt, staring at your glow-in-the-dark star-laden ceiling. You are too old for a nightlight, but cannot be left to fend for yourself in the dark. You show up to school with bloodshot needle eyes. The message has gone to everyone in your grade and they sent it to twenty people who sent it to twenty people and five of those twenty sent it to you.

If you don't send the message to twenty people, the girl from *The Ring* will appear at the bottom of your bed tonight at 3 a.m. You've never seen *The Ring,* but there's a picture attached and you really don't want to meet her. The math is very complex and not clearly stated in the email. If five people sent you an email that was meant to be forwarded to twenty unsuspecting victims, do you send it to one hundred or the specified twenty? You panic because you definitely do not know one hundred people. You send it to twenty people, as originally stated, with crossed fingers. That night, you keep vigil while clutching your Winnie the Pooh flashlight and a foam sword readied for battle.

Dad's friend from work who has no eyebrows and smells like mothballs gives you a doll. You've only met her once, which is why she thinks this is a good idea. She does not know you saw one snippet of a *Chucky* movie and couldn't sleep for two months or that you weren't allowed to read *Goosebumps* anymore after your sour reaction to *Night of the Living Dummy*.

The doll is porcelain and wearing a calico dress with curled auburn hair that looks human. She's on a stand on your dresser and no matter where you are in your room, she's looking at you. Her tag says her name is Ruth. You hate Ruth. Her eyes are black during the day and at night, the moon makes them glow and twinkle mischievously. You have to sleep in your room. There's nowhere else to go. Your mom asks you why you've been sleeping on the floor and not your bed.

"It's the only place I can't be seen" is not a well-received answer.

Ruth is banished to the basement with the girl from *The Ring* and the septic tank monsters.

You are an adult now and you still make rules for yourself. You don't go to parties in the campus suites because you are still afraid of monsters grabbing you and dragging you away. You are still afraid of any email or letter that says "Urgent Open Immediately." You still hate dolls and the idea of being watched at night. Your mom's new house doesn't have a basement, and for that, you are grateful. But you know Ruth is living somewhere in the garage. Sometimes, in secret, late at night, you try not to look at the stacks of plastic bins for fear that she will look back at you.

No Name

Kostandi Stephenson

As I wait for the police officer to arrive, I drink room-temperature water out of a flimsy bottle that a victim's advocate handed me. She's kind and soft spoken with average-length brown hair. Her lack of physical zeal makes her more approachable. She looks calm and welcoming in her casual clothes and comfortable, well-worn jeans. Clearly, she's seasoned with trauma and well trained enough to not flinch at gory, gritty details of sex crimes. She keeps offering me snacks. It's a nice touch, but my stomach is not to be trusted as its contents slither and turn over.

Mallory, the advocate, has called the police for me. Despite the circumstances, she's incredibly cordial and cheery on the line. With "thank you" and "that's so helpful," the reality that she's requesting a police officer feels disjointed. *I must rest my hands on the table to keep steady*. She keeps ducking in and out of the conference room, obsessively checking the front door. It's a women's shelter with a two-door lock system because that's the only way to keep the battered women and children here safe. The staff is on high alert and they speak in hushed tones about the incoming officer. I only see quick glances of most of the residents. After checking to see what's causing Mallory to pace back and forth, they scurry like frightened little mice. I'm just as afraid as they are—so out of my mind terrified that I'm praying to a god I don't believe in. I'm begging that I get a female officer. There are enough women in the shelter that I think maybe all the estrogen will draw

in a policewoman. Even in the excessively large conference room I wait in, there's constant reminders of my femininity. Vintage posters are framed and hung all around, promoting the safety and health of women. But the only patrons I see are endangered and sick.

It's only been about fifteen minutes since we called the police. But it's still enough time for me to rethink this choice of coming forward. I want to take it back. What lies ahead of me is an hour-long interview in front of strangers. They need all the details of what the man whose name I can't remember did. A male officer walks in. He's a stock image of a police officer. He towers above me and I can see how muscular he is, thanks to his well-fitting uniform. A walkie talkie is perched on his shoulder and shiny cuffs dangle from his belt.

I notice his attractiveness and vaguely think I could want to get closer to him in a different circumstance. *Part of me is disgusted* that I can notice alluring details in a man after all that a man has done to me. *Part of me is grateful* that there is still a sexual component to my being. The officer sits down at the conference table made for eight people, but it only seats the officer, the advocate, and the victim.

He introduces himself and explains that I can't shock him, that he's here to help, and that it's going to get uncomfortable. He exhales and I can't tell if it's an annoyance, or if he's just as anxious as I am. I wonder what it's like on his side of the table, whether he will believe me, or if he already doubts. We are all wearing masks, so any hope I had of reading his face is dropped.

I'm getting prompted to tell my story and to finally put on record what No Name did to me. I try to form coherent, eloquent sentences, desperate to prove that I'm a reliable witness. There's paranoia with each inhaled breath that no one in this room is on my side. Mallory, literally on my side, is grounding but she doesn't know the internal battle that she is helping me win. I view her profile and take in the curves of her glasses. My eyes need a rest from the tall officer with a gun on his hip.

The words trip and stumble out of me. I know I'm speaking too rapidly. Mallory has pointed out his body cam; she wants me to know and is hell-bent on transparency. I am being filmed and *she didn't prep me for this possibility*. While it gives me the tiniest shiver of discomfort, knowing that all my actions can be played back, I find the body cam fascinating. It's an unexpected distraction and I am shocked by its small frame and discreet

coloring. The officer reigns me back in. He knows what I'm doing: grappling at any excuse to not talk about No Name.

Between shallow, frequent breaths, I continue. I give him a rundown of the perverted molestation I endured. It's not enough detail and suddenly, people I've known for 20 minutes are discussing my vagina. The questions come and I feel like I'm being rubbed down with sandpaper. I'm being carved down, filed and exposed. We're saying vagina over and over and I'm being asked how long, how many fingers. My voice wavers and cracks. I try to swallow but have no saliva on my tongue.

Questions are being asked of me that I never thought I'd hear or have to answer. All his phrasing is medical. The technicality of each question is so callous and cold, but I'm still sweating through my shirt. "Can you go over the assault again?" the officer says. I falter. Even though I've given a clear explanation, the officer is walking me through step by step to grasp onto any detail, sensation, or smell. He asks me exactly that—*to describe the scent of the assailant.*

The only scent I can place is that of cured meat. I saw him handle a packet of salami and cheese and the musk of his snack withered in the air. He was so casual, so relaxed. One minute, he was just enjoying a small bite to eat and then, when his appetite wasn't fulfilled, he devoured me. This detail isn't helpful, so instead, I describe the face of No Name. I know it; I see it each night as I try to sleep. As the details of his features spill from my lips, I am marred by the irony of how intimately I know this man without knowing his name. It's such a vital piece of information. I can't accuse someone without knowing who they are. The police officer is annoyed; I can feel it even with the mask on. The fabric buckles each time he firmly purses his lips. I see how stiff his posture is before he leans back into his chair. An exhale precedes the repetition of the question "and you don't know his name?" But I know so much more than his name.

I know how he's balding in the classic way men in their sixties do. He slicked back his silvery white hair, but it was thinning on the top of his head. I know that he is out of shape and significantly overweight. I wouldn't even have had to see him to note this. Each breath he took was ragged, loud and labored. It may as well have been the panting of a beast from a monster movie. I know that his weight is the thing about him that sticks with me the most. His intimidating size echoed in every detail and action he made. I knew his weight by the moan of the chair as he sat near me. And I heard

it once again as he heaved himself out of the chair with an attenuated sigh. But mostly, I remember how he even carried the weight in his hands. His fingers were short and fat. They had the plumpness that one sees in the hands of a well-fed baby. But those obese, swollen fingers are the ones that subjugated me. I see them all the time. When I brush my teeth, while I listen to a lecture, when I eat. And while I painstakingly describe the hands of No Name to the officer and advocate, I *feel* them again.

This phantom assault makes me fumble with my words and I pause to drink more lukewarm water. I am trying to compose myself, to stop myself from shaking, but No Name has touched more than vulva or vagina. He's touched my brain and I feel his sweat coat my thoughts. I'm no longer at a women's shelter. I'm in hell. And hell is a hospital bed as a health provider greedily accosts me. I wonder if the whole assault was satire. That maybe it's commentary of the failing American medical system. But no. It's my life, my story. And it's a story where a man whose job was to save me, was the one who violated me when I was too sick and weak to defend myself.

Mallory pulls me back into the present. Her tone is soothing as she praises me and reminds me to breathe. This woman is a miracle. She is keeping me together and even though I just met her, it feels like it's the opposite. She's stoic and her noble essence emboldens me to continue the report. To think, when I first saw her only thirty minutes prior, I thought she was nothing special—pretty in a run-of-the-mill sort of way. But now she's golden and effervescent.

The barrage of questions keeps coming and the police officer writes in a well-worn red notepad. He scans through all he's written. It's a meager amount of black shorthand and smears, but he seems satisfied and closes it. He couldn't have written more than twenty words. Most of them were dates, and a quick flash of annoyance pings in my chest. How could something so monumental be reduced to a note that fits into a chest pocket?

Then, the officer guides me through what the legal process of getting a conviction would entail. It sounds aggressively complicated. The most important question is finally addressed: *what do you want to do?*

Everything I want—a time machine, vigilante-style repercussions—are all impossible. I tell the officer that I do want to make this an official report, I want a detective, an investigation, all of it. He nods briefly and fiddles with his walkie talkie. He's mumbling some police jargon that I don't understand. Then a crackle and a hiss bounce out of the grey device. We wait in

silence, hoping for a response. After a beat and no response, he rolls his eyes and shakes his head in a good-mannered way. "They never answer," he says. It's just another day punching the clock for him.

After a bit of phone tag, he finally reaches the dispatcher and gets a case number. It gets written on a tiny, powder blue handout. His pen scratches it as he hits his name and badge number. I should be expecting to hear from a detective soon—another stranger who will get to know me solely as a victim. But it's finally over. The officer is giving me a final wrap-up speech and quickly asks if there's anything else I need to add. After a quiet no from me, he disappears, and the double doors are locked securely once again.

I start sobbing, louder and harder than the little sniffles and sparse tears I had during the report. I'm reeling and trembling—even my thighs twitch. Mallory applauds me, even thanks me for my bravery. She explains that she studied criminal justice and she'll help with every step of the way through the legal process. It's unlikely that I'll see justice through the courts. I've no physical evidence, and the news is filled with countless stories like mine. None of them seem to have their well-earned amends. There isn't a cinematic ending for me. To *concede to that reality leaves a sour taste in my mouth* so severe that I clench my jaw. But there is victory in my coming forward. I'm fighting back now and with the help of police, I will get paperwork of every employee I worked with in the hospital. No Name can't hide forever.

I will find him, and I will know his name.

SHORT FICTION

Periódicos

Eileen Burnett

He sat there, cigarette in his mouth
half-cocked, as if ready for a smile.
He had mastered the art of holding his ash—
that long testament to his *paciencia*,
both with us and with the life that burned bright
behind his glasses smudged deep with oil.
Hands, deeply creased and weathered yet smooth,
strong for his eighty-five years.
A lifetime spent in introspective meditation
thinking about
    what was
        what could be
            what never would be
all because of what he knew to be
    TRUE
in those carefully folded *periódicos* of his,
those barometers of a society that
was really only meant to be
    a bookmark
But here he was, forty years later
Not much has changed.

"Me han robado todo" they say. . . .
But have they?

Carlos set down his tools, tools he used to repair and restore furniture for the rich white people in Crescent City. The furniture was from the old colonial homes that were originals from the times of the slaves, slaves that may have come from the same land of Senegal as his ancestors, and the irony was not lost on him. That he would use his craft, a talent that had earned him a fine reputation as one of the finest *bodegas* in Matanzas, preserving a culture that had bastardized people, undermining an entire culture. They had raped and pillaged and now left their eternal monuments to stand as constant reminders to that insult, to that betrayal. . . .

He shook his head to clear it.

No, he told himself. He must not think in this way.

He lit a cigarette, took a long, deep draw, and held it for a moment, feeling the smoke swirl into his lungs. The nicotine finding every avenue to make its way into his system, filling his head with a soft buzz of contentment. The ice in the glass of water at his side table had long since melted, and a ring of sweat was on the side of it, bleeding out onto the table. He reached over and took a drink, letting the cool water pass down his throat and clear what was left of that thought. He imagined it to be *una cascada*, like the ones back home: soft-flowing and cool. The kind that washed away all bad feelings and left a man feeling centered and refreshed and happy to be alive.

Those people, the ones that did those things, they were dead now. And this? This *mueble* was a simple piece of wood and two-hundred-year-old horsehair all wrapped in a cloak of deteriorating cotton fibers. It was held together by nails that were hand forged, each one, by a craftsman, like he himself had once been.

A craftsman who was now dead.

He looked at the wood, the rich colors brilliant with hundreds of years of use. It was nothing. The wood could not speak for an era that had long since passed. It could not whip, or rape, or take away his dignity; it was only a chair, and he, only a man.

This chair . . . it did not care about the size of his nose, the color of his skin, or the way his hair curled. It did not care if his grandchildren looked

negros o blancos, what kind of house they lived in, or if they observed the right religion.

The wood did not care if or how or why he had lost everything to come here, only to find that he received a fool's welcome when he did. Whether he was spat on, laughed at, or condescended—that wood, that piece of furniture and all it signified, could not care because it was wood, and wood did not care. Lifeless and still, it sat in his shop, asking nothing of him except what its owners had asked of him.

And if he were to truly see, he would realize that these clients had asked him to restore this eighteenth-century chair from a plantation that had once been a hub of slavery and misery in this area. They had just recently bought the place. They were investors from *El Norte,* and they had about as much to do with its history as Carlos did. Nothing.

He looked again at the chair. There were no echoes inside of it to tell it of its hate for him and his kind, no laughter at the choices of his music or his drink, and certainly no reverberations of shouting for those whose lights could no longer be shared, whose inglorious industry called for something this world was just not ready for. No, the wood *could not care*, for it was only an old, weathered, inanimate thing that carried no resolve within itself. And for that matter neither can the horsehair, except that it stunk of two hundred years of rich white ass and needed to be washed.

He brought the cigarette again to his lips, drawing in the smoke that reminded him of his homeland, trying to make it a part of him: the sights, the sounds, the feelings of a memory that seemed to grow dimmer by the day. He closed his eyes and listened to the cicadas in the trees, felt the trickle of a breeze that made its way into the garage, and heard the birds flying overhead. He caught the smell of *frijoles negros* from the kitchen where his daughter was cooking for her three young children. The rich and flavorful scent of onions and garlic simmering in olive oil made his mouth water, and he nearly dropped his cigarette. He sighed, sat down, and let the smell of bubbling beans well-seasoned with pickled-pork, cumin, and oregano wash over him. He could also detect the aromas of starchy and sweet yucca boiling and the garlic-lemon *mojo* that had been staples for him as he was growing up.

He lit another cigarette and closed his eyes, thoughts drifting to the days of his youth as he rested: *fiestas* with the roasting pigs, pigs that seemed to be as plentiful as they were fat; the serendipity that one always just happened

to be ready for a party or gathering at a moment's notice; the dancing and singing that kept time with their lives, especially the singing. He and his brothers could sing all day and all night together, *baladas* that would make all hearts swell with a love for life, liberty, and country, or *Punto Guajiro* that made all the ladies get up and dance with a beauty unmatched by any in the world. They sang and danced for no other reason than for *pura vida*—expressing life in rhythm and song.

Carlos thought on this for a while as he smoked his cigarette. Then another. He thought of the bourbon that flowed like water all through the night; the *gasolina* that kept his friends and family laughing and clapping barefoot in front of the fire. It was a portrait of life beneath the stars brighter than a man could dream of; it was more marvelous than the richest of paintings.

Carlos opened his eyes and looked around his shop, glad for the good things in his mind that no one could take away.

He looked over to the piece of furniture still awaiting his hand to make it beautiful once again and then to his *periódico* on the table. He thought of the article he had read earlier that day. This newspaper was his daily link to the outside world. Good or bad, he weighed its worth by its contents. He smiled and shook his head as he stood, satisfied that his question earlier had just definitively been answered.

No me han robado todo, no, he thought to himself.

He could still remember. He could still think. He could still dream. And that was enough for him.

My Heart and Liver

Emma-Li Downer

Mama always wanted a home. She whispered this in my ear with tangy breath on Friday nights. She clung to Mum's arm and wobbled out of long nights at a restaurant and bar, singing in a croaked voice that matched her steps about how lucky they were for finding each other, for adopting me. It wasn't until much later I understood why the look on Mum's face began to darkened and match the glances people gave Mama in public.

Mum always loved puzzles. She unfolded the morning newspaper solely for the crossword, letting her forgotten tea cool. *Jeopardy* and *Wheel of Fortune* were staples during our dinners, shows that Mama said were hard to get on, harder to win, and Mum was practicing for both. It's taken me a while to fully understand why Mum turned to Sudoku puzzles and their preset answers after fighting with Mama.

For "Cultural Diversity and Awareness Week," Mrs. McCoy said that we needed to bring in an "authentic, cultural dish" to talk about. I asked Mum. Mama was my go-to for help with homework because she made it fun, even if I had to ask Mum to check my math because she knew multiplication better than Mama. But Mama was away on a business trip, Mum's cooking was the best, and I had something to prove.

That annoying boy in the back of the classroom had looked at me and asked how I could bring any good food from "over there." Mrs. McCoy snatched his wrist and apologized as she yanked him out of the classroom.

"There's always an answer," Mum said as we searched the internet. I told her I wanted to bring something sweet because everyone loves sweet things. I never said anything about the boy. "All you need is time."

She found a recipe for "mooncakes," and we visited the local food store. The store didn't have "such Oriental" ingredients, according to the worker unpacking bananas. Mum covered my ears, her hands shaking. Her muffled voice spat out what Mama explained later as "bad, naughty words."

We ended up driving forty minutes to a long building with odd, red shapes on the front. Hiding underneath those shapes were red letters that I could understand: *Asian Food Market*. After the car stopped, Mum's hands unfurled from the steering wheel. "We're never going back there."

I wasn't sure why she was so angry. She only got like this when Mama wobbled into the house and couldn't lock the door behind her. I nodded along as if I understood.

Lightning flickered outside, quickly followed by a crack of thunder that roared over the TV's chatter about the heavy storm and heavier traffic. I huddled further into Mama's side as we waited for Mum to come home for dinner. She leaned over my ear and started telling me about the places she visited when traveling for work. Her clean breath tickled my skin as her airy voice spun the wildest stories.

"I just finished meeting with a business partner in Italy—that country that looks like a boot," Mama was saying. My eyes kept closing, and I heard snippets of her story. Something about her climbing a leaning tower of pizza? Her shoes must've been sticky coming home. Mum probably made her take them off before entering the house. Mum hated a dirty floor.

"Was the pizza good?" I asked, trying to stay awake.

"Pizza?"

"I like pizza," I heard myself mumbling. My eyes closed. "But someone said pizza isn't Italian. It's . . . it's from here. Like Chinese food. . . . "

"We can go to Chinatown . . . " Mama's voice was floating in and out. " . . . bring you to China . . . visit where we met you . . . try all kinds of food . . . to do that?"

I heard the question and nodded as if I agreed. I had Mama and Mum. I didn't need to go anywhere like my birth country. When I first said that, Mama had assured me that I would think differently when I got older.

I stared at the sheets of paper Mr. Xiao handed out with Chinese characters neatly printed for us to study, trace, practice. Below the unfamiliar shapes were English letters with small dashes hovering above certain letters at different angles. To help with pronunciation. I found them just as complex as the Chinese characters. I just looked at the English words below.

"Happy Valentine's Day," Mr. Xiao greeted the three of us once we settled around his dining room table. "It's a special day. Want to learn a term of endearment later?"

My face remained blank, but the two other students nodded as if they knew what he meant. They probably did. They were siblings adopted from China a year apart, a boy and a girl. The sister was older than me by three years and told me the day we met that their dad was homeschooling them. The brother was older than me by two years and bragged last week that if the two of them were in a public school, they'd be a year ahead of where they were supposed to be. Their dad was teaching them pre-algebra, and they had each other to practice their Chinese.

I only had four years of elementary school and stopped trying to practice after Mama had me say something in front of her brother, who was visiting for the new year. He had laughed, apologized, and forgotten all about it.

Hair, *finger*, *mouth*, *chest*. Mr. Xiao pointed to each body part as he said the Chinese. *Shoulder, leg, eye.* I tried to follow along, but the words still sounded foreign. He tapped his head, saying something that sounded like *toe* as if the two body parts were switched. I wanted to laugh in delight; I might have a chance of saying something right.

"Do kids at your school notice how your eyes are different?" the sister asked me during our ten-minute break. The three of us sat shivering on Mr. Xiao's front steps to get out of that cramped space. "Or your hair or skin?"

A gust caught some of the black hair resting on her shoulder, and the strands tumbled down, smooth and straight. Like mine, I realized. Not like Mum's blonde curls or Mama's wavy brown hair.

"Our dad gave us a memoir to read," the brother added, not explaining what that was. "The author grew up in a town like this one and always felt

out of place. No one looked like him, especially in school. Do you feel like that? Like you don't belong?"

I started to say no, but I stopped. I thought for a moment as I clenched my teeth so they didn't chatter in the winter air. There was just that boy who had sat behind me two years ago, the one who forgot to bring food for Culture Week but enjoyed eating Mum's mooncakes. I mentioned him, and they looked disappointed.

We headed back inside for the rest of class, and I decided to pay more attention in school. If the siblings thought it was important to notice the differences between me and my classmates, then I would. They were smarter than me, older.

My heart and liver. Mr. Xiao pointed to those areas as we packed up for the day. It was a term of endearment he called his fiancé. *xīn-gān.*

I didn't try to repeat it when I told Mum about it on the ride home. It sounded better in Chinese.

"The heart and the liver are two of the most important organs in the body," she explained. "It's a way to tell someone, you're as important to me as my heart and liver; I need you to live."

We sat in warm silence the rest of the way, something I only got with Mum. Mama always wanted to talk with me, talk *to me*. I wondered if this made Mum more like my heart or my liver.

The small cherry blossom tree in the front of our house waved a greeting in the spring breeze. I smiled back and spied Mama's car in the drive. Mama was supposed to be on a business trip; she must have gotten home early. Excitement buzzed in my stomach, but it fell quiet when Mum sharply inhaled. She released a hissing breath as we turned into the driveway.

I started putting on my backpack. It was full of paper covered in printed Chinese characters and my messy attempts to copy them—no improvement after months of lessons. The car stopped, and I quickly slid out. Climbing the front steps, I didn't need a key to open the door. I entered, cautious of the silence and emptiness until I saw Mama sitting in the dining room. She was pinching her nose, her dark hair all frizzy. A tall bottle, partly filled with her sour-smelling drink, stood next to one of those half-fat, fancy glasses now stained a purple-red. I didn't know if I should make a noise, so I stood in the doorway.

Mum entered the house and shut the front door. Mama heard her movement, glanced up, noticed me, made an odd expression with wide eyes and a wobbly smile, and then looked through me.

Mum came from behind and patted my head. She asked me to go to my room, to study my notes from tonight's lesson or do some homework for school. Dinner would be ready in an hour. Come down to set the table when she called, okay?

I nodded. The sounds of Mum putting away the bottle, the glass, and opening the fridge followed me up the stairs. Mama didn't speak until I closed my bedroom door. Her words didn't enter my room. Mum's voice did, and I spent an hour staring at foreign symbols, not listening to my heart and liver fighting.

Mama's brother only visited for the holidays, so he joined us to celebrate Mama's birthday at her favorite restaurant and bar. I heard her voice from across the room. She was engrossed in a conversation with the band playing that night as they took a break. Mum was right by her side, supporting her because, after a couple of hours into a party, Mama couldn't do it herself. A tacky party hat on Mama's head made her stand out in the crush of bodies.

My uncle sat with me at a table. His glass was always full of some kind of beer that almost matched the yellow hue of my skin—or maybe listening to my classmates had made me start thinking like that.

"Y'know," he started with a slurred voice. His words cut through the murmur of conversation around us. "Your mom . . . and me and my sister. We have no parents anymore. But family—family's always been important to me. I'm sure it's important to you, being Chinese and all. If you don't get married and have kids, you . . . y'know, you'll be the last of us."

He paused for a drink, and I scanned the bar area. That loud cone of colors on Mama's head was mingling far away.

"I guess, you can't rea-really continue my family," he chuckled. "You not being related and all . . . but keep the name going, y'know? At least the name . . . I'm talking keeping a legacy going. Get me? You get me. Legacy, honor, Chinese things."

At my silence, it seemed to hit him. What he was saying. Who he was saying this to. He tried to hand me a smile. An apology? A request to forget

this conversation? In his state, he didn't notice how I let it drop onto the table between us.

I didn't tell Mama because she was croaking those tuneless songs about how lucky she was that we were a family. I didn't tell Mum because she was leading Mama into the car, up the driveway, and into their bedroom.

I did try to understand him. Later. After the tears. I wondered who would be sad if I was gone, if I ran away tonight. Who would've missed me? I wondered what would happen if he disappeared. Who would've missed him? I tried to understand that if I had Mama and Mum, who did he have for his heart and liver?

Mama loved me. I've never doubted that. Yet, I can only visit her on chilly afternoons. I always bring a small grave blanket from the local church; I don't know why. We were never religious, and Mama wouldn't have made a fuss if I just brought myself. Maybe I feel weird passing those children standing outside the church and not buying something. Perhaps it's the eager looks in their eyes or the thought that they're waiting to brag to their mothers how much they sold. Maybe I'm projecting.

Once I remember how to navigate the small paths that cut through manicured grass, I unpack the grave blanket from my heated car and find her.

"Mama." I test out the shape of my word, and a gust full of an encroaching winter steals my energy to say more. I stomp the stakes into the ground and nudge the bundle of evergreen needles and ribbon with my boot. It looks like it'll hold. I turn away.

During my drive out of the cemetery, I wonder if Mum was right, if there's always an answer. Given time, could I figure out how Mama's glass of wine with dinner evolved into a bottle and then into *sharing* two with Mum? Or why Mama's liver started to fail as her stress increased from work, and her response wasn't to stop. Or why her drinking and driving on a rainy night had only one outcome.

As I get older, am I supposed to better understand why I had to walk for my high school graduation and then change into somber clothes for Mama's funeral? Was I supposed to feel fortunate that Mum struggled with Mama's absence but didn't leave me—not right away, not all at once?

Mr. Xiao called his fiancé his *heart and liver*. He tried to connect me to a culture that Mama assumed must be worth more to me because I was born

there. He might have taught me some Chinese words to describe grief. Or loneliness. He might have taught me *home* and *mother* and *love*. But he never taught me what *brain* or *mind* or *memory* was.

I had to look those words up in English. How neurons die in the brain. Why Mum's mind and memories slowly leaked out like wine in a cracked glass.

This hollow feeling that pulsates in my chest and stomach—can it be remedied by knowing whether *head* is pronounced like *toe* in Chinese? I just know that it's hard leaving Mama to rest in her new home. It's hard driving to visit Mum where the only puzzle she tries to solve now is remembering my name. It's hard without my heart and liver.

Ancestry

Roman Hladio

[As World War II approaches the doorstep of his Eastern European village, Petro and his family prepare to escape the violent fate they see awaiting them. "Ancestry" was born out of the bedtime stories my Baba told about fleeing her Ukrainian village during the late 1930s.]

"Get up. Now." Tato's harsh words pierced through my dreams, coming through the mouth of a fairy I had caught dropping sweets into my shoes. "Up, Sinu. Wake your sisters, and bring them outside. It's time to go."

I rubbed the sleep from my eyes, opening my mouth as a question formed in my mind, but by the time I could see again, Tato was gone. My shoes stood at attention near the foot of my bed, just as I had left them. I had been keeping them close ever since Tato told me his plan.

"I need you to be ready, Petro," he had said late one night as we locked up the pigeons. I had found them living in the space above the door and had spent countless hours trying to teach them how to deliver the letters I had just begun to write. Mamo told me she'd boil the birds if they couldn't do anything by the end of the week. The birds didn't learn, but Mamo didn't keep her promise either. Now, they just pecked at the ground as if they were chickens, though they still had the good sense to come back at the end of the day. Tato had told me that we had to go because he could read

and write, which made the neighbors like him. He said the Soviet soldiers would kill people like us because they wanted to be everyone's favorite, they wanted to be the special ones. I thought it was pretty dumb to kill smart people because they usually made better plans. "They want us to be complicit, Petro." I had nodded, leaving the coop to continue the chores he and Mamo had laid out for me.

I jumped up and slid into my shoes. I had been practicing every morning since that day at the coop. Vika and Lesya turned restlessly in their sleep, quickly rolling into the empty space I had just created in the bed. It wouldn't have been hard for Tato to wake us all at once. I shook them both.

"Stop it, Petro. Let me sleep!" Lesya scooted away, bumping into Vika, who in turn gave a sharp jab to her stomach, exclaiming, "Hey! What was that for?"

"Quiet, both of you!" I hissed, trying to mimic Tato's sturdy tone. "We're leaving soon. Get up, and get dressed. And no talking."

I had friends who knew about the war. Last summer, we'd sometimes talked about it, swimming in the creek on hot days. They always seemed excited: the metal wagons with big guns on them, weapons that could drop people like ragdolls and shoot 300 times faster than our slingshots, and the girls who would throw themselves at the uniformed men. Those were their favorite things to talk about. But sometimes, usually on the rare occasions when Vasil or Andriy had swiped a bottle of *horilka* from their fathers' stash, we'd talk about the real stuff we knew about the war. How the Soviets were taking the towns around us, and how all the men—even boys our age—were enlisted or shipped off to work camps, and how dirt football fields had turned into piles of mismatched limbs due to undiscovered landmines. The towns had been raped and pillaged and burned until the ground became as dark as the night sky. All that was left were soot stained pigeons pecking at debris. We'd sit by the creek, taking swigs from the bottle hoping to feel warmth in the darkness swirling within us.

After a lot of moping, my sisters finally settled down in a spot near the

front of the wagon, nuzzling themselves in between sacks of bread and dried meat that Mamo had prepared earlier in the week. I couldn't tell what time it was, but the moon had already passed its highest point, and Mamo held bags almost as heavy as the ones beneath her eyes.

"Petro, bring the sacks from the kitchen and the big pot," she said. "Leave everything else. We don't want them to think we planned this."

It took three trips to gather everything. I stopped and glanced around, the pot still under my arm. Why did we have to leave it all behind? Who would notice if a few books were missing from the small shelf in the corner or if we took Mamo and Tato's wedding candles? I couldn't bear the thought of a fire consuming everything sacred to me, to us. Checking over my shoulder to make sure she wasn't watching, I raced towards the stubby cupboard, grabbing my cousin's knife from the bottom drawer—its ivory handle seeming to glow in the darkness—and pulled the wood-carved cross down from the kitchen doorway. The knife had supposedly helped him survive his deployment so it would surely help us survive ours, and the cross was my last birthday present from him before he died. Outside, I slipped both into the rucksack that held a few pieces of clothing while Mamo strapped in the donkey.

Four days ago, my cousin had returned from the war. We saw him—still in uniform—walking around town with his wife. The drabness of his garb made it hard to miss the badge that had replaced his left arm. We heard whispers of what happened from relatives, each new story filling in what the last had left out. His troop had reclaimed a village very similar to ours. The Soviets must have escaped as they arrived, and their bombers came two days later. He miraculously re-appeared at his base camp days after the bombing run, was given the best medical attention possible, and was honorably discharged for his valiance. Tato told me that a man who went through something like that was never the same, and the glazed look in his eyes told me everything else I needed to know.

Our extended family avoided talking about it in detail until he was found dead a day later. Andriy thought he had done it himself; another boy said it was the work of a self-proclaimed patriot who thought my cousin had somehow failed in his duty. I liked to think a Soviet spy sought to end what his brethren had started.

"Show some respect, boys!" Mamo had crept up behind us, giving each of our cheeks a sharp smack.

In any case, I knew that his death had made up Tato's mind.

"All right, Petro." Tato beckoned me over to the wagon from the spot against the wall I had been resting at. "Up you go. We have to be gone before the sun rises and anyone cares to notice."

I climbed into the back, carving out my own space near the girls. Mamo followed behind me, leaving Tato to carry the reins. I could feel the exact moment he started tugging the donkey along. I looked back towards our house as our wagon rolled down the bumpy dirt road. The dull clay walls, which had been the backdrop of my life, now seemed lifeless. The thatch roof looked identical to all the houses around it, all of them shells protecting the hearts living inside them.

Eventually, we rolled to a stop. I glanced up from the stick I was whittling with a flat river rock I had found while swimming that warmer season. A few yards ahead stood the church where my whole family—aunts, uncles, grandparents, and great-grandparents—had been baptized. Tato handed Mamo the reins and walked hurriedly up the steps leading to the priest's door on the side of the church. Vika stirred.

"Where's Tato going?" she asked.

"Just to collect our documents. He'll be back soon, just be patient," Mamo said.

"Are we moving?"

"Yes, Vika, it'll be like we're moving. Now hush, and I'll tell you a story of what our new life will be. When we get there, you and Lesya will have a whole bedroom separate from Petro, and the three of you will go to school. Your teacher will ask you, 'Where did you learn to read so well?' and you can tell her, 'My Tato! He's a genius!' And Petro can raise all the pigeons he wants, maybe even chickens because it would be nice to keep a few more eggs . . . "

I had my first kiss next to those steps. Kateryna Kolisnyka and I had snuck out of vespers one night and sandwiched ourselves between the steps and the big willow that grew beside them. She was one of the few girls in

town who was attractive and I wasn't related to. I gave her some flowers I had found by the creek earlier, and she gave me a kiss, which I promptly returned. The service must have ended early, though, because the next second, I heard Mamo shouting my name, calling me a heathen and a pervert. Kateryna ran away as I got dragged ear-first to the sacristy, where I was forced to confess to Father Mykhailo while Mamo listened, making sure to interject when I forgot my sins.

Tato reappeared a short time later, a stack of papers in hand. He opened the rucksack and tucked them in, raising an eyebrow at the trinkets I had stowed away, not saying anything.

With Tato at the reins, we began pulling away from the church once more. Its figure had always scared me as a child with the weathered planks emerging from the wheat fields surrounding it, the three steeples reaching like hands towards the sky, and the dull metallic domes catching the moonlight at bent angles. It moved like a ghost, materializing in front of me, then fading into the night a moment later. The steps were the last thing to disappear into the midnight haze.

I leaned my head on a sack of bread in the bed of the wagon and cupped a hand over my exposed ear, trying to block out the story Mamo kept telling over and over again. The wagon felt like a cradle, but my thoughts and the rocks in the road kept bouncing my head around. Would we ever return? Who would feed the pigeons? Would Vasil, Andriy, and the other boys and men fight or let themselves be taken and killed?

I fell asleep, dreaming of my village. Above, pigeons with flaming feet flew through the skies. They landed everywhere—in the fields, on top of the houses, and in Father Mykhailo's hair. In the end, there was nothing but rubble and ash and bone.

"Up, Sinu." I woke to Tato shaking my leg. "Your turn at the reins."

Everyone else was asleep. Tato took my place in the wagon, placing his hat on my head as he laid down. I looked down the road ahead, through the endless expanse of fields that was my home. The sun broke the horizon behind us, casting our long shadow through the monotonous plains. I did not look back.

Krabby Patty Gummies

Roddyna Saint-paul

Agua and Manman have been cooking up a tsunami of food all morning: *sòs pwa blan* with white rice, chicken, *griot*, sweet plantains, mac and cheese, and whatever else they've decided to make. The aroma creeps to every corner of the house, a siren song that settles in our noses and promises the world to our tongues. Only the inexperienced make the mistake of entering the war zone.

My brother and I know better; we watch the chaos with our noses pressed against the glass of the French door of the kitchen. Our mother and our nanny move with dizzying speed. The sink is running, now it's not; the fridge is opened, then closed, then opened, then closed. The oven is beeping loudly, insisting it's preheated, and the exhaust fan is on full blast. Even so, I can hear some pastor's sermon blasting from the phone propped against a window.

"Christine!"

I jump to attention when I hear Manman call for me, worried she's seen me smudging the glass with my nose. Thankfully, she doesn't look angry. She points to the dining room and snaps her fingers. "Go set the table. Dinner is almost ready."

I groan. She's once again refrained from assigning the job to Thomas. The little twerp laughs obnoxiously.

"Sucker," he teases. Pretending I don't hear him, I wait until he looks

back to the kitchen to kick the soft spot behind his knee. He buckles with a yelp, and I dart to the safety of the dining room before he can recover.

I detest doing any chores that my mother insists are a woman's job. Thomas never has to do housework. Worse, setting the table before each meal impossibly sours my mother's cooking. Agua knows how much I hate it, and she slips out of the kitchen to help me.

"Agua, it's okay. I can do it."

She laughs and reaches for the placemats in my hand. Her fingers are like sticks of charcoal, dark and bony, like the rest of her. "Let me help you, *petite mwen.*"

I leave her to the placemats, turning to gather the utensils from the China cabinet.

"Why don't you let me do it? You've been cooking all day with Manman."

"I help you because I love you."

"But I can do it."

"I know you can. But why shouldn't I help you? I am the *granmoun* and you are the child." She circles the table, placing a napkin at each setting before gesturing for me to set out the utensils. I'm only quiet for a few moments.

"Aren't you tired?"

"Not yet, *petite mwen,* not yet."

I sigh and finish setting the table. Done with the chore, I walk towards her, and she opens her arms, enveloping me in a familiar hug. Crushed against her gaunt frame, I inhale, drawing comfort from her baby powder-scented chest and the slight smell of pork that clings to her white house dress.

"Christine, I will help you to grow happy and strong and blessed and independent. That's my job. You can take care of me when you're older. *Ou tande mwen, cherie mwen?* You hear me?"

I nod against her chest. She holds me tighter for a second, then pulls away from me to dip a hand into one of the bottomless pockets of her house dress. A Krabby Patty gummy is visible for an instant before she pushes it into my waiting hand and glances around to ensure that no one has spotted us. I pocket the candy, elated that I don't have to share it with Thomas.

"This is the way life works—the old care for the young until the young can care for the old. Work hard and study hard so that one day you can take

care of me." She leans down, plants a kiss on my head, and sends me back to my room to play until she calls me down to eat.

As I climb the stairs, I vow to build us a mansion to fill to the brim with Krabby Patty gummies and butterfly-patterned house dresses and fancy house shoes that ease her back pain instead of those cheap lavender mesh slippers with flower-patterned sequins. Someday I will.

The funeral home is far too small to fit everyone who came to bid Agua farewell.

My family and I are stuck in the lobby with the others who are just arriving for the wake. Across from us stands a picture of her that I've never seen before. She's young, with hair that hasn't yet thinned out and eyes that haven't yet blurred and reddened. She isn't smiling in the photo, but if she was, I'm sure it'd be a beautiful grin, complete with a full set of teeth and laugh lines that disappear when she stops smiling.

I stare in confusion at the name printed beneath the portrait. Madame Noelle Magloire. I don't recognize it.

"Manman," I say, "how could I not have known her real name?"

"She came to us when you and Thomas were very young—Anna hadn't even been born yet. You couldn't pronounce Magloire. You started calling her Agua, and everyone followed." She squeezes my hand, raises it to her lips, and gives me a kiss. "Don't worry. She loved the nickname."

"*O Seyè Jezi! Mwen pa kapab!*" An older lady I don't know clutches at her chest and staggers back, sobs racking her body. "Lord Jesus, I can't!" Mom drops my hand and rushes to catch the woman before she falls, with Papa and Thomas right behind her.

I turn back to the portrait and weave through the sea of mourners to enter the viewing room, where Agua's casket awaits. I cannot go past the back row of folding chairs.

The Krabby Patty gummy in my pocket was supposed to be a heartfelt gesture, but it feels like a joke now. Lying in a casket some twenty feet away from me is my surrogate grandmother—the woman who fed, protected, and comforted me for a decade.

I place the candy on the folding chair closest to me and make my way out of the funeral home, weaving through the sea of her other children, who I didn't even know existed.

The first few days after she left were no different from normal. Maybe I felt some mild inconvenience: Agua wasn't there to make breakfast, and I got stuck with Manman's unsweetened oatmeal.

I learned to drizzle honey into the bowl while her back was turned.

Agua and I spoke on the phone every few days, and sometimes she even came by to drop off some candy for us. There were no tears or screams of anguish.

Missing someone sneaks up on you. It creeps around your days like the moss that crawls along the side of our garage. Weeks went by and my body longed for her before my mind did. My heart felt too light—I'd gone too long without a bone-crushing hug.

Children are selfish; each little moment is a giant episode of their lives, and the supporting cast inevitably gets swept to the back of their minds. And then, when I got old enough to discern what was missing, life sprinted along, refusing me the chance to get my bearings.

Madame Magloire did not have any sons or daughters, but she has children all over New York. Despite every child she raised, she died in a tiny apartment in Queens, probably dreaming about the sea of mansions she was promised by every young life she touched.

Ready or Not, Here I Come

Eunice Tan

After Teacher Lin told Ma that the reason why I can never sit still in my desk chair is because I am "special," Ma wrote a new rule on the list taped to my bedroom door in bright red Chinese characters: NO MORE HIDE-AND-SEEK OR RUNNING. NOT EVEN ON NO-CUSTOMERS TUESDAY.

I think it is a Tuesday. Teacher Lin's voice fades as my gaze wanders from a class painting labelled "Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia" to the red calendar with today's date: Tuesday, May 13, 1969. As I shake my leg under my desk, I wonder if anyone will tell on me if I run with the other boys after class.

"Class dismissed!" Those two words launch me out of my seat like a rocket.

My classmate Aadam and four other boys walk up to my desk.

"Ey, Hoi Seon!" Aadam says. "Want to play sepak takraw with us at my house? My mom said we can kick my ball over her clothesline."

My desk mate Yi Fen jolts in her seat and smiles up at him.

"Ye—uh . . . I can't," I say with a sigh. I think of the list on my bedroom door and how my Ma has tea every week with all the aunties in town.

"Oh, come on!" Aadam shakes me by the shoulders.

"I can. I can play with you."

All five of us boys turn to look at Yi Fen. I'm about to agree, when Aadam snaps at her, "Who asked you to play with us? A girl, play sepak takraw? Kick the ball over the line with your skirt?!"

"I have pants under my dress!" Yi Fen jumps up and tugs hard on her pant leg.

"No," Aadam's dark brown fingers press down harder into my shoulders, and it starts to hurt. "We don't play with girls like you," he says to her in Malay. Yi Fen's eyes grow. Aadam turns back to me and lets go of my shoulders. "Play with us tomorrow," he says in English again.

He and the other boys leave, and I watch, fists shaking by my sides. Xin and Ling-Ling walk by, whispering to each other in Mandarin, only that they aren't really trying to whisper.

"She is so weird," Ling-Ling says. "Look at her dirty dress. And why is she wearing those ugly pants?"

"Ya, eww . . . how can she have a Chinese name when her mother is Malay?" Xin "whispers" back. "She's not Chinese just because her father is."

"Ya," Ling-Ling agrees, "my Ma-Ma told me we should never mix."

The girls' footsteps fade as they leave, arm in arm. I look at Yi Fen, my eyes darting in panic. She looks down, dusting small flakes of wood off of a carving she etched into her desk with her pencil during class, then bends to pick up her backpack and walks away.

"Yi Fen! Wait for me!" I shout in Mandarin.

She stops and turns with a smile. It is bright. The same dimples, rosy cheeks, twinkling eyes. But her eyes are red and wet. I gasp and unclench my fists.

"See you tomorrow," Yi Fen says in Mandarin. And she leaves.

Alone in the classroom, I study her drawing. It is a sepak takraw ball—stems of a palm tree woven together. I touch it and close my eyes. I know what I have to do.

"Please!! Ma!" I cry at lunch.

"NO, I said NO," Ma shouts. "We are NOT buying a ball! Sepak takraw is for boys who study well and deserve a break! Not for boys who can't sit still and read!"

I think of Yi Fen. The image in my mind of her smiling brightly without

teary eyes as I present her a brand-new ball shatters into pieces. I slam my cup, yell at Ma, kicking at her under the table.

Ma about jumps up when Ba suddenly clamps his large hand over her mouth.

Her eyes almost explode with anger, but Ba puts a finger to his lips and gives her a look that makes her stop. He slowly removes his hand. It shakes slightly in the air. Ma's eyes widen and fix on Ba. I stop kicking. He takes three silent steps toward the window and peeks down at our coffeehouse entrance. With a swish, he draws the curtains and shoots the look at Ma again—eyes unmoving, lips slightly apart—it says something to her. She gasps.

I hear the muffled breaking of glass. The clang of pipes. Deep voices shouting orders. Then a scream.

"B–Ba, M–ma," I stammer, shuddering. The sounds grow louder. "What is happeni–?"

"A game," Ba whispers. Then he rushes to my side. He carries me up into his arms and breathes into my prickly black hair. I bury my head into his chest. "Everyone in town is playing a game. It is just getting too messy and loud."

My head pops up and I tap Ba's shoulders. "A game? Like hide-and-seek?"

"Yes!" He laughs. I begin to smile. "Guess what?" he says, "It's time for us to play!"

I bounce in his arms. "How? How do we play?" The shouts and clanging grow. Are those people banging on our coffeehouse door downstairs?

"That's just the other players telling us to hurry up! We've been keeping them waiting too long," Ba says with a nod at me and Ma. She pats me on my back, very gently and slowly.

"I–is Ma playing too?"

"Yes, I'm playing too."

I blink hard at her. Ma? Play a game with us? Her eyes seem more distant than usual. But Ma has never wanted to play with us before, so I just smile wider.

The players start shouting. They are men yelling Malay words.

Ba rubs my head. "Rule number one is you must not listen to what they say. Cover your ears tight. Go on. Show Ba you can follow the rule."

I cover my ears with my hands and look at Ba.

He smiles and nods. "Well done."

Ma squeezes his shoulder. He smiles and pats her hand.

"Hoi Seon, play your best game of hide-and-seek ever," Ba says. "Hide somewhere I will never find you. Where no one will ever find you."

My heart quickens.

"Rule number two: Don't go near the other players. Don't even look at them. Rule number three: Do not come out of your hiding place until you hear Ba say 'Ready or not, here I come,' okay? Even if I shout or even if I call your name, you must not come out of your hiding place. Do you understand?" Ba says all this very quickly, his breath uneven. But he finishes off with a warm smile and chuckle.

I smile back and nod.

"And if you follow these three rules perfectly," Ba says, "I will give you the ball."

I gasp. "Yes, Ba!"

I will finally be able to make Yi Fen stop crying. And I can play with her after school.

Ba looks deep into my eyes. He must really, really like this game. Maybe he played it when he was my age.

"Okay," Ba says. "I will start counting." He slowly lowers me. "Go, Hoi Seon. Run and hide. One, two—"

I run. Past the lunch table, down our stairs. I know exactly where I am going to hide. I arrive at the back of our coffeehouse. I can't hear Ba counting anymore.

"*Izinkan kami masuk*!" *Let us enter!* the voices shout behind me, banging and kicking. I almost turn. I want to see what they look like. But I remember: "Cover your ears. Don't even look at them." The sepak takraw ball. Her smile. I shake my head and stomp my feet. I cover my ears and run into the back kitchen. There is my hiding place. Under the tiled floor.

I lift the top of the deep drain. It is dry because no one has used this back kitchen in a long while and the restaurant next door closed a month ago, but it still smells like raw meat and rotten salted mustard greens. Ba told me never to hide in dirty places. I giggle to myself. He'll never find me here! I take a deep breath, almost gag on the smell, and lower myself into it. I fit in perfectly if I sit in a particular position. I reach up and shut the cover over my head. Because of the bars in the cover, I can look up at the lines of light. I cover my ears and wait.

Or at least I try to. Looking up at the blank ceiling and staying in the

same position for so long makes me shake. I give up and start dragging myself along the drain with my feet, hands clamped over my ears.

Soon, I see the afternoon sunlight above. People keep running over me, so I cannot see clearly. Some drag beams of wood. One man with very hairy legs has a thick metal pipe splashed in red-brown paint. It scrapes painfully against the bars above me, piercing my ears even as I press my palms over them as hard as I can. Bursts of orange colour dance on top of buildings. Is that the "fireworks" Ba tells me about? The players above are being too loud, so I drag myself further along to escape them.

By now, I have been in the drain for so long that my knees and elbows sting, my head feels squeezed, and I cannot smell the terrible stench I choked on just minutes ago. Or hours ago? I can't tell.

My elbow touches a dark, warm liquid. It covers most of the drain ahead. Suddenly, I can smell again, and this shining liquid makes my head spin. Did Aunty Xia from the chicken rice restaurant pour chicken guts into the drain again?

"Heuuheuu . . . " The darkness hisses and twirls around my neck. I struggle to shake it off.

The shouting and clanging grow louder. I hear a scream. It sounds like Teacher Lin when she is angry, but more desperate. I reach for the drain cover. The darkness hisses into my ear. I want to leave and jump into Ba's arms. I want to play sepak takraw with Yi Fen. Wait.

Yi Fen. My hand freezes. It falls back down. Don't forget her.

Ba. Don't forget his proud smile when you win hide-and-seek. The ball. You are only going to get the ball if you follow the rules.

"Go away!" I whisper into the darkness. "Go away!" Breathe in. Breathe out. The grip around my neck loosens and the darkness slithers away on the dark liquid.

I cover my ears again and drag myself back, returning to our coffeehouse. The drain starts at our kitchen, so once my back bumps into something, I will be there. I keep telling myself this and try not to think about anything else. Like how all of me hurts so badly. How my tummy is growling like a wild dog. How the heels of my sandals are teari—

PANG. PANG. PANG. The deafening shots break through my hands and ring into my ears like a pencil pierces right through a thin plastic bag. My hands shudder and I have to focus so hard to keep them over my ears. Tears stream down my face. I really want this game to end. I slowly turn

around and see, to my relief, the light of our kitchen. I drag myself toward it as I cry and press harder on my ringing ears.

"Hoi Seon!"

Ba! I reach for the drain cover to throw it open but then I remember. . . . "Do not come out of your hiding place unless Ba says 'Ready or not, here I come!' Not even if he calls your name!"

My fingertips trace the bars. I picture her smile without those wet eyes.

"Hoi Seon ah!" Ba cries with a crack in his voice.

My fingers tremble.

"Ready or not, here I come!"

I throw open the drain cover. I stand and yell, "Ba-Ba! I am here!"

They rush down the stairs and run to me. Ba carries me high into the air and hugs me tight. Ma cries as she hugs us both.

"I kept all the rules, Ba. I kept them all," I cry into his chest.

"Well done, Hoi Seon ah," Ba breathes into my hair. "You did so, so well." He pulls me closer and says my favorite words: "You win."

Seven days after the game, I look out the window at the flower shop across the street—Yi Fen's mother's store. Open. Please. Suddenly, as if by a magic spell, the shop door opens. I gasp, leaning forward. Yi Fen walks out. I startle at a white cloth around her left leg.

I grab the ball and sneak downstairs, running toward the flower shop. Her dark hair in two small pigtails, she turns back to the shop. I hide the ball behind my back.

"Yi Fen! Wait!!"

She turns around, eyes growing. "Hoi Seon? What are you doing here?!" Yi Fen looks over her shoulder, limps toward me, and drags me to the alleyway beside the shop, pinning me to the wall. "My mak can't see you. She'll get angry at me." She speaks in Mandarin, except for the Malay word for mother, "mak."

I nod with my mouth open.

She narrows her eyes. "Why are you here?"

"Oh! Uh, is your leg okay?"

Her eyes dim and she looks down at her bandaged leg. I realize she hasn't smiled at all.

"No," she says, "I won't be able to walk normally for at least two months."

"H—hey, don't be sad." I reveal the new sepak takraw ball. "For when your leg gets better. Let's play together."

She looks up at me. Her brown eyes grow. Oh, no, no. . . . They get wet, and a whole stream of tears starts pouring down her face.

I gasp and ramble, "I—I can tell my Ma I am reading books with my friends. She'll let me go out. Only if you want. And if your leg gets better. Well, the ball is yours, so whenever you want to play. Um, why are you crying?"

Then, Yi Fen does something completely confusing. She laughs. Her laugh is high and bright. Her wet cheeks grow pink, and the biggest smile I have ever seen spreads across her face.

I stare, shocked and questioning everything. Her eyes glow and she cries more and more and laughs more and more. Then, I start laughing too. Somehow, in this moment of confusion, I think she is the prettiest girl I have ever seen. As we laugh, I think of the words I will hear from Ma later: "We buy this new ball for you! Just for you to lose it!"

And I smile even more.

Broken Things

Kelly Taylor

I knocked over my grandmother's favorite vase on my way out the door. I grabbed my purse, swung it over a shoulder, and whacked it against the patterned glass. The pretty indigo pieces shattered on impact, burying themselves in my matted carpet. I stared at the waves of glass for a long time, wondering if I should say something, if I should carry out my own little funeral for the part of my living room I'd just irreplaceably lost.

"Are you still coming to lunch?" you asked over the phone, twenty minutes later. I sat on the floor picking tiny shards out of the carpet with my fingers.

"No. I don't think so," I said. "I've had an accident."

"Oh, my God! Really? Are you okay?"

"Yeah. Fine. It wasn't—I'm not hurt. I'm fine. Just cleaning up. I broke something. Not a bone." *Just a vase.* "It's a bit of a mess."

"Oh." Your voice softened with relief. "Oh. Want me to come over and help?"

"No. Thanks. I can handle it."

You paused. "Meet you for coffee instead?"

"Okay."

"Two o'clock?"

"I'll be there."

You disconnected.

I found the bottom of the vase largely intact. It was the biggest piece to survive the wreckage. I ran my fingers over the stickiness where years of rubbing alcohol couldn't remove the remnant of a price tag.

"It's priceless. My one-of-a-kind original."

"But Gram, he had to have made more than one blue vase."

"Ah," she said. "I'm sure he did. But mine is still special. None have a story like mine. I got it in Venice."

"I know."

"From this cute store in a back alley where a lovely old man blew glass."

"You've told me."

"Did I tell you about his glasses? He wore those tiny square ones that kept slipping down his nose. Like Pinocchio's father."

"And he had hair like Albert Einstein."

Gram patted the tufts of white hair remaining on her head. "Just like me."

It was true, with her lined cheeks and rounded face, she wasn't a far cry from the famous scientist. Sometimes even Dad called her Einstein.

"Did I tell you I met your grandfather there?"

"No."

"I didn't think so." She smiled triumphantly, filling her lungs to tell a tale I hadn't yet heard. Her hands flitted about with her words, shaping each action as it came along. "He was there at the store, wandering down the aisles, looking for earrings."

My eyebrows shot to my hairline. "Earrings?"

"That's exactly how I felt. I went right up to him and asked if he had one piercing or two. I'd seen these dangly ones with painted bluebirds and I thought, 'Aha! Those will match his eyes so nicely.'" I imagined Grandpa's hearing aids getting caught in bluebird earrings. "'But no,' he said. He was only picking something out for his wife at home. He was on a business trip, you see."

"Grandpa was married?"

"Wait. Let me finish the story. So I said, 'Oh, what does she look like? I can help pick something out.' And he described her, and I pointed to a

pair painted with yellow and green flowers. It was very pretty. Not as pretty as the bluebirds, but still remarkably detailed. I said, 'Here, get these. She'll love them.' And he said, 'Thank you; I will. That was very nice of you.'"

"*Gram!*"

"I know. I know. You don't want to hear all the details. Anyway, he saw the big vase I'd purchased, and he asked me if I was alone, and I said I was, and he offered to carry it back to the hotel for me. So, we were walking down all these spindly little lanes. And when we got to my hotel, he said, 'Son of a gun!'" Her eyes widened as she mimicked Grandpa's astonishment.

"He was staying at the same place?"

"The very same. And I thought, 'Augh!'" She tossed her hands in the air the way she always did, with a shrug of her shoulders, as if to say, "Life, right? You never know what's going to happen."

"'Well, what do you know?' I said. 'Want to get some dinner?' And he did and we had a lovely time. So I said, 'Look, what are you doing tomorrow? Want to do some sightseeing?' And he wanted to do that too. So that's what we did. And it was fabulous!"

"What about his wife?"

She did her signature shrug. It wasn't callous or wry. It was all wonderment. "He left her."

Dad came home soon after that for our family dinner. Gram cooked chicken parmesan, the kind that made Dad spend twenty minutes trying to scratch the burnt bread crumbs out of the pan afterward. I leaned on the countertop as he worked at the sink. "Daddy, did you know Grandpa was married before Gram?"

"Did I? . . . " He whirled around from the sink. "Ma!"

"What?" she called from the dining room, pausing the story she was telling Mom about how she received her best set of wine glasses from serving on the board of the bank in Boston.

"Can I talk to you in the other room?" She followed him into the office. Suds still clung to his wrists from where a hasty scrub with the dish rag hadn't succeeded. He closed the door all but a crack, keeping his voice soft. "I can't believe you told her that. That's her grandfather."

"What? She wanted to know how we met. It's still romantic. You don't think any less of your father for it."

"No."

"And neither will she."

That summer, when Gram got out the sticky notes and asked us to put our color on the things we liked, I put a bright orange one on the bottom of the vase.

I thumbed the spot where it had been removed last year.

Setting the base on my coffee table, I sifted through the remaining pieces, sweeping the small ones with my hand. Maybe it was inevitable. Maybe all things returned to their original forms. Maybe glass was fated to return to sand.

Gram wasn't cremated. She was Jewish. She didn't believe in it. We buried her beside Grandpa in a nice, cushioned coffin that Mom picked out. It sealed and locked with a fancy silver clasp. But I worried about the worms. Would they tunnel their way in anyway?

I gasped as a shard sliced my index finger. Blood bloomed from the cut, shallow but long. I rushed to the bathroom, trying to catch the drips with my free hand. It was two inches too big for a band-aid, so I wadded some toilet paper around it. Three pieces of tape secured it to the skin.

As I stepped back into the living room, my eyes shot to the empty space on the sideboard. The vase had been so perfect there. Right next to the front door. My watchful sentinel. My guardian angel.

"I just don't know where to put it," I said, cataloging everything in my new living room. We'd already set all the books and lamps in their proper places, artfully arranged to frame the TV in a way that appeared homey but not cluttered. We'd even taken the empty boxes to the trash room and picked up Chinese food from the place around the corner. The vase was the last thing in my apartment that didn't have a permanent home.

Your shoulders sagged. "Well, I'm not moving it again. You get one last spot and that one's final."

"Okay. What about by the love seat?"

"You're sure?"

"Positive."

You shook your head as you shifted the vase to its new home at the base

of the couch. "There," you said, stepping back to admire your work. "Movie time?"

"Ummhunh." I twisted the vase so that my favorite side of the swirling black pattern faced forward before climbing onto the couch. We haggled over the movie, debating between boxing robots and dog films where the dog always died at the end. We settled on *Roman Holiday* because it made me think of Gram. She'd always hated the ending. If Ann had really loved him, she would have made a mess out of it, no matter the cost.

When the credits rolled an hour and fifty-eight minutes later, I turned to you. Your face was awash in flicking lights. Tiny pinpricks of it fluttered in your eyes like fireflies caught in a jar. I wanted to ask, "Would you leave your wife for me?"

Your face would have twisted. "What? I don't have a wife."

"I know," I'd say. "But if you did. Would you leave her?"

And then you'd study me and ask if I was serious. You'd think about it. And say that you didn't know. You didn't know because you'd never been in that position.

Instead, I said, "You ever think about going to Venice?"

"Not really. Venice Beach, maybe."

"It would be fun."

"I don't know. Maybe. Someday," you said.

"Someday," I repeated.

I kissed you goodbye and locked the door. Then, I cleared a space on the sideboard. And I hefted the vase across the room.

It had lived on that table ever since, growing into the corner. A permanent fixture, more concrete than the walls or the floor. I wondered what I'd put there now. A picture, maybe? But who printed pictures anymore?

Gram had.

Grandpa took them and she treasured them. The walls of their house were covered in hundreds—thousands—of his pictures, ranging from family portraits at Niagara Falls and the Red Sea to candids of me chewing at the dinner table. We'd converted the garage into a darkroom for him. I spent a good amount of time watching as he shifted a picture from one tray to another, noticing the way the liquid rippled. And how every time he shifted the page to a new tray, the picture got a little clearer.

"Grandpa?"

"Hunh?"

"Was your first wife mean?"

His tongs paused midway to a tray. He studied my face for a long moment. Then he lifted his glasses, rubbing at his eyes with arthritic knuckles. "No. No, she was very nice."

"Then why did you leave her?"

He sat back on his stool. "It's hard to explain. I loved your Gram very much. I didn't expect her to be—well, I didn't know she was out there the first time I got married. And I kept thinking, what if I had met her first."

"But you didn't."

"No. I didn't."

"Was she upset?" I asked.

"Who? Melinda? I suppose so. I felt bad, I really did. But . . . " He scratched at his beard. "I like to think of it this way," he said. "If I hadn't left her, I wouldn't have your dad. And without your dad—"

"I wouldn't be here."

His lips stretched into a smile. "Now, I know you weren't a mistake. And I think—I think Melinda would agree. She has grandchildren of her own now. I've seen them on that Fateblocks thing."

"You mean Facebook."

He chuckled. "Yes, that's it. I guess. . . . My point is—" His eyes met mine through the thick layer of his glasses. "Some things are worth the mess."

I scooped the last shards into a shoebox. I couldn't stand the thought of dumping them into the trash. My funeral march led me to the closet, where I found a place for the box under the rack with my slim selection of formal wear. The long skirt of an emerald dress settled over the cardboard.

My phone buzzed. A gray bubble popped onto the screen under your name.

Still coming? it read.

I poked at the keys with the good fingers of my right hand.

"I don't know, Gram. I'm not sure it's going to work out," I said after the first time I brought you home with me.

"You don't have to be," she said, blowing on the steam rising from her tea. "I'm never sure about anything."

I dunked my biscotti in the mocha depths of my cup, mushing it up with each jab. Brown bready clouds gathered at the rim. "But you were sure about Grandpa."

"Ah. Yes. For a time, that was true. And it comes and goes. But it wasn't always that way. People change. They make reckless decisions. And I'm not saying that we were reckless. Just that you don't have to be." Her eyes wandered to the window where Grandpa could be seen bent over his shriveling tomato plants. Wiping sweat from under the rim of the bucket hat she made him wear, his lips contorted, shaping the curves and edges of every obscenity I knew and then some. "Maybe it will work and maybe it won't. Maybe you'll grow old together. Or maybe you'll break apart. But you know what the cool part about breaking is?"

I shook my head, braving a sip of my mushy concoction.

"Life has a way of mending itself."

I grabbed the base from the coffee table. The jagged sides were just tall enough to form a shallow dish. Finding a nail file in the folds of my purse, I sanded the edges into softer points and set it on the sideboard. It looked empty. I rustled through my purse again until I found a handful of spare change. The coins plunked against the glass as they settled into the dish. Two nickels, a dozen quarters, and a dime. It's not much yet, but in time, its contents will swell with keys and wallets, sticky note reminders, and "I love you" cards. And they'll be there whenever someone steps out the door.

I spot you at the booth by the window, staring out at the oncoming traffic. Reds and greens flash by in an endless procession. But the afternoon sunlight outshines them. The bright rays spill over the table, staining your brown hair with a fine layer of gold. You push it back with a hand. I wonder what it feels like to touch strings of sunshine. Soft and slick and slightly oily.

"Hey," I say, sliding into the seat across from you.

You lift my bandaged finger, examining the stained wrappings. "I thought you said you weren't hurt."

The warmth from your hand spreads up my arm, sliding its way to my heart, to my lips. "I wasn't. It's just a cut. Lots of glass to clean up. You know how it is with broken things."

You nod and sip your coffee and I don't think that you do. But it's enough, I think, for me to know.

Pretty?

Grace Worwa

They say, *Reach for the stars,* and I believe them. I believe them because the little dashes on the bathroom wall mark my growth as they march toward the ceiling. *You can be anything you want to be.* Maybe I'll be a musician, a superhero, the president. I could be a teacher, a Navy SEAL, an NFL football player—Wait, I can't play football? Why not? Okay, I'll play basketball then.

The ball makes a crackling sound when I pull my fingernails over its rubber goosebumps. Each *snap* and *pop* seems to rhythmically implode within my chest, like a second heartbeat. Squeaky shoes on the gym floor. Salty sweat stinging the papercut on my palm. The ball *thump-thump-thump*s across the court. Corner shot. It scratches through the net. The ball follows its rhythm, and my hands follow the ball. My second heart thumps along in sync, and it's enough. Right now, it's enough.

My hands become calloused. Rigid lines of hardened skin outline where I grip the dumbbells in the weight room; they mark where the ball rubs against my fingertips as I pass it up the court. Every time I grip a pencil and feel the sting, my chest feels full.

Only *they* don't feel it.

Why are your hands all messed up? Why do you always wear sweatpants? Why don't you ever wear your hair down?

Because that's what I do. I follow my second heart. I sprint just to feel the

friction of my shoes against the gym floor, to feel that hot vibration sizzle up through the bottoms of my feet and into my bones. That's who I am.

But you would look so nice in this top. Do you even wear makeup? You mean, you don't even know what foundation is?

But why does that matter? So what if I'm the only one on the team who doesn't peel off a pair of jeans before practice? The only one who doesn't take out a bitty little bag of cotton swabs and remover pads in the locker room?

It matters. People judge you by how you look. Just try a little. You could be pretty if you tried.

Pretty?

Stop shopping in the men's section.

Okay, so skirts, jeans, blouses, dresses. Maybe get some foundation to fix that acne.

Here, try this top on. It's a medium.

But it squeezes my stomach too tight. How about a large?

A large is too big, honey. You'll just have to lose some weight.

So I suck in.

Reach for the stars.

But I can't pull my fingernails across the rubber basketball anymore. There are no nails to pull. They're just ragged stubs because I gnaw at them every morning as I stare into my closet, my chest twisting in on itself, slowly squeezing my second heart into silence.

The hollow *pop* of basketballs bouncing together. The echo of voices floating around the gym. *Ball Ball Ball!* It comes to me, rubbing against my fingertips, fitting perfectly in my hands. Get set, shoot, follow through. But it doesn't scratch through the net. I missed.

You know when you stare at yourself too long in the mirror, and you see things you never noticed before? Your nose is too big; your hair is too frizzy; your stomach sticks out a bit too much? That moment defines the rest of your life. It's like you're looking through a foggy window, and someone wipes a patch of glass clear with a gloved hand. Either that, or your window was clear to begin with, and the other person just smudged some water on it.

The rhythm in my chest has grown faint and untrustworthy. My shoes

don't squeak across the floor anymore. They make an irritable clicking sound, and it's like those long, thin heels are stabbing holes through my brain. When I catch the basketball, it feels awkward and heavy in my hands. I can't move. *Thump, thump, thump. BANG* against the backboard.

My legs are bound too tightly by this skirt, and this shirt squeezes my stomach so that I feel like I'm constantly sucking in. It's like I'm holding my breath. I haven't breathed in so long. My hands don't follow the ball anymore. They chase it, trying to catch up, but they can't. My second heart no longer pumps life through my veins. It's dead weight in my chest, deflated and grey, and so my feet can't move to its beat. My feet are stuck to the floor, nailed down ever since I looked in the mirror.

Reach for the stars, they say.

SIGMA TAU DELTA REVIEW

"Are you a man?": *Macbeth* and the Fear of the Feminine

Hanna Denton

When Macbeth first appears in the play that bears his name, he quickly establishes identity as one of the story's central themes. In Act 1, Scene 3, after being accosted by the Weird Sisters, he is surprised to be greeted with titles he does not yet hold (Shakespeare 1.3.142–72). His confusion regarding his identity only deepens as the play progresses, particularly in his struggle to establish his identity as a man. Illustrated through the principles of analytical psychology, Macbeth's repression of what he perceives as the "feminine" aspects of his personality destroys not only the psychological integrity of the hero but also the cohesion of the society in which he lives. Furthermore, in the character of Macduff, that cohesion is restored through a reimagining of the male gender which combines traits traditionally seen as "feminine" with those traditionally viewed as "masculine."

I. Macbeth's Persona

The audience's first introduction to Macbeth comes not through the man himself, but through his reputation among his comrades in arms. In Act 1, Scene 2, a bloody captain in King Duncan's army comes to update Duncan on the progress of the battle against the traitor Macdonwald, and to sing the praises of "brave Macbeth" (Shakespeare 1.2.18). We hear of

Macbeth's "brandished steel, / Which smoked with bloody execution" as he "carved out his passage" to meet Macdonwald and "unseamed him from the nave to th' chops, / And fixed his head upon our battlements" (1.2.19–20; 1.2.21; 1.2.24–25). In the terms of analytical psychology, the captain is describing Macbeth's "persona," the public face that he presents to the world. He lives in "a society which values and honors a manliness and soldiership that maintain the cohesiveness of the tribe by extreme violence, if necessary" (Asp 154). Accordingly, the attributes of "manliness and soldiership," as Macbeth understands them, are the ones he seeks to display to the rest of the world. Everything else must be suppressed in their service.

II. Macbeth's Unstable Personality

For a warrior as brave and daring as Macbeth, it comes as a surprise to find, in Act 1, Scene 7, to what extent he is controlled by his wife. The scene opens with Macbeth preparing to murder Duncan. In a soliloquy, Macbeth expresses both a fear of retribution (Shakespeare 1.7.7–12) and a recognition that what he intends to do is wrong (1.7.12–25). He announces to Lady Macbeth, "We will proceed no further in this business" (1.7.34), only to cower under what Lady Macbeth had referred to earlier as "the valor of my tongue" (1.5.30). She openly questions his manhood (1.7.56–58), reinforcing the idea that his manliness is tied to his capacity for violence. Following this tongue lashing, Macbeth resolves to do that "terrible feat" which moments ago he had forsworn (1.7.93). How does such a brave and seemingly self-possessed individual come to be so easily manipulated?

A possible explanation may be found in analytical psychology. The work of Carl Gustav Jung, the founder of the field, was concerned foremost with achieving unity between the disparate elements of the psyche, both conscious and unconscious. According to Jung, these elements represent themselves as various "archetypes"—mental images that represent not the external world but rather the "inner reality" of a person (*Psychological* 442). One of the most important archetypes in Jungian psychology is the "anima"/"animus." This archetype represents all the attributes of a person's psyche which are not expressed in the persona (468). Because men experience societal pressure to present a highly masculine persona, and

women experience similar pressure to present a highly feminine persona, the anima is often described as the "feminine side of the male psyche," while the animus is the "masculine side of the female psyche" (Hall and Nordby 46). In cases in which an individual defines his entire identity by his persona, the anima remains unconscious and is projected onto another person, often a spouse. According to Jung, the person onto whom the anima is projected "is the object of intense love or equally intense hate (or fear)" (*Psychological* 470–71).

In *The Relations between the Ego and the Unconscious*, Jung describes how the wife of such an individual, as the bearer of her husband's "soul-image," becomes invested with the responsibility of shielding him from his own unconscious (195–96). Consequently, she holds an undue power over him: "His fear of the dark incalculable power of the unconscious gives his wife an illegitimate authority over him, and forges such a dangerously close union that the marriage is permanently on the brink of explosion from internal tension—or else, out of protest, he flies to the other extreme" (196). It appears that Macbeth occupies that "other extreme," following his wife's lead so closely that her mocking is enough to spur him on to murder and treason.

Many critics have argued that Lady Macbeth is not a feminine figure at all, but rather lives in flagrant defiance of the gender roles of her era, pointing to the infamous "unsex me here" speech as evidence of her rebellion against femininity and her wish to embrace the same violent masculinity that defines her husband's persona (Alfar 180). However, Lady Macbeth is not, according to the standards of her day, an entirely unfeminine figure. Though she employs extremely violent rhetoric, we never see her wield the knife herself. Indeed, a classically feminine attachment to family prevents her from killing Duncan: she refuses to approach him because he "resembled / My father as he slept" (Shakespeare 2.2.16–17). Though she takes on a defiant tone with her husband in Act 1, Scene 7, she is nevertheless wholly dedicated to advancing his career, without attempting to amass power for herself. In this way, she fulfills the early modern ideal of the wife entirely devoted to supporting her husband (Reyes and Kenny 83). Obscured as it may be by her own wish to embrace masculinity as she understands it, Lady Macbeth's femininity still allows Macbeth to project his own feminine qualities onto her, which in turn makes him excessively dependent upon her, as the bearer of part of his psychic identity.

III. Social Turmoil

One of the goals of analytical psychology is to help the patient reach "individuation," a state in which each of their unique characteristics are allowed to be expressed. Though "individuation is always to some extent opposed to collective norms," nevertheless it is necessary for the healthful functioning of society (Jung, *Psychological* 449). Without this process, Jung writes, an individual becomes "stunted" and "a social group consisting of stunted individuals cannot be a healthy and viable institution" (448). The choice of one individual to artificially suppress certain aspects of his psyche has consequences for the whole social group of which he is a member.

In *Macbeth*, this is represented dramatically by the reign of terror that Macbeth brings to Scotland when he is king. Having gained the throne by violence, he intends to keep it by the same means, reinforcing the aspects of his personality which he believes to be most masculine. Furthermore, his violence takes on a specifically anti-feminine quality. As Rebecca Pancoast notes in her survey of feminist interpretations of *Macbeth*, Macbeth becomes more and more obsessed with birth as the play progresses, a concept traditionally associated with womanhood. His first major act of violence as king of Scotland is his attempt to snuff out Banquo's family line, in order to thwart the prophecy which said that Banquo's descendants would establish a dynasty. Later, Macbeth orders the murders of Macduff's wife and young children. His repudiation of all things womanly is complete when he receives this cryptic prophecy from the Weird Sisters: "none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth" (Shakespeare 4.1.91–92). He believes that everything to do with women, including the children they bear, can have no effect on him, and this confidence emboldens his aggression (Pancoast). As Malcolm describes it, the results are devastating: "our country sinks beneath the yoke. / It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash / Is added to her wounds" (4.3.49–51).

IV. Macduff

One individual who cannot watch idly as Macbeth bathes Scotland in blood is the Thane of Fife, Macduff. He flees to England where he

meets Malcolm, Duncan's rightful heir, and intends to help him secure his father's throne. Like Macbeth, he is a warrior, and he defines his masculinity at least in part by this violence (Shakespeare 4.3.3–5). At the same time, his aggression is tempered with concern for the weak (4.3.5–9) and genuine shows of emotion. He does not believe that either of these features negate his masculinity. For example, when Macduff learns that Macbeth has murdered his whole family, Malcolm urges him to "dispute it like a man" and exact violent revenge on Macbeth (4.3.259). Macduff replies, "I shall do so, / But I must also feel it as a man. / I cannot but remember such things were / That were most precious to me" (4.3.260–63). According to scholar Jarold Ramsey, this scene represents "the first time since the opening scenes [that] a concept of manly virtue that is alternative to Macbeth's is broached" (294). Though Macduff plays into the stereotype that violence is inherent in men, he does not see violence, soldiership, and other more traditionally "masculine" qualities as the be-all end-all of manhood. Other, more ostensibly "feminine" qualities such as pity and grief may have their place too.

These two very different conceptions of masculinity suggest a point made by Judith Butler, namely that gender is not "a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed," but rather "the stylized repetition of acts through time" and "the arbitrary relation between such acts" (519, 520). Though cultural stereotypes about gender may hold a powerful influence over an individual, there is no compelling reason why any stereotype or cultural construct must be the *only* way an individual can perform their gender. Realizing this allows for "possibilities of gender transformation" (520). This transformation proves crucial. As Jung writes, collective norms, though inevitable, must never be taken as the only directive for a person's character: "The more a man's life is shaped by the collective norm, the greater is his individual immorality" (*Psychological* 449). As we have seen, the failure to give expression to all components of the psyche, including those without a clear sanction from the prevailing culture, results in fragmentation both on the personal and social levels. As a more fully integrated individual, Macduff represents the return to harmony that is possible when the individual is not at war with himself. His defeat of Macbeth, clearing the way for Duncan's rightful heir to ascend the throne, embodies this triumph of order and harmony over fragmentation and chaos.

V. Conclusion

According to Jung, "everything begins with the individual" (qtd. in Hall and Nordby 122). The way in which a person interacts with his environment, as well as the pressures that environment places upon him, will have far-reaching effects not just on that person but on those around him as well. In *Macbeth*, we see an example of how gendered expectations, taken to the extreme, create an inner turmoil which in time becomes exteriorized. This is because gender, as a socially constructed concept, can never give scope to the totality of any single person. Instead, if a society is to flourish, it is necessary that its members recognize and enact the totality of their being in the world. The masculinity of Macduff, which does not observe the same rigid boundaries between "masculine" and "feminine" attributes, embraces this totality, which allows him to become an agent of order in Scotland.

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N. K. Jemisin's *The City We Became* and Wielding Racism

Marianna Hiles

Racism featured in science fiction work has historically been weaponized as a tool of the oppressor. Examples of such range from the overt, like the works of H. P. Lovecraft and *The Turner Diaries* by Andrew Macdonald (real name, William Pierce), to the more subtle, including works by John W. Campbell and Jay Kristoff (Allen; Horton; Krasny). As it functions in these stories, racism is meant to garner sympathy and create understanding in white audiences while deliberately othering and dehumanizing characters of color. However, a new wave of diversified thought and representation in the science fiction discipline has encouraged a shift in the way that authors think about and utilize racism in their work—guided by the example of the racist characters in N. K. Jemisin's *The City We Became*, this essay will explore the novel application of racism and racist characters as a method of using oppressive imagery to further a social justice-oriented goal.

The legacy of racism in American science fiction is not only entangled with the treatment of authors of color within the discipline but also featured in the stories. People of color have been targets of prejudice both on and off the page. As Jemisin commented during an episode of WNYC Studios' "The New Yorker Radio Hour," "It's not possible to separate Lovecraft [and other authors' racist] ideology from [their] greatness as [science fiction and] fantasy [writers]: [Lovecraft's] view of non-white peoples as monstrous informed the way he wrote about monsters" (Khatchadourian). Thus,

the history of this literary category is undeniably embroiled in depicting people of color as the dangerous other. Depictions such as these have been embedded in the fabric of science fiction writing for decades.

With this legacy in mind, acclaimed author Samuel R. Delany questions in his critical assessment and critique of racism, titled "Racism and Science Fiction," "Well, then, how does one combat racism in science fiction?" As an inherently imaginative and speculative genre, science fiction is known for pushing the boundaries of what is considered possible and for critiquing aspects of the world. In that spirit, a new wave of science fiction authors have endeavored to not only address the racism in the discipline, but to counters and to reimagine how it can be used much differently than initially intended. Speaking on his textual relationship to racism and Lovecraft in particular, author P. Djèlí Clark said,

> We took the stuff that you created . . . [where] you actually had us in very negative roles, and we're gonna take it from you. And we're gonna flip it around. We're gonna do what we want with it, and there's nothing you can do about it. [In that way,] my writing is not an ode to Lovecraft, it is more so a jab. (CBC Radio)

Clark's choice to examine and actively work to disrupt the intended purpose of Lovecraft's racism exemplifies the shift in how this type of discrimination is used in the literary landscape. The refashioned purpose of this racism in the text is not to alienate but to expose and criticize the structures that uphold white supremacy.

Much in the same way as Clark, N. K. Jemisin creates an original science fiction narrative that reframes Lovecraftian racism as a distinctly malevolent force in her novel *The City We Became*. Most of the central characters in her story—all people of color—face off against an ancient force that they call "the Enemy" and "the Woman in White" (Jemisin 9, 67). Throughout the book, this entity embodies and compels several human forms; all of those individuals with whom the main characters interact are white people with racist tendencies. Jemisin uses racism to further her authorial goals: to identify racism in the genre and world while simultaneously dismantling by illustrating its absurdity.

"The Woman in White" weaponizes racism as a way of pitting New York against itself, whether through her embodiment of police officers, a racist white woman in a park of white supremacist artists or in her manipulation of Aislyn (Jemisin 13, 60, 150, 99). She locates this preexisting damage and deliberately uses it to her advantage to foil the city's survival. The avatar of New York even describes her way of manipulating sinister forces such as racism: "The Enemy uses this anchor to drag itself up from the dark toward the world. . . . This attack is not all of it, of course. What comes is only the smallest fraction of the Enemy's old, old evil" (Jemisin 16, 17). Essentially, the "old, old evil" manifests as racism in *The City We Became* and is characterized as a weapon of the Enemy, a weapon of evil that is wielded to divide, conquer, and defeat.

By framing racism as a powerful and almost overwhelmingly negative force in her novel, based on the real New York, Jemisin seeks to similarly frame the racism that she resides in as a woman of color and witnesses in the world around her. She is recognizing this racism, calling it out and deliberately naming it through her portrayal of its evils in a fictional setting and as a weapon of a fictional multiversal war. *The City We Became* sees genuine harm inflicted on its central characters because of the racism the Enemy directs toward them. As we follow these characters and connect with them, we as the audience are meant to experience their humanity. We see how much racism damages not just the city but its individuals and families. Just as the protagonists are aligned against the Woman in White and her weaponization of racism, Jemisin intends for the audience to empathize with these characters and find themselves so aligned, as well.

Critics may argue that the choice to include racism as a large plot point in a people-of-color-led, social-justice-oriented story, such as Jemisin's, actually negates any agency given to those characters. The writing advice Tumblr blog, *Writing With Color,* expands on the negative effects of overemphasizing folks of colors' struggles in narrative:

> We're just tired of our stories being battles, all about The Struggle, us against [a] racist world. . . . When you've got a PoC fighting off racism at damn near every angle . . . you risk making the character about their Struggles, to the point where they're flattened symbols for racism, and less of an actual character. (Collette)

According to this blog, the worry behind underscoring the racism in such a text is that the story would revolve around the harm done to a specific person or community without acknowledging their true personhood or celebrating their resilience and tenacity.

What's more, some Afrofuturist authors and scholars believe that the imaginative features of this genre lend themselves to the production and exploration of new worlds in which racism is not normalized. Following this line of thought, one might assume that those who ascribe to that belief do not see racism as a tool that can be used against white supremacy; from their perspective, white supremacy has already claimed racism as a tool of its own. This critique has ties to Audre Lorde's essay "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" and its understanding of any form of racism—including fictional racism—as inherently sustaining the oppressor. During a feminist conference in 1979, Lorde—renowned Black feminist poet and theorist—said, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us to temporarily beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (Lorde). Although Lorde created this speech in response to the lack of inclusion in feminist spaces for Black women, her words have the potential to resonate with critics of N. K. Jemisin's use of racism in her narrative.

I posit that, in *The City We Became*, Jemisin deliberately asserts the agency of her characters of color throughout the entirety of the novel, including when they face instances of racism. They are not just struggling against this force, but thriving at different times in the text, having moments of celebration and community with members of their groups and others. Jemisin also emphasizes that the Woman in White did not create the racism that threatens them but simply capitalizes on what was already lingering in the city; she is emboldened by racial discrimination, but it is neither her own creation nor her only source of power. Furthermore, although the entity takes advantage of this preexisting racism to use it against the avatars of New York, it is her supernatural abilities that the protagonists end up fighting against the most. These characters' distinct ways of fighting also contribute to a positive recognition of their uniqueness, humanness, New York-ness, and the various intersections that make them who they are. Manny learns to use the wealth and strength of Manhattan, Brooklyn draws power from her musical talents, Bronca uses her Native American roots to connect with the structural and natural roots of New York, and Padmini turns the math

in her mind into fast traveling abilities (Jemisin 70, 77, 73, 166, 177). They are each individuals who experience racism, but they are also the heroes and avatars of New York. As the *Writing With Color* blog affirms, "I'm not defined by my Struggles, capital S. They're a piece of me and [lend] a certain flavor, but they are not the pie" (Collette). The lives of these characters are influenced by, rather than *defined* by presence of racism. Thus, Jemisin demonstrates that it is possible to center characters of color in a narrative that includes racism, provided that these characters are not merely embodiments of struggle but whole and complex persons.

As for the final critique, however liberatory a non-racist reality might be to imagine, the realism and the as-true-to-life-as-possible depiction of New York that Jemisin portrays in *The City We Became* necessitates the existence of racism in her narrative. She explains in the book's acknowledgements that her source material was the city of New York, and to her, "real worlds feature real peoples, and therefore it's important that I not depict [these characters] in ways that disrespect or cause harm" (Jemisin 435). Jemisin's incorporation of racism is key to a genuine portrayal of "real-world" building; an absence of racism in a character of color-centered, semi-realistic novel would presumably not fit with the lived experiences of non-white New Yorkers. Nonetheless, the simultaneous inclusion of these characters thriving, proudly claiming their racial identities, and using them to their advantage, and even having experiences that do not merely center on their race, is just as crucial.

Furthermore, the author chooses to depict racism as it is explicitly used by white women when she writes it as coming from the white female protagonist, Aislyn. Jemisin establishes Aislyn as someone who aligns herself with the concept of whiteness and to the will of the patriarchy—as represented by her father and Conall—to maintain some semblance of stability in her life (88). Like the Woman in White, Aislyn wields racism, but she has different reasoning and different methods of doing so. She uses this type of prejudice like a shield, as something to protect herself from the world and the New York outside of Staten Island that her father has socialized her to fear (92). The binaries of white and non-white have fused with her conception of good and bad, as demonstrated when Aislyn cannot bring herself to associate the whiteness of the Woman in White with terrorism: "*Terrorist!* her mind cries . . . and rejects. Terrorists are bearded Arab men who mutter in guttural languages and want to rape virgins. This woman is just

crazy" (103). As flawed as Aislyn is, however, Jemisin makes clear that her racist perspective was cultivated and is maintained in conjunction with an obedience to her father and a desire for protection from a scary world that he himself concocted.

Isla Govan and Tilman Smith describe this type of bond with white patriarchal systems and the guise of protection in their book *What's Up with White Women?: Unpacking Sexism and White Privilege in Pursuit of Racial Justice*:

> [Bargaining with the patriarchy] refers to a woman's decision to conform to the demands of the patriarchy to gain some benefit, whether it is financial, physical, psychological, emotional, or social. The trade-off . . . is that [one] often [abdicates her] inherent power, rights to sovereignty, and intelligence to cash in on the presumption of protection and ease. It leads [her] to believe that men have [her back] when this is not often true. . . . 'Patriarchal bargains . . . pressure women into internalizing patriarchal ideologies and, thus . . . recreating patriarchy every day. . . . It reinforces a system of oppression for all women. There is an individual gain, but a collective loss. (23)

Aislyn's dependence on this patriarchal bargain is part of what keeps her engulfed in her racist upbringing and stagnant in her beliefs throughout her roughly thirty-year lifespan. The structure of this binary mindset that she was raised with prevents her from breaking away from the sexism and abuse of her father (Jemisin 105, 268, 274). As is the case with most systems of power, this microcosm of the patriarchy was designed to keep her in place, keep her obedient, keep her unaware of alternative systems, and establish an "other" for her to fear. Thus, even in the crafting of a *human* racist character, N. K. Jemisin seeks to interrogate these systems that have supported and pressured Aislyn's reliance on racism in what the character believes is an act of survival. Her actions are not excused, but the intersections of her experiences and identities are included in the text as a gateway to considering the underlying power structures at play in her life.

Aislyn's characterization and demonstration of learned, ingrained racism is also quite accurately represented in a quote from Samuel R. Delany in "Racism and Science Fiction." Delany states, "Racism is a system. As such, it is fueled as much by chance as by hostile intentions and equally the best intentions as well. It is whatever systematically acclimates people . . . to

become comfortable with the isolation and segregation of the races, on a visual, social, or economic level." The manifestation of Aislyn's racism can be traced back to her involvement in specific systems; these include her patriarchal bargain, the system of white privilege, her proximity to policing through her father's role as a cop, and a system of gender-based violence under which she and her mother are ruled (Jemisin 92, 105, 274). The systems in Aislyn's life coalesce to influence her perception and replication of racism. Her isolation in Staten Island, her socialization by a racist father, and her methods of binary thinking have "systematically [acclimated]" her to racial profiling and discrimination as typical ways of interacting with the world around her (Delany).

Although Aislyn does not ultimately overcome her prejudices in *The City We Became*, Jemisin uses this woman's story arc to prompt her audience into questioning what might lead someone to adopt and rely on racism. The narrative this author delivers is rich with a diversity of experiences, from racism to racists, and how different types of people are affected by each. Racism in this novel is not merely a symbolic representation of the struggles of being a non-white person but a multilayered theme that Jemisin intends to use in humanizing her characters. In her subversion of Lovecraftian racism and other such forms in science fiction, she delves into the complexities and the richness of her leading characters of color. She weaves experiences and lives that are influenced by racism but far from completely determined or destroyed by it. Jemisin beautifully crafts a science-fiction interpretation of the weaponization of racism in modern society in *The City We Became* and offers up an incredibly captivating story along the way.

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Black, White, and Red All Over: Hybridity and Colonial Anxiety in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*

Nathaniel Keckley

In his groundbreaking book, *Orientalism,* Edward Said posited the construction of the colonized East by the colonizing West—a process he termed "Orientalism." The Orient was supposed to be mystical, superstitious, emotional, and backward, whereas the Occident was enlightened, pious, rational, and progressive (Parker 307). This concept of the constructed dichotomy between East and West was complicated by Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Bhabha argued that in colonial discourse, the line between the colonizer and the colonized—a line that Orientalism constructs—becomes blurred (309). Notions of cultural purity deteriorate as both interlocutors begin to think, speak, and act like one another. The result is a hybrid society in which many supposed demarcations are somewhat, if not entirely, illusory. Importantly, this process is a two-way street; the colonizer becomes a hybrid of the colonized (312–13). Literature produced by the colonizers in a hybrid society frequently works to contain the anxiety that arises from this hybridity. One such text is Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter.* The novel was penned in the 1840s, when America was actively engaged in colonial acts such as the Mexican-American War and the forced relocation of indiginous peoples (Doyle 357). At the same time, the United States itself had not yet been independent of Great Britain for even a century. Furthermore, the story takes place in the seventeenth century, when Europeans were just beginning to scratch the surface of America

and still living in close contact with Indigenous peoples before war, disease, relocation, and reeducation killed, removed, or subsumed the latter.

The intimacy of existence between the New England colonists and their native neighbors is explored throughout the novel, though not always in a direct way. The text is rife with anxiety about the joint transformative force that the colonized exercises on the colonizer. Although this process is signified, the reverse—the violent influence on the natives by the settlers—is obfuscated but still tacitly manifest in the text. The Bostonians live not only in proximity but in familiarity with the surrounding natives. The Indigenous person with whom Chillingworth first appears to Hester is notable, but not unusual, for "the red men were not so infrequent visitors of the English settlements, that one of them would have attracted any notice from Hester Prynne, at such a time" (Hawthorne 42). But beyond mere coexistence, an active cultural dialogue and exchange occurs.

The effect of the European settlers on the natives appears at first to be absent in *The Scarlet Letter.* However, three insidious instances exist in the text in which this phenomenon is acknowledged. The first might seem to be a passing remark in the preface to the story proper, and the second is a more widespread method that uses nature to signify nature's inhabitant, the Indigenous person. Finally, there is a focus on the violence within the Puritan community that both turns away from, yet point to, the violence toward indigenous peoples.

The first instance is accomplished indirectly and largely unconsciously. As Laura Doyle writes in "'A' for Atlantic: The Colonizing Force of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*," Hawthorne frequently works in this way. His strategy of "placing key events at one remove, gestured toward yet submerged, characterizes the novel's historical method and its repressed relation to Atlantic history" (Doyle 350). In "The Customs House," upon discovering the scarlet letter, Hawthorne (the narrator) first thinks it was "one of those decorations which the white men used to contrive, in order to take the eyes of Indians" (Hawthorne 25). At the first mention of "Indians" in the text, a critical association with trade and violence is made by Hawthorne. The acknowledgment of trade is explicit, but violence is merely suggested by the language and signification of the letter. The phrase "take the eyes of Indians" is an interesting choice, for it invokes the idea of taking—again,

in trade, but also by force. It introduces the narrative concept of removing the natives' body parts, a common practice in the days of the New England frontier. Trade and violence are intertwined; the Narragansetts (allies of Colonists), brought body parts laurels during the Pequot War, they would also trade in goods with each other (Lipman 17). Another violent exchange is also conjured by the scarlet letter as an item of Indigenous trade—disease. Old World diseases like scarlet fever and smallpox devastated native peoples. The "scarletness" of the letter associates it with the former virus, while the fact that it "take[s] the eyes of Indians" links it with the latter; five to nine percent of smallpox victims experience blindness from various complications (Semba). It is no wonder that the scarlet letter seems to burn Hawthorne to the touch.

The second way in which the Indigenous person being acted upon by white settlers is expressed in *The Scarlet Letter* comes through the metonym of the forest. This idea of the forest as the native or the native force will also be central to the idea of the colonized acting on the colonizer, but for now, it will do to examine it to the reverse process. The forest exhibits the same traits as the Indigenous person. It is a place of "solitude," with "dark, old trees" (Hawthorne 127). It is an "unredeemed, unchristianized, lawless" wilderness that is also "wild" and "free" (121). The chief features attributed to the forest, however, are its darkness and its mystery; it is "dark" and "inscrutable" (53). Later, it is described as "black" and "stern" (123). The Indigenous residents are, of course, dark (that is, darker than the Anglo-Puritan colonist); they are also inscrutable and stern. The party of North American natives that attends the governor's festival has "countenances of inflexible gravity, beyond what even the Puritan aspect could attain" (138). All the features ascribed to natives—paganism, lawlessness, darkness (in the racial and spiritual sense), and a sinister inscrutability—are also signified by the forest, which becomes a metonym for the native that inhabits it. Thus, what happens to the forest, by extension, happens to the native. The rose bush outside the jailhouse was once "over-shadowed" by "gigantic pines and oaks," but these trees have, of course, been felled by the settlers (36). The colonizers' acts of deforestation and civilization are referenced by Hester as well. While in the forest, she recalls to Dimmesdale that "only a little while ago [Boston] was but a leaf-strewn desert, as lonely as this around us" (119). In "The Customs House," Hawthorne himself, speaking of Salem, remembers that it was once a "wild and forest-bordered settlement," but it

is now "tame" (10). Of course, the tameness comes from the removal of the forest and that which is intertwined with it: the Native Americans.

The third way in which the colonizer's action upon the colonized is acknowledged is perhaps the most obvious. In Hawthorne's accounts of Boston and Salem, the towns' bellicose history is made evident. He recalls how his ancestor William Hawthorne arrived "with his Bible and his sword, and trode [sic] the unworn street . . . as a man of war and peace" (11). At the beginning of the narrative proper, he wryly opines that "the founders of a new colony . . . have invariably recognized" the necessity of a prison and a cemetery, thereby highlighting that crime, death, and even killing are foundational parts of Boston's history (35). At the governor's festival, there are displays of wrestling, quarterstaff dueling, and swordsmanship, spectacles that, although considered "sports" in England, are something more in the colonies. The settlers "keep alive" these sports "for the sake of the courage and manliness that were essential to them" (137). Yet it is impossible to believe that the arts of war are mere diversions, as Hawthorne posits. The patriarchs of the town are introduced with "military music" and preceded by a "body of soldiery" that is compared to the Knights Templar (140).

It is tempting to view these remarks, particularly the first, as winks and nods to the violence exercised on natives in New England's history. As Doyle notes, Hawthorne neatly avoids any direct reference to war with the natives, aside from a passing remark about Governor Bellingham's role in the Pequod War (360). Instead, he redirects the focus to internecine violence among the Puritans, such as the Salem Witch Trials or the persecution of Ann Hutchinson. Indeed, the entire novel is a study of the latter at the expense of the former. Although Hawthorne lugubriously tells Hester Prynne's story and eagerly accepts blame for his ancestors' role in the persecution of men and women like Hester, he simultaneously ignores those same ancestors' role in genocide. Hawthorne explains that "the exigencies of this new country had transformed Governor Bellingham into a soldier," but Doyle wittily points out that "much is compacted in the word 'exigencies'" (362).

Although *The Scarlet Letter* is mindful of the effect of the colonizers on the colonized than it may at first appear, it is far more keenly aware of the reverse—the results of the colonized land and its people on the Anglo-Puritan settlers. As has been shown, the forest and the North American native it represents are associated with blackness, obscurity, and wickedness.

Although it is in the western hemisphere, America and its indigenous peoples are being subjected to Orientalism, as defined by Said. The text constructs both the forest and its inhabitants as wholly alien and sinister. This constructive process generates much anxiety over the influence of the land on its white émigrés. A glaring manifestation of these Puritan anxieties is the Black Man—a telling euphemism for Satan. The Black Man is said to stalk the forest, converse with evil people, and make pacts with witches such as Mistress Hibbins. Contact with the forest brings the danger of contact with the Black Man or other sinister forces of corruption, and this can be seen in the characterization of Chillingworth and others. Early on, before Chillingworth's sojourn with the natives has even been established, this period of contact has wrought a visible change. He is an amalgamation of European civilization and Indigenous people "savagery," "clad in a strange disarray of civilized and savage costume" (42). His intellect has also taken on pieces of native lore. It is hypothesized that, "during his Indian captivity," he has "enlarged his medical attainments by joining in the incantations of the savage priests; who were universally acknowledged to be powerful enchanters, often performing seemingly miraculous cures by their skill in the black art" (81). And Chillingworth himself says that he has learned much "among a people well versed" in herblore (49). Thus, Chillingworth has been culturally transformed, as it were, by his stay in the forest with the natives, and this transformation has a sinister aspect: the practice of magic whose defining color (black) is significant.

This blackness is not only performative, however, it is manifest. Chillingworth's face is perpetually described as black or dark, and this swarthiness intensifies throughout the novel. In the beginning, it is fleeting: his face "darken[s] with some powerful emotion" when he sees Hester on the scaffold (43). Eventually, however, the Bostonians hypothesize that he is "getting sooty with the smoke" of his infernal furnace, which makes his visage "ugly and evil" (81). Pearl calls him the Black Man (84). Even Hester herself asks Chillingworth, "Art thou like the Black Man that haunts the forest round about us?" (52). Chillingworth's blackness is connected with the forest and, with evil. However, his is not the only face affected by the forest's influence. Hawthorne describes the whole Puritan stock as "stern and black-browed," wedding darkness to inscrutability again (11). Pearl favors towards those who exhibit whiteness and eschews those who exhibit blackness. Pearl describes the jailor as a "black, grim, ugly-eyed old man"

(136). Dimmesdale's temporary metamorphosis is the most dramatic. After meeting Hester in the woods, "the same minister returned not from the forest" (130). The old Dimmesdale has been left in the woods, "withdrawn into a secret dell, by a mossy tree-trunk, and near a melancholy brook." At the same time, the new Dimmesdale loses respect for the religion and customs of his community and is temporarily tempted to "strange, wild, wicked" acts. Only the short duration of his exposure to the woods (compared to Chillingworth's) allows him to resist.

Despite her name, Pearl has "nothing of the calm, white, unimpassioned luster" that her name would signify, and to be paler would be to lose her identity (58–59). Her eyes are wild and black, and her face is elfish and fiendish (63). She is perhaps the most forceful manifestation of colonial hybridity. She has "no law, no reverence for authority, no regard for human ordinances or opinions, right or wrong" (84). Like the wild forest and its lawless inhabitants, "the child could not be made amenable to rules" and is godless (59). In "'A' Is for Abolition?: Race, Authorship, *The Scarlet Letter*," Jay Grossman focuses on the hybridity of Pearl as a mixed breed and even calls her a mulatto (606). Her co-mingled heritage exists on two levels: the literal and the figurative. Figuratively, her father is the Black Man. "Once in my life I met the Black Man!" exclaims Hester, and "this scarlet letter is his mark!" (Hawthorne 113). Because the text repeatedly conflates Pearl with the scarlet letter (both symbols of Hester's shame), this is as much to say that Pearl is the Black Man's mark. But Grossman also points out that Pearl's father is a black man of sorts, as well, for Dimmesdale, in his black frock and black gloves, concealing his black secret and, of course, blackened by the influence of the forest as explored above, becomes a sort of black man (605). Indeed, Hester meets this black man in the forest, where he supposedly lurks.

As the title of his article suggests, Grossman is chiefly interested in the matter of American slavery and abolition in *The Scarlet Letter,* but this mulatto aspect of Pearl's identity also fits into the postcolonial theory of hybridity that applies so well to the text, as illustrated above. Where Grossman sees colonized Africa, I also see colonized America, and where Grossman sees, in self-described neo-Marxist fashion, the embeddedness of Hawthorne's narrative in the superstructure of colonial slavery (613–14), I simultaneously see the narrative's embeddedness in a superstructure of colonial settlement and the anxiety aroused thereby. What happens when

an Anglo-Puritan woman goes into the dark, inscrutable forest and commingles with the sinister black man? A devil-child is born. What happens when an Anglo-Puritan man goes into that same forest and commingles with the black man's dark witches? A swarthy warlock returns.

Doyle was not quite correct when she said that the only direct reference to conflict between the settlers and the natives is the governor's role in the Pequod War. In another equally fleeting reference, the narrator relates that Puritan children are fond of playing at "taking scalps in a sham-fight with the Indians" (61). Scalping has always been associated with Native Americans; it is supposed to be something inherent in their culture—a hallmark of the savage warrior's ritual. Yet, the Puritan children seem to have picked up this barbaric habit, and they have not even got the excuse of being "mulattoes" like Pearl. The elements of their identity are like Pearl's, "all in disorder" (59).

Hester's transgression is her consorting with the black man and subsequent birthing of a mixed child, and this sin, "her ignominy, were the roots which she had struck into the soil" (53). Doyle cannily observes that this metaphor—the transplanted plant—is a reiteration of what Hawthorne writes when describing his own ties to Salem, though the sin there is that of his forefathers, not his own (350). Hawthorne possesses "deep and aged roots" that his family "struck into the soil" (Hawthorne 10). In this way, Hawthorne and Hester are both naturalized to New England. Although one has "dwelt much away from" Salem and the other was born in and raised in England, both have become natives of the colony (10). This leads Doyle to posit that "after all, the 'sin' with which Hawthorne is most preoccupied is neither adultery nor his ancestors' whipping of adulterous women but, rather, colonization itself" (350). Whether or not Hawthorne is unconsciously aware of and repulsed by the atrocities committed by the Anglo-Puritan settlers, his text certainly demonstrates an inherent and persistent aversion to the inevitable contact between America and its natives, and Europe and its Puritans—two worlds whose border is the colony.

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Classifying *Thursday*: Examining the Many Genres of G. K. Chesterton's Novel

Laura Kimzey

The Indian parable of the blind men and the elephant has been passed down for generations. The simple story is generally well known: six (sometimes seven) blind men try to determine the nature of an elephant by touch, but they disagree, because each man only touches a single part of the creature—the ear, the tail, the leg, etc. Only by putting together their perspectives at the end of the story can the blind men start to understand the magnitude and reality of the creature before them. This parable is often used in arguments to encourage respect for others' viewpoints, and it teaches that important lesson well. However, the story can also be explored and studied in another sense: as a potential influence and companion to G. K. Chesterton's 1908 novel, *The Man Who Was Thursday*.

Although the connection between the two tales has not been discussed by scholars, it appears on multiple levels of the story. The six men of the Central Anarchists Council all seek to identify their mysterious leader, Sunday, through different perspectives and are individually unsuccessful. Furthermore, each of these men is named after a day of the week, corresponding with the version of the tale where the blind men visit the elephant one at a time over six days. Sunday, who serves as the "elephant" of Chesterton's novel, connects to the idea of the creature itself. Not only is he massive and solemn in an elephantine manner, but out of the seventeen times the word "elephant" appears in the novel, sixteen refer to Sunday, either comparing

him to an elephant or referencing him riding one. Likewise, as in the fable, Sunday's identity only begins to be revealed when the six men put their clues together and start understanding his enormity. Interestingly, the idea of multiple perspectives forming the correct conclusion also appears in the form of the story. In *Thursday*, Chesterton not only tells an unusual tale, but he uses an unusual manner, employing multiple kinds of writing to produce a multifaceted conclusion. To see this in action, one need only attempt to identify the genre into which the novel fits best.

A reader might first be tempted to classify *Thursday* as a detective story; after all, Gabriel Syme announces his Scotland Yard identity in the second chapter (Chesterton). Defining the detective story as a genre sheds light on whether *Thursday* counts as such a tale. A detective story is simply defined as a story about a detective who uncovers an actual or suspected crime. Unlike other fiction involving crimes, a detective story must focus specifically on the detective character (Baldick 94). In the popular tales of Sherlock Holmes, Hercules Poirot, and Father Brown, the detective himself forms the common element between various episodes. Furthermore, the case in question must carry significant weight with such difficulty that few could solve—outside of the detective, of course (94). Stories like Poe's *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* or Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express* exemplify this kind of baffling murder mystery in which only the brilliant detective Dupin or Poirot can identify the criminal and bring resolution.

Several of these elements appear in the winding story of *Thursday*. The novel centers on Gabriel Syme, a detective from Scotland Yard's special branch of police designed to track down anarchists and other dangerous thinkers. These police officers have a unique goal: to identify the crime *before* it happens and stop it from taking place. As a policeman from the branch tells Syme, "We discover from a book of sonnets that a crime *will be* committed" (245; emphasis added). This order of events is unusual, but the action still involves tracking crime and criminals, as in most detective stories. Likewise, Syme mirrors detectives like Holmes or Father Brown in attempting to uncover the truth of the situation, though Syme seeks information about the anarchists and Sunday's identity rather than a murderer or thief. The crimes that detectives like Syme uncover—from an assassination at Hartlepool to the deaths of the French president and the

Tsar—are indeed serious and hard to detect. The former is only discovered because one detective "thoroughly understood a triolet" (245). In addition to meeting these requirements for a detective story (Baldick 94), *Thursday* provides many of the common elements of such a tale: hidden identity, deduction, fright, and secret codes. *Thursday,* then, fits well in the detective story genre—a fact that should not surprise, as Chesterton is well known for his *Father Brown* mysteries, which fall into the same category.

Despite this fit in the detective genre, the story works as well or better in a category slightly different from, although related to, the detective story: the spy story. Alison Milbank says *Thursday* has a "spy thriller plot" (38), and William L. Isley, Jr., hints that the novel's main plot might not be a detective story at all, but a more broadly based spy story (285). Isley distinguishes between these genres in a few ways. According to him, the plot of a spy thriller goes much further than a single crime, which generally indicates a detective story; instead, it often tells of an international society of criminals that threatens nations or entire societies (285). In these stories, the opponent is normally not one detective but a government-based body of protagonists (285). Thus, a spy story's plot is of much larger proportions than the work of a solo genius or murderer. Similarly, Isley says the aim of the good character(s) in a spy story differs from that of detective story; rather than simply answering a whodunit riddle, the protagonists in a spy story generally attempt to apprehend and disband the antagonistic agency (285).

Chesterton's novel contains several characteristics of this genre. The main group of antagonists, the Central Anarchist Council, consists of international members hailing from England, Poland, France, and Germany. Their intended crimes, likewise, go beyond a local or even national scope, touching governments all over Europe. They plot to one day abolish all authority and perhaps all human life, forming a major threat to societies and humanity itself. Thus, the anarchists can fulfil the broad scope required of a spy story. *Thursday* also presents protagonists beyond just an individual; Isley points out that Syme is a government agent, as are the Scotland Yard detectives (285). This sets up the government-versus-government scale often seen in spy stories. Finally, Syme and his fellow detectives are not trying to track down a specific criminal but trying to identify and thwart anarchists as a body, specifically in the Central Anarchist Council, which is seeking to attack the agency in the form seen in most spy thrillers.

Therefore, according to Isley's guidelines, *Thursday* can be classified as a spy story as well as a detective story.

The genres of detective story and spy thriller seem closely related, so it is not surprising that one story can easily fall under both classifications; however, *Thursday*'s complex and varying elements suggest the novel can fit into categories that do not revolve around crimes and mysteries—for example, fantasy. Once again, defining the genre allows one to see how this apparently oppositional claim works in practice. *Fantasy* as a literary term includes "any kind of fictional work that is not primarily devoted to realistic representation of the known world" (Baldick 135). Fantasy offers a world that functions according to its own rules that do not necessarily correspond with those in normal life. A fantasy story may look like a fairy tale, a romance, or even science fiction, and it often includes magical power and other such phenomena as accepted realities (135–36). J. R. R. Tolkien, master of fantastic world-building, gives more specific criteria in his essay "On Fairy-Stories": fantasy is a work of sub-creation and thus needs to be internally consistent and satisfy certain desires that are not met in this world (13, 46–47). Tolkien also requires three specific results from fantasy: recovering a clear perspective on everyday life, escape from a troubled reality, and consolation through a happy ending (57–70).

Thursday rises to the challenge and demonstrates several traits of the fantastic genre. Although the novel uses no traditional magic, it does give a setting and events beyond normal reality. The opening description of Saffron Park depicts an unusual place, which is "not only pleasant, but perfect, [if one] could regard it not as a deception but rather as a dream" (Chesterton 205). The buildings are described as "fantastic" with a "wild" ground plan, and even the people seem to oddly embody poetry, philosophy, and other artistic pursuits (205). From that unrealistic setting emerges an even more incredible plot: a secret society of anarchists ruled by seven men, known by the days of the week, who scheme to overthrow the world from a sunny balcony breakfast table. Even if one could argue that such a plot could take place in an ordinary world or a detective story, the looming character of Sunday provides a phenomenon in himself. His enormous size, ability to inspire utter terror in his followers, strange activity, and enigmatic identity cannot possibly represent a real human, pushing *Thursday* into the realm of fantasy. The story's ending includes inexplicable supernatural events, which supports its genre as fantasy.

Chesterton's novel even stands up to Tolkien's more rigorous standards. The setting of *Thursday* is so convoluted that the first test of internal consistency seems rather difficult to apply. Nonetheless, the story does keep some regularity in its confusion; all the scattered facts and characters come together to build an overall story with nothing seeming completely random or pointless (other than the plot itself at times). *Thursday* only partially meets Tolkien's second criterion; that is, satisfying desires that cannot be met in this world. Obviously, the novel does not fulfil the longings Tolkien mentions by name in his essay, like the ability to talk to other creatures or see other worlds (13, 41). However, it does satisfy other human longings for adventure and (as Gregory promises Syme) entertainment. While these needs can be met in normal life, the story provides both adventure and entertainment in a very unusual manner, perhaps still able to be classified as fantasy according to Tolkien. As far as Tolkien's three requirements of recovery, escape, and consolation, *Thursday* fulfils each of these: the whole story shakes up one's perspective on anything from anarchy to hornbills, as Syme himself sees; the unrealistic setting and characters allow the reader to escape from everyday struggles; and the story ends happily, albeit ambiguously, with Syme awakening from his adventure with the feeling of "some impossible good news" (Chesterton 407). Thus, the novel meets at least most of Tolkien's criteria for fantasy, reasonably establishing it as a work in that genre.

Oddly enough, *Thursday* seems to bring in hints of a fourth kind of literature: allegory. *Allegory* is a story with a layer of meaning beyond its obvious, physical connotations (Baldick 8). This hidden significance, often revealed in the personification of inanimate objects as characters in the story, must correspond to a larger reality outside of the story, such as an event or system of belief (8), whose theological or philosophical points are wrapped in a coating of allegorical fiction. *Thursday* certainly suggests a deeper meaning behind the surface-level story of bombs, disguises, and cabs chasing an elephant. At the end, each member of the Central Anarchist Council and his title as a day of the week correspond to a day of the Biblical account of creation. These connections seem to symbolize both the men's personalities and the truth revealed by their various insights on Sunday, who forms the main allegorical figure in the novel. Sunday clearly declares what he represents: "I am the Sabbath; . . . I am the peace of God" (Chesterton 402). Even Gregory serves an allegorical purpose,

being compared to Satan in the Biblical account of Job (404). In these ways, *Thursday* directly allegorizes the Christian belief and story of creation. Chesterton's story also wrestles allegorically with the question of theodicy. The detectives struggle at the end to understand how Sunday can be both entirely good and have brought them so near suffering. Although Sunday does not answer their questions and accusations directly, his overwhelming goodness and admission that he, too, has suffered, seem to correlate to the Christian God's answer to His people's same questions and accusations. In these representations, *Thursday* can be accurately classified as an allegory of the Christian faith.

As if fitting into four distinct genres was not enough, Chesterton suggests at least one more for *Thursday*. In the last few paragraphs of the story, Syme experiences some kind of awakening which indicates his previous experiences with the Council and their leader may have been no more than a dream (or nightmare). This ending places the novel in a fifth genre, that of the *dream narrative*. This genre is defined by the narrator recounting his adventures as a dream, often with allegorical significance (Baldick 72–73). Chesterton's story follows this definition almost exactly, although Syme is simply the main character, not the narrator, and his awakening is rather vaguely described. Robert Boeing writes that the dream-based story was an important piece of medieval literature, often used to reveal some wisdom or knowledge to the dreamer (31). Syme follows this model, emerging from his adventure with an insight into life and an understanding of the goodness of creation that results from his vision, showing another way in which *Thursday* corresponds with the typical dream narrative. Apparently, then, one must place the novel in the genre of dream narrative alongside its other categories.

Imagining that a novel can be both detective story and Christian allegory, both spy thriller and dream narrative that escapes to fantasy, seems incredulous. Yet Chesterton achieves this diversity in *Thursday,* which begs the question: why? Why would any author dabble in so many genres and create such a convoluted (though brilliant) story? Author C. S. Lewis writes of the forms of his stories coming to him inexplicably and undeniably. Was that the case with Chesterton—that his book felt like it could come in no way other than the hodgepodge of styles he uses?

Returning to where this essay began helps to answer this question. As with the blind men and their views of the elephant, Chesterton gives his

readers multiple different perspectives through his multiple genres, and each one provides something different: the detective story's action and hunt for truth, the spy story's thrill and massive scale, the fantasy's startling setting and characters, the allegory's layer of truth behind the madness, and the dream narrative that returns the characters and readers to the real world. Each of these pieces is necessary to *Thursday*. Without the criminal-hunting aspect, Chesterton's allegory would be entirely unappealing; without the larger questions of theodicy and creation behind the plot, it would have no point besides confusion. If the dream narrative alone was emphasized, the story would seem weak and easily dismissed. Taken alone, the pieces give no more insight than feeling an elephant's tail gives of the whole creature. However, taken together, the various genres Chesterton uses form a cohesive and brilliant whole that teaches readers multifaceted truths about God, themselves, and the world. These truths converge to the conclusion—a conclusion as massive as Sunday and still harbouring some of his mystery—that Chesterton wants his readers to reach, and he wisely directs them there by using various genres. No single angle could have reached this conclusion so well, and Chesterton seemed to know that. After all, he was no blind guide.

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Meeting the Man and the Deprivation of Black Masculine Subjectivity

Aryana Martin

Racism, one of American culture's most fundamental and ferocious obstacles, unveils fraught issues of identity and fear in American history. Addressing this racism in his essays and through his fiction, James Baldwin urges the white population of America to consider what necessitates the social construct of race and its logical effect, racism. Baldwin's "Going to Meet the Man" reveals the dynamics of racism and brings to life the inner workings of the complex dynamics of white patriarchal society in America, suggesting that the American-built patriarchal ideal, developed by a white-supremacist culture, depends on the oppression of black men. Baldwin poses a vital question through his character Jesse: How is manhood defined and achieved? Baldwin's response suggests that white power structures, and thus white masculinity, depend on the degrading and dehumanizing invention of the "nigger" to metaphorically castrate and control black masculinity. Baldwin's story, therefore, forces its audience to examine larger narratives that connect white power/control, masculinity, and racial identity in the US.

Written in third-person omniscient narration, Baldwin's "Going to Meet the Man" examines the racist thoughts of Jesse, a forty-two-year-old white deputy sheriff in the 1950s American South. The story begins with and centers around Jesse's sexual impotence, as he fails to become erect with his wife, Grace. While lying in bed, anxiously anticipating sexual performance,

Jesse reminisces about two events: the beating of a black prisoner earlier in the day and a lynching that Jesse witnessed in his childhood. Reflection on both events, involving the degradation and violent eroticization of the black male body, cures Jesse's impotence. To explore, via Jesse, the white man's persistent perspective on manhood and race, one must consider what prompts Jesse's arousal. Violent eroticization of the black male body, through the beating and lynching, enables sexual action and the continuation of the white race through procreation.

The relationship between racism and masculinity is explored also in Arthur Flannigan Saint-Aubin's work "Testeria: The Dis-ease of Black Men in White Supremacist, Patriarchal Culture," and Baldwin's Jesse beating a black male prisoner reflects Saint-Aubin's neologism testeria. Saint-Aubin defines testeria as the "dis-ease" or sickening discomfort about the black male body, considered by white society as a threat (1059). This discomfort results in the white population denying the black man's subjectivity, ultimately reflecting how America's culture represses black men. Jesse justifies repressing a black prisoner; he claims that the protestors interrupting his workday are "molesting the people and keeping [white individuals] from [their] duties" (Baldwin 233). Specifically, Jesse recalls the memory of the black protest leader whom his fellow officers brought to the jail. Jesse confronts the black man in his jail cell and hits the prisoner in the testicles (233). Jesse's "dis-ease" with the black male body drives him to a specific target: the black prisoner's testes. Saint-Aubin's methodology encourages Jesse's decision to be read as an act motivated by unconscious fear and desire, thereby revealing Jesse's fear-based impulse to destroy the black man's assertive power, or possible subjectivity, as the "ring-leader" (232) of the black community.

Jesse aligns his discomfort toward black male subjectivity and his racist, violent behavior to the rules of God and the Bible, which Jesse parallels to the rules of American society. He declares that "it wasn't his fault if the niggers had taken it into their heads to fight against God and go against the rules laid down in the Bible for everyone to read!" (Baldwin 235). Jesse understands going "against the rules" as a challenge to the governing position that grants white men authoritative power in society. I extend this definition by arguing that America structures white supremacy on white

patriarchy and that Jesse views God as the symbolic Father and the Bible as His Law.[1] Aligning his authority as being under God's, Jesse, therefore, sees black individuals as nuisances attempting to reject the "natural order" of white male domination. In other words, Jesse is consistently frustrated by the black man's attempt to gain subjectivity that "goes against the rules laid down" (235).

Despite his frustration with black individuals rejecting this natural order, Jesse still becomes aroused by the black man, expressed as a "peculiar excitement which refused to be released" during his confrontation with the black male prisoner (Baldwin 232). Jesse's arousal from beating the black male prisoner supports Saint-Aubin's claim that white supremacist patriarchal culture compulsively eroticizes the othered black male subject (Saint-Aubin 1058). Jesse does not recognize the cause of his arousal. He "violently stiffens—with no warning at all" (Baldwin 235), which speaks to the white man's persistent need to dominate the black man and to the unconscious erotic desire that underlies it. Jesse's beating of the black male prisoner provokes an eroticization of the black male body and triggers Jesse's traumatic memory of the lynching scene he witnessed as a child. A Fourth of July-like picnic celebration, the lynching scene displays the horrific reality of America's deeply rooted white supremacist culture. In this scene, Jesse meets the black male victim and witnesses the barbarity of the white crowd. In particular, he watches a "smiling" white man stretch, cradle, and caress the black man's testicles before violently flashing the knife up and down, castrating the black man and "cutting the dreadful thing away" (247–48). This recurring theme of white masculine control, or denigration, of black masculinity is demonstrated in this scene; the white man holds the knife, a symbol of white masculine violence and control that castrates the black male body (Taylor 56).

Jesse's father's friends, once "responsible for law and order," are Jesse's "models," as they passed down the metaphorical Law of the Father and taught him "what it meant to be a man" (Baldwin 236). Jesse's desire to be "one of his father's friends" (247), or to be the castrator, signifies Jesse's wish to contribute to the legacy of white supremacy, which embodies Susan

[1] According to Jacques Lacan, The Father is the symbolic object that "regulate[s] the laws" (Evans 99), and His Law is "the set of universal principles which make social existence possible" (98). The Father defines masculinity, and His Law dictates which masculine ideals must be achieved.

Faludi's model of post-World War II manhood. Faludi focuses on the masculinity crisis in America (6) and addresses what was "being done" to men to cause this crisis (7). Faludi explains the postwar manhood template as "a team of anonymous, duty-bound young men successfully completing the mission their fathers and their fathers' fathers had laid out for them, defeating a vile enemy and laying claim to a contested frontier" (16). Faludi's otherwise astute analysis does not address race. I argue that Jesse's similar description of violently laying down the rules of white patriarchy models the cultural effort to complete the mission of defeating the "vile enemy" (16) by destroying the black male body. This inconceivable pressure to uphold America's unachievable masculine ideal, or "contested frontier" (16), becomes inherent, a legacy, a "test," a "secret" (Baldwin 248).

The lynching scene provides Jesse with "the template for postwar manhood" (Faludi 16). Faludi argues that Echo, a widely admired 1960s satellite experiment, symbolizes "a beacon of pride and *secret* knowledge, a *paternal gift* rocketing him [the child, the white male child, I argue] into a future his father has helped to launch" (4, emphasis added). Similarly, Jesse sees the lynching scene as "a mighty test [in which his father] had revealed to him a great *secret* which would be the key to his life forever" (Baldwin 248, emphasis added). What does it truly mean to be a man in American culture, then? Using Faludi's model with more attention directed toward race, one might see how Jesse, his father, and the white men before him retain and pass down this "secret," this "paternal gift," in the form of white patrimony. This white patrimony within a white supremacist culture inevitably prompts Jesse and other white men to oppress and castrate black men and thereby control the threat of the black masculine image. Jesse and the men before him claim this frontier (not a bordering territory, but a border between whiteness and blackness) to preserve their manhood. Therefore, Jesse's true impotence, or lack of power, lies within this white patrimonial ideal, an ideal that cannot disassociate masculinity from racist ideals.

Jesse's law-enforcing profession qualifies him to enforce compliance with the Law of the Father. Jacques Lacan's Law of the Father, within the symbolic dimension, dictates behaviors within a patriarchal culture. Men successfully become men if they abide by the Father's Law. However, due to a white supremacist patriarchal American culture and because the Father is white, only white men have access to this Law, and black men are denied (Saint-Aubin 1061–62). As an officer of the Law, Jesse's duty in "protecting

white people from the niggers and the niggers from themselves" (Baldwin 235–36) corresponds to Jesse's interpretation of himself as a protector or guardian of the Law of the Father. Protection, a noun that requires an interpretation of a threat, connects to Saint-Aubin's testeria and the white man's fear of black male subjectivity. Jesse's fellow officer, Big Jim C., personifies the fate of those who go "against the rules" and thus challenge white patriarchal order (235). Big Jim C. represents both Jim Crow segregation laws and the powerful white Father who controls black masculine culture in America. Before becoming a prisoner, the black man is beaten by Big Jim C. and other officers, emblematizing punishment for denying the Law of the Father. In other words, Big Jim C. and other officers of the Law (including Jesse) comply with the Father's Law by further prohibiting black men from becoming men (Saint-Aubin 1067).

Jesse reminds us that the white population in America yearns to control the black man's destiny. Jesse observes the white crowd and the lynched black man who "wanted death to come quickly [as] they [the whites] wanted to make death wait; and it was they who held death, now, on a leash which they lengthened little by little" (Baldwin 246–247). The leash and the knife, therefore, simultaneously signify the white man's urgent need to violently control the black male body. The white men—"older men, friends of his father's, [responsible for] raising and lowering the chain"—are Jesse's idols; they control the black man's fate (247). Thus, Jesse seeks to control the black male body as a white man under the pressure of the Law.

Jesse's ability to get an erection is fully dependent on the violent eroticization of the black male body. White men in America eroticize and hypersexualize the black man because they "need him" to perform (*I Am Not Your Negro*). His erection is simultaneously a sexual performance and a performance of manhood. His inability to perform then has a double meaning: Jesse's inability to perform sexually and his anxiety, which stems from not fulfilling the requirements of the Law.

One question remains unanswered: *Why* does the white man depend on a legacy that oppresses and castrates the black man to achieve manhood? In his article connecting lynching rituals to castration anxiety, Kwangsoon Kim poses a similar question. Examining the harmful effects of racism through a psychoanalytic perspective, Kim asks, "What would/could happen if the Freudian (white) Oedipal boy is placed in the American South where castration is not a fantasy but a reality?" (320).

Why is the castration of the black male body necessary for the American white man's perception of masculinity? Applying Freud's Oedipus complex to "Going to Meet the Man", readers can potentially answer these questions by reevaluating Jesse's fear of punishment or castration. According to the Oedipal model, young Jesse would desire maternal attention and thus see his father "as a powerful competitor" for such attention (Kim 325). Jesse would, consequently, see his father as a potential castrator and the cause of castration anxiety.[2] As he matured, Jesse would eventually "identify himself with his father" (328), resolving the Oedipal drama and releasing its anxiety. Kim, however, argues that Jesse does not resolve the conflict as he "could not successfully work through the Oedipal stage due to the lynching rituals he witnessed as a child" (320). Kim's argument that the black man "replaces the authority that Jesse imagined his father possesses" (328) suggests that Jesse shifts his castration anxiety towards the black male body. Jesse repositions the threat of his father in the Oedipus complex when he observes the black man's genitals, which "seemed heavier, too much heavier" and "bigger than his father's flaccid [penis]" (Baldwin 248). At this very moment, Jesse "learns that his father is not the most powerful and masculine person in the world" (Kim 328). Instead, the black man possesses the metaphorical and all-powerful masculine phallus. Jesse's response of dominating, oppressing, and castrating the black male body reflects his own wish to continue the postwar masculine legacy in fear of his own punishment. In this interpretation, Jesse's father becomes an ally rather than an enemy (328), as the black man challenges their own white power and manhood. This alliance pushes Jesse and his father to make it their mission to destroy the black male body, to disempower black masculinity, and to render impossible black subjectivity. In this way, "it is not Jesse but the sexually potent black man who should suffer from castration anxiety" (329). As a result, due to their emasculated state, Jesse and the white men in America must castrate the black male body as a means of resolving the converted racialized perspective of the Oedipus complex. Is this why, as Baldwin asks, the white man feels the need to castrate the black man?

In "Papas' Baby: Impossible Paternity in 'Going to Meet the Man,'"

[2] Castration anxiety stems from the fear of having one's penis cut off by the Father (Evans 21). It is the anxiety derived from "having to be the phallus," or symbol of power (129). "Aroused by a threat," the man fears castration (21) or the Father's ability to punish the man and take his potency away.

Matt Brim considers how "race is produced" (191) by analyzing "the white father's anxiety about reproducing race and thereby sustaining the white paternal order" (173); this reproducing race also relates to Jesse's sexual performance. After reminiscing about the beating of the black prisoner and the lynching, Jesse becomes aroused and has sex with Grace but tells her he is going to "do [her] like a nigger" (Baldwin 249). If Jesse is to produce a child with Grace on this night, Jesse's child would be understood (in American society) as a pure white child. Yet, Jesse's reliance on the black male body for arousal and reproduction of this "white purity" turns to raced paternity, making the child a metaphor, as race is a constructed metaphor, for the inability to reproduce race or whiteness (Brim 193).

Jesse's inability to produce whiteness without blackness is evoked in Baldwin's allusions to Jesse's impotence. Incapable of continuing this white paternal "legacy" or "secret," Jesse represents the white man's fear, and the white population of America's anxiety, around reproducing race and perpetuating white power. Baldwin, therefore, exposes the true reason why white men wish to control black masculinity. If white men do not control the black man, they cannot reproduce race, and therefore must confront the reality of race as a social construction that does not grant them ultimate power. The white population in America must, then, recognize that they only obtain power and avoid deprivation through white masculinity that depends on false masculine and racial ideals that oppress the black man.

"Going to Meet the Man" uncovers the history of American racism, a history with a continuous generational and systemic fear of the black male body, which provokes white men to castrate and control black masculine subjectivity. Some might consider Baldwin's title to mean that Jesse is "the man" who is met in this story; however, Jesse's attempt to deprive the black man of his subjectivity is contrary to manhood. Baldwin knows he is "not a nigger [but] a man" (*I Am Not Your Negro*), and such a man is the very man Jesse meets and the man Jesse internally struggles to acknowledge throughout this story. The man that Baldwin's audience goes to meet, as Jesse meets, is the black man. Baldwin's title, thus, emphasizes the black masculine image as *the* image of manhood in order to highlight white American culture's dependence on the black man to define masculinity. Despite being a victim to a white American society that wishes to see his

destruction, the black man prevails, and we meet him throughout this story to confront, defy, and correct mistaken white assumptions.

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"No Man's Land": Women's War in *Dracula* and World War I

Janie McGann

In Bram Stoker's infamous novel *Dracula*, the violent and strategic pursuit against Count Dracula bears an uncanny resemblance to a war in more ways than one. In her essay "'The blood-dimmed tide is loose': *Dracula* as Prophetic Foretelling of WWI and Germany's Assault on England," Genesea M. Carter claims the resemblance because Dracula serves as a subconscious manifestation of Germany and the fears held by the British during the late 1890s. By the publication of *Dracula*, the tensions with Germany that would eventually lead to World War I had already been brewing. However, the parallels to this war go beyond the battlefield. The behavior and role of women in both World War I and *Dracula* greatly mirror each other, both which reveal women capable of working and embracing their sexuality in ways not previously recognized by society during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For many men and women alike, the widespread change of women's roles confirmed their already held fears that women were becoming a force to be reckoned with. Dracula forces the characters of the novel to confront this prospect in a fictional setting, years before it was implemented into society. As a result, the parallels between the roles and behavior of the women in *Dracula* and The Great War seem to suggest that Dracula also represents the fear of the rapidly modernizing woman that eventually came to stage during World War I.

Before the fight against Dracula even begins, women's role in society are

being considered through Mina, the fiancé and eventual wife of Dracula's initial prisoner, Johnathan Harker, and her abilities that display her as a fairly modern woman, though not to the point of nonconformity with the prescribed gender roles of the late 1890s. Mina possesses a wide variety of skills. In a letter to Lucy, her closest companion, she describes her endeavors in learning shorthand, stenography, and typewriting, at which she is "practicing very hard," are so that "when [she and Johnathan] are married [she] shall be useful to Johnathan" (Stoker 55). This presents her as a woman who uses her capabilities to act properly by serving her husband. Even so, such abilities greatly contrast her to Lucy, who serves as the more stereotypical depiction of femininity in the story. Because Lucy belongs to the upper class, she is not required nor expected to be as able as Mina, who does not share the same social standing. In fact, Mina is revealed to have been Lucy's governess—to "prepare [Lucy] for the world of life" (101), further highlighting Mina's abilities as a self-sufficient woman, while still maintaining a position within the domestic realm.

According to Alan P. Johnson in his critical essay "'Dual Life': The Status of Women in Stoker's *Dracula*," Mina has such a skillset because "*Dracula* seems clearly a response particularly to the 'New Woman' controversy of the 1890s," which was "a demand for 'sexual equality and self-development' for women and a challenge to the traditional Victorian marriage arranged for money and position" (2). As Johnson points out, "neither Lucy nor Mina is literally a full-fledged 'New Woman'" (3); however, Mina is still aware of the change. She amusingly remarks that "the New Woman . . . will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it too! There's some consolation in that" (Stoker 87). This shows that, although she may not partake in the occasionally radical movement, she is not outwardly against it. As a result, Mina still acts as a proper British woman, while revealing that the "slow, uphill struggle" (Johnson 3) of women working toward equality is already in motion at the time the story takes place.

This climb accelerates when Dracula enters the scene and as Mina takes on more responsibility, while the men pursue the physical battle against Dracula in a series of events not unlike that experienced by women in World War I. Sandra M. Gilbert gives a vivid account of the dramatically increased role of women in society during the war in her essay, "Soldier's

Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War." She explains, "As nurses, mistresses, as munitions workers, bus drivers, or soldiers in the 'land army,' even as wives and mothers, these formerly subservient creatures began to loom malevolently larger" due to the war (425). For many of these women, this was their first time being able to work and earn their own income and for most, if not all, it was the first time they could engage in a job that allowed them to have a greater purpose as an influential member of society. Mina, too, is able to apply her abilities to a wider scale than merely serving her husband through the fight against Dracula. She assists in typing the diaries of Johnathan and Dr. Seward to give a chronological account of events and to serve as a "secretary" to their meetings (Stoker 208). More importantly, when hypnotized by Van Helsing, she can report Dracula's whereabouts to the group. Despite being unable to assist in the physical battle, Mina makes the most of her position at the sidelines; she plays an invaluable role in the defeat of Dracula that not only allows his eventual demise to occur but also allows her to gain self-sufficiency through an otherwise dismal event. Although she does not exactly "enter the public realm" (Gilbert 425) like the wartime women, she exercises a level of agency and influence not previously available to her upon the entrance of Dracula into her life, thus establishing a link between Dracula and Mina's minimal but evident modernization.

During World War I, men were forced to respond to this evident change of gender roles, which led them to believe "that the war had drastically abrogated most of the rules that had always organized Western Culture" (Gilbert 430), leading to anti-feminist backlash and a society unsure of how to cope with the near total subversion of their previously held notions of gender. The discomfort expressed by the men of *Dracula* regarding Mina's role in their work is more subtle, as is Mina's modernization. However, the men struggle to reconcile Mina's role and skill with their preconceived beliefs about the place of women. Van Helsing describes Mina as having a "man's brain—a brain that a man should have, were he much gifted—and a woman's heart" and the men's endeavor being "no part for a woman" (Stoker 207). Though they recognize that Mina has played an influential role in their work, they demonstrate their prejudice by attributing her skills to masculinity and then opt to exclude her from their plans, despite the essential part she has played. After Mina is attacked by Dracula, the men decide that "Mina should be kept in full confidence; that nothing of any

sort—no matter how painful—should be kept from her" (253). This change suggests that, once Mina has suffered the physical pains of battle, she is worthy of being included in plans. Yet, after Van Helsing begins hypnotizing Mina to ascertain Dracula's whereabouts, the men conclude again that they "must keep her ignorant of [their] intent, and so she cannot tell what she know not" (281). Now that Mina has been discovered to have a telepathic connection to Dracula, the men fear her involvement will muddle their plans. Dracula's existence initially gives Mina greater agency. However, on direct contact with him, Mina is deemed untrustworthy and "unclean" (279), as she confirms the worst fears of the men: that Dracula is exerting his influence over her.

These men justify their fears because, in nearly every instance, Dracula's influence results in radical change for females, which is met with great contempt by their male counterparts. On seeing Lucy in the cemetery after her death, Dr. Seward claims her "sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (Stoker 187). Lucy has been transformed by Dracula from the epitome of ideal British womanhood to a merciless but powerful sexual being. Johnson argues that Lucy's actions as a vampire are a "subconscious rebellion . . . provoked by the undue constraints and condescension which have been inflicted on her by society" (1), revealing that Dracula merely allowed Lucy to exercise desires that she already had. During World War I, heroines were "set sexually free" (Gilbert 438); as Johnson reveals, the war brought liberation that women had been desiring since the 1890s, even if subconsciously. In both the war and *Dracula,* the absence of men results in sexual "rebellion." Therefore, Arthur's stabbing of Lucy with the stake "suggests that her rebellion could have been prevented by the presence of a strong self-dependent fiancé" (Johnson 6). Moreover, his actions have sexual implications, as Arthur penetrates Lucy in a way that returns sexual power to him and puts Lucy back in her prescribed place as a woman. Because Lucy's sexual prowess is inconsistent with how women are perceived by society, Arthur finds the present state of his fiancé a "horror" (Stoker 189) and proceeds to make it his mission to prevent another from reaching such a state.

Before biting Mina and Lucy, Dracula has only been reported to have three other victims: the "three young women" (Stoker 41) Johnathan first encounters at Dracula's castle. In the case of these three, it seems that Dracula's presence has brought them together. Gilbert quotes Nina

Auerbach in stating, "Union among women . . . is one of the unacknowledged fruits of war" (428). Similarly, these three women find themselves together in their own no man's land as Dracula's victims. The men they desire are merely for their consumption. Dracula, the man ruling them, may stop their plans to bite Johnathan. However, he does not interfere with the subsequent sisterhood that forms among them. In their two appearances in the novel, they are presented together, and when they encounter Mina, they exclaim, "Come, sister. Come to us. Come! Come!" (Stoker 317). They implore Mina to join their vampire sisterhood, one in which they feed on men and children. As a result, not only has Dracula's mere existence allowed occupational expansion for Mina and sexual freedom for Lucy and all three women, but it has created a potential outlet for them to indulge in and expand their practices to others. When the sisters see Johnathan, one exclaims, "There are kisses for us all" (42), and after Dracula stops them, they are only satiated when presented with a "half-smothered child" (43) to feed on. Because these behaviors present them in complete opposition to the societal expectations of femininity, the union of these women poses a threat to the established balance of society and, therefore, helps fuel the fervor with which the men fight against Dracula and his creation of an "ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless" (53–54).

The men are opposed to Dracula not only because of the radical changes he exerts upon women but also because these changes threaten their masculinity. If Dracula subverts the typical role of women, this would, by extension, also affect the role of men. This too was seen in World War I, which had "at least temporarily dispossessed male citizens of the patriarchal primacy that had always been their birthright" (Gilbert 425). On their return, they found a society supported by women, thus, threatening the dominance the men once had. Furthermore, the war created men who suffered "specifically from sexual wounds, as if, having traveled literally or figuratively through No Man's Land, all have become not just No Men, nobodies, but *not* men, *un*men" (423). This insecurity was heightened by women who, paradoxically enough, experienced a sexual release. Similarly, the men of *Dracula* find their biggest threat in a being who gives power to women and in the women themselves, who for the first time have more physical power than they do. In Dracula's creation of a population of the "Un-dead" (Stoker 179), he also produces "*un*men" (Gilbert 423) in the

sense that they no longer compare with the women they encounter who are now more capable in their strength and sexuality.

Though a fictional monster who creates a population of unrestrained women feeding on children and men clearly exaggerates the fear of what might occur if women have power in society, the sentiment is real. As Carter states, "The novel drew much of its power from Stoker's clever exploitation of existing fears within British society" (2); fears that, minus the fictional embellishments, more or less came true in World War I as women joined the workforce and experienced sexual liberation. Gilbert claims that literature during and after World War I presented it as "primarily a climatic episode in some battle of the sexes that had already been raging for years" (424). *Dracula* deals with the earlier stages of this battle at a time when these fears could be faced subtly in a story rather than physically in society, as they eventually were in World War I. Despite this discrepancy and the fact that *Dracula* was written nearly three decades before the war, the behavior and role of women in the novel greatly parallel an event that did see the wide scale implementation of women into society, as they struggled for the right to vote, suggesting that the feared liberation of women was inevitable.

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"If we write novels so, how shall we write History?": Realism and Story in *Middlemarch*

Natalie Nichols

In *Daniel Deronda* (published in 1876), George Eliot wrote, "I like to mark the time, and connect the course of individual lives with the historic stream, for all classes of thinkers" (qtd. in Cottom 11). Eliot's *Middlemarch,* work of this pioneer of a new form of realism, represents a new way to connect individuals to historic streams, penning a distinct time and place and capturing history on the page through personal stories. At regular intervals in the text of *Middlemarch*, Eliot spends time discussing the sociopolitical landscape; she intentionally situates *Middlemarch* before the Parliamentary Reform Act of 1832 (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] 246). Her complex cast of characters also faces the anxieties of the industrial revolution with the arrival of a railroad (382). Eliot's narrator even refers to herself as a "belated historian" early in the book, suggesting that she is intentionally attempting to give an account of history (96).

The novel, thus, demands an evaluation of Henry James' early critique: "If we write novels so, how shall we write History?" This is, of course, one of Eliot's integral concerns within the novel—the interplay between story and history. The words' shared etymology is no small matter to her, and her choice of historicist realism presents insights into her understanding of how history must be represented and interpreted in light of individuals. Her novelistic technique invites a critique of the kinds of history that presuppose overly broad narratives and assume an objective lens.

Eliot's quote in *Daniel Deronda* illuminates a fundamental tenet of her understanding of history: it is for all classes of thinkers. James, in his review, refers to her as "a generous rural historian," setting out to document stories of ordinary citizens. This documentation is precisely what Eliot is trying to do. Eliot opposes the idea that history—studying or being a part of history—is limited to the upper class, men, or the rich and powerful. She documents the stories of the lower classes, dignifying the "figure of ordinary life" in the characters of *Middlemarch* (Cottom 60). Cottom, however, argues that her "portraiture of the poor" here is problematic because it "tragedizes and sentimentalizes unfulfilled potential in the lower class," and this potential is a middle-class, moralized lens of the world (62–63). In this, Cottom considers Eliot not leveling the ground between classes but rather distancing the classes even more. His analysis seems to consider Eliot's work as patronizing, one that assumes that lower classes are voiceless and needing an author with the imagination to interpret their narratives. But this overlooks the dignity that Eliot imbues to a myriad of different histories and voices in *Middlemarch*.

Initially, *Middlemarch*'s working title was *Dorothea* (Maertz 21); but if Dorothea was the sole frame of Eliot's web of stories and the novel had retained this type of individualism, *Middlemarch* might have offered this middle-class condescension that Cottom criticizes. The stories of the rest of *Middlemarch* would have been important only because they involved or revolved around Dorothea—she would have been the interpretive lens. But Gregory Maertz rightly notes that the shift of the title from *Dorothea* to *Middlemarch* signifies the shift from the individual to the community (21). As it shifts, it indicates a change of whose voices matter. The stories and histories of rural citizens are equally important and, through the novel, now are accessible to all readers.

In contrast with Cottom, Maertz recognizes the significant social moves that Eliot is making, calling the way that *Middlemarch* is able "to articulate the plight of talented women and outsiders whose capacity for meaningful action is restricted by sexism, narrow-mindedness, and xenophobia" its "enduring achievement" (22). This novel declares that history is comprised of and explained by stories from all different types of people. And history is *for* all these classes, just as Eliot says: she makes ordinary lives meaningful.

History is the necessary interweaving of these stories. It is the "scratche[s] in all directions" on the "pier-glass or extensive surface of polished steel" that do not make sense until "a centre of illumination" suddenly reveals "concentric circles" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] 182). The narrator in *Middlemarch* has the capacity to be the centre of illumination that ties together the individual stories; the distinctly-rooted historical context also serves as a centre. The situation interprets the stories even as the stories also make sense of and interpret the context. Eliot practices what Jerome Beaty calls "indirect historicism," where "she presents history dramatically, within the story, as part of the lives of the characters; she rarely offers it directly to the reader as history" (175). The historical acts and timeframes are integral to the characterization of the citizens of *Middlemarch*.

Eliot situates her novel in a time of intense change; the external environment reflects Eliot's psychological musings. Specifically, the environment is undergoing social, political, and economic change. She intentionally picks the framing of the Reform Act and the modernization of the railroad because this externalizes the agitation and anxieties of the era. In a way, this grounded historicity seems almost reminiscent of Romantic uses of the environment as an externalization of inward emotion. Eliot uses environment to symbolize the psychological state of her characters, but the environment and historical context are linked together. Just as the physical environment of *Jane Eyre* often mirrored Jane's imprisonment and psychological entrapment (Brontë 10–13, 275–77), so do the environments of Eliot. In Eliot's novel, Dorothea watches Featherstone's funeral at a distance from her home (*Middlemarch* [Hornback] 222–24), her isolation from society mirroring the broader entrapment of her marriage. But even in this scene, Eliot employs history to make a point and to characterize Dorothea further, noting that "the country gentry of old time lived in a rarified social air: dotted apart on their stations up on the mountain they looked down . . . " (223). Dorothea is using the external world as a metaphor for her feelings, but "without reference to her place in history, [readers] cannot indeed grasp the precise nature of Dorothea's psychological situation or participate in it" (Shaw 231). Her environment is compared to that of the past to signal her class and psychological distancing; her discontent with this is obvious. Another character in Eliot's work, Ladislaw is characterized by and reflected within the Roman art museums in which he and Dorothea encounter one another. Within those museums, Ladislaw studies paintings

and paints his own works (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] 132-33). In this way, he is associated with a pre-Raphaelite period, which "gives him a set of basic values. . . . The historical association gives authority—but not necessarily approval—to his character and his way of life" (Hornback 677). His environment is distinctly historical, and this time shapes his identity and representation. Environment reflects the social reality at every turn, and this historical reality becomes an interpretive lens.

As Cottom points out, the Victorian novel was never "simply a window on reality or a monological truth. . . . [It] is the means by which realist texts unsettle, critique, and reshape dominant social assumptions" (29). For example, J. Jeffrey Franklin argues that "social reality was too concerned with exploitative relationships, social advancement, material wealth, and the merely empirical truth of facts" (3). *Middlemarch* takes this reality and exaggerates it, putting these concerns at the forefront of its narratives. The novel is full of people taking advantage of other people, like with the chaotic spousal relationships and social climbers of Rosamond and Mr. Brookes. Social assumptions also include money, which is a central concern for most of the figures, like those who struggle with gambling or those, like Dorothea, who lament their wealth. From the first sentence, Eliot also introduces running motifs of empirical facts and science, as the narrator announces that this history is one of how man behaves under the "varying experiments of Time" (*Middlemarch* [Hornback] xiii). This immediately connotes scientific inquiry in its notion of experimentation. Through her overemphasis on all of Franklin's elements of Victorian society—relationships, advancement, wealth, and empiricism—Eliot creates a "revised version of society" that is "similar to but 'truer' than social reality" (Franklin 13). In so doing, Eliot makes her social reality tangible, emphasizing its impact on daily concerns. She can then begin to subvert it and challenge it across the narrative, questioning whether these "dominant social assumptions" are actually practical concerns or if they, like the constantly shifting landscape and time, should also be reassessed and shifted (Cottom 29). Historical context interprets contemporary stories.

Contemporary stories also continue to interpret history. *Middlemarch* weaves communal stories into a narrative, but it also serves as an inquiry into an individual's history. James calls *Middlemarch* "too copious a dose of pure fiction" because of "its diffuseness." Yet it is precisely this diffuseness that makes its historicity more real. For, as the narrator muses early

in *Middlemarch*, "scenes which make vital changes in our neighbors' lot are but the background of our own," yet somehow simultaneously "become associated for us with the epochs of our own history, and make a part of that unity which lies in the selection of our keenest consciousness" (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] 223). Eliot's crafting of narrative and history reflects one of the critical questions of the Enlightenment during the contemporary development of classical liberalism: whether we are autonomous and free individuals who craft our own narratives and make our own choices in complete freedom. The history of *Middlemarch* that weaves the story together, the web and its concentric circles, points to the understanding that our narratives are inextricably bound to those of others. We cannot truly understand one person without understanding their interactions with others—and it is those shared interactions that shape our everyday narrative.

A principal concern of the residents of Middlemarch is their relationship to the past. Some—like Dorothea, Lydgate, Casaubon, and Mr. Brooke—are all trying to find their places within the past and the present by making history. They narrowly define this desired future in their "history" in highly narcissistic terms. For example, Dorothea yearns for the past of Theresa of Avila, hoping to be another "epic life" herself (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] xiii); yet, as the narrator cuttingly notes in the preface, she instead becomes a "foundress of nothing," whose desireness for goodness is "dispersed among hindrances instead of centering in some long-recognisable deed" (xiv). From the beginning, Dorothea will fail in making her place in history, but her narrative is still integral to the history of the town of Middlemarch and the stories of its residents within. Bookending the failure at the start of the novel is Rosamond Vincy's remembrance of Dorothea at the end: "the generosity which had come to her aid in the sharpest crisis of her life" (575). Dorothea does good, albeit small and personal, work. Lydgate, similarly, is remembered for his "excellent practice" among his immediate neighbors (575), yet he regards himself ultimately as a "failure" because he cannot live up to that which he intended to do—make a critical scientific discovery and further the field of anatomical conception (100). Again, Eliot seems to claim that perhaps some of the most important histories exists in the immediate impact we have on one another.

Other characters, like Fred Vincy and Mr. Bulstrode, must learn that

the past is not separate from the present nor can the past be outrun or forgotten. They both must face the "demand that means justify ends, that the past be justified in the present" (Franklin 39). Fred must come to terms with his past actions when he cannot pay back the Garths for his unwise loan, leading them into financial ruin, no matter how much he wishes he could (Eliot, *Middlemarch* [Hornback] 166-74). Mr. Bulstrode cannot cover his past—not by concealing it, not with money (as when Ladislaw rejects it), and not with indirect murder. A man's past is not "simply a dead history," but rather "a still quivering part of himself" (425). History offers a necessary lens for present ramifications and understanding the consequences of our actions on one another.

Ultimately, to James' critique, Eliot's approach to realism *should* inform our approach to and understanding of history. It is a critique of Enlightenment emphasis on pure reason alone. James argues that "the author wishes to say too many things, and to say them too well; to recommend herself to a scientific audience" (James). Perhaps it is precisely this narrow lens of that needs some correcting. Perhaps empiricism and pure science cannot represent a holistic picture of history and reality. Instead, history's presentation is one of intersection, emotion and experience, the narrative threads of both the bourgeois and the rural farmer intersecting, the ordinary lives that weave patterns and illuminate one another.

Realism does not negate the need for an empirical quest for facts and historical representation in *Middlemarch*; Eliot did not set out merely to create a new way of writing history in her novel. Her writing is an attempt not just to represent her reality but to subvert assumptions and norms through an ordinary representation of her time. Her form of realism allows us to consider "how we might go about construing the world in a way that gives us a reliable enough sense of our place within it to facilitate discovering and discussing values and norms" (Shaw 266). It also asks us to consider *how* we construe the world and our stories. Her work includes a place for empirical examination and narrative-seeking in meaning-making, which should fundamentally be the concern of telling history. Meaning emerges holistically through the combination of both methods.

To James' critique, if we write novels as did Eliot, we must write history thus—asking ourselves if enough stories are intersecting and represented; where our biases and frames are; and whether emotional, ordinary experience has been integrated and considered alongside empiricism.

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More Than Just a Statistic: Multiple Consciousness in Renée Watson's *Piecing Me Together*

Ashley Perry

Renée Watson's award-winning young adult novel *Piecing Me Together* has been critically acclaimed for its depictions of intersectionality and the nuanced relationships among today's youth. The highly didactic book tackles social issues of race, gender, class, age, and body size—all dynamically wrapped in the life and narration of Jade Butler, a sixteen-year-old, plus-size African American girl from a poor, minority-majority community in Portland, Oregon. Alluding to African American sociologist W. E. B. Du Bois' concept of "double-consciousness," which posits that African Americans see themselves through their own eyes and the contemptuous eyes of the dominant (White) American society, Watson builds off his theory by conveying how Jade's other intersecting identities also impact her social experiences and the way she perceives herself.

Some may argue that Watson's protagonist primarily struggles with her racial identity; therefore, her internal conflict embodies a traditional conceptualization of Du Bois' double consciousness. Nevertheless, closer examination of both Watson's novel and the first chapter (titled "Of our Spiritual Strivings") of Du Bois' essay "The Souls of Black Folk" proves otherwise. Du Bois' race theory is amended in *Piecing Me Together* with a more inclusive depiction of multiple consciousness to challenge the notion that any single group of people are monolithic. As an individual with numerous marginal statuses, Jade views herself through five interdependent

lenses of inequality: race, gender, class, age, and size. Through Jade's collage art, adaptive behavior, and observations of mistreatment, Watson exhibits how these five forces work in tandem to heighten an individual's internalization of prejudice and judgmental attitude toward themself and others.

To begin, Watson adds interrelated attributes like gender, age, class, and body size in her amended allusions to Du Bois' original "double consciousness" theory to underline how race alone does not determine one's needs and self-perceptions. Instead, she illustrates how numerous social statuses work together to shape experiences of mistreatment, particularly among African American girls, thereby aligning more closely with recent scholarship on "multiple consciousness." In "The Souls of Black Folk," Du Bois defines double consciousness as a "sense" exclusive to African Americans "of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" in a world that "looks on with amused contempt and pity" (922). Watson highlights this experience at the start of *Piecing Me Together*, when Jade exhibits extreme anxiety over what to wear for her first day of junior year at St. Francis, an "expensive," private high school on the other side of town with a mostly White student population (2–3). Jade divulges not wanting to "look like [she's] trying too hard to impress or that [she] doesn't care about how [she] looks" (3). Here, Watson alludes to Du Bois by repetitively adopting the verb "look." However, she applies the verb in the multifaceted context of a school in which every factor influencing Jade's appearance and subsequent negative self-reflection counts, including her femininity, lower financial status, adolescence, heavier body size, and race. These variables cause Jade to assess herself through her own eyes and the castigatory ones she expects from the primarily white and wealthy individuals at her school. "One ever feels his two-ness," Du Bois writes, "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body" (922n1). Recent scholarship has departed from Du Bois' almost exclusively male language and race-focused vision here by introducing "multiple consciousness," meaning "an awareness of multiple systems of inequality, and an awareness of how these systems work with and through each other" to structure power and privilege (Harnois 973). According to Deborah K. King, those whose lives are characterized by multiple jeopardies, or "several, simultaneous oppressions" like classism, sexism, and racism and "the multiplicative relationships among them" (e.g., black women and girls), exhibit multiple consciousness (47).

Consequently, they "have a unique standpoint" through which to view how their intersecting statuses (e.g., race, class, age, gender) interact to create systems of discrimination that cannot be entirely discerned by looking at race separately (Harnois 973). Because Du Bois renders all African Americans the same due to their shared race and excludes black females' related struggles in his masculinized discussion of double consciousness, Jade is not engaging in his race-only, male-centric version of double consciousness. Rather, she uses her "unique standpoint" as a poor, overweight black girl to assert her expertise in assessing the ways that others judge and (mis)treat her.

Jade showcases her multiple consciousness by transforming her neighborhood and self in collage art, demonstrating how she has internalized pervasive prejudices about her community being a "wasteland," as she calls it (Watson 90). For example, Jade describes how many people "can't find beauty in [her] neighborhood" but she can. Jade equates herself with the ubiquitous "everyday things" (i.e., waste like candy wrappers) that she finds and believes she must "cut, tear, arrange, and rearrange" to create art, or "beauty," when she admits that she too is "ordinary" and "not precious like the gem" that her name evokes (10). In this simile, Jade labels herself more like the garbage in her penurious neighborhood than a precious jade stone, clearly displaying that she does not see herself as beautiful unless she modifies her body (both in real life and in her collages) to align with society's idealistic standards of female beauty, which she recognizes privileges whiteness and skinniness. This model is tied to Jade's financial status, weight, and race, as fewer full-service supermarkets and natural food stores that sell healthy foods at affordable prices exist in low-income, urban, and predominantly black communities like Jade's, exacerbating paradigms like obesity (Sutherland 849).

Similarly, Jade manifests her multiple consciousness by imagining how her fellow bus riders would condemn her eating habits due to her weight and gender (not just race) and by responding to these emotions with her art. After being objectified and harassed by a group of boys at a local Dairy Queen who give her a beauty score and call her a "fat ass" (Watson 94), Jade makes a self-conscious decision not to eat fast food on the bus. She even considers tearing up the leftover bag to make a crown or dress for a girl "who doesn't feel insecure about eating whatever she wants in public"—i.e., not a "big girl" like her (95). To elaborate, Jade conveys her multiple consciousness and feelings of inadequacy through her construction of a

crown, a symbol of the confidence and authority she so desires. Initially, only when she is bathed in her mother's love and safe from the white, male, thin, and/or wealthy gazes outside her home does she feel that her "lips and hips, hair and nose don't need fixing" (85). This feeling suggests that she often views her body as broken, defective, and in need of "covering" and "disguising," like the devalued trash that comprises her art (25). She makes this connection more evident when explaining her art to her mentor Maxine: "I like to take things that people don't usually find beautiful and make them beautiful. Like, blocks here in the Villa, or sometimes people in my neighborhood" (41). In other words, she feels she must "make beauty" in her art of the disregarded because, in her mind, no one thinks she or her neighbors inherently possess it.

Consequently, Jade changes her physical appearance to defy the various stereotypes imposed on black girls, highlighting how she has internalized them so profoundly that she sees herself through the conflicted lenses of multiple consciousness. For example, in the chapter entitled "*la primavera*" (Spanish for "spring"), Jade gives birth to an alternate persona of herself who is not ashamed of how she dresses and who acts in front of people. Employing the anaphora of "sometimes I just want to," Jade's list of "wants" suggests that due to her multiple consciousness, she does not feel comfortable in her body and, as a result, she restrains her self-expression. She wishes to "go to school, wearing [her] hair big like cumulous clouds without getting any special attention" (Watson 201). This simile compares Jade's natural hair to fluffy clouds common during spring—the season of life, renewal, and rebirth—and signifies how Jade tucks away an essence of her identity because she anticipates being seen as special or different or as an exotic specimen by her ignorant classmates and teachers. In fact, according to Brenda Randle, "women are defined by their hair" (117), and for most black women, "hair is . . . linked to one's lived experience" (116). Randle chronicles how "Madam C. J. Walker's 1905 hair softener" (created by and for black people) promoted the dominance of a Eurocentric standard of beauty in the homes of African American women by "sanction[ing] the act of straightening" as an emblem of middle-class status over more natural styles (118). As a girl of the lower working-class conscious of the condemnatory eyes of her middle-upper-class and white peers, Jade hides her hair in scarves and braids to attain a comparable middle-class aesthetic. Hence, in Jade's eyes, hair relates to more than just her race; it is perhaps

"an indicator of gender, social class, sexual orientation, political views, religion and even age" (Randle 119), attributes she seems intent on covering until the end of the novel.

Jade admits to altering her behavior to avoid scrutiny from authorities in her life and to thwart prevalent stereotypes about plus-size, poor, black teenage girls. In a similar personification as wanting her "tongue" to "speak the way it pleases," Jade expresses her desire "to talk without watchful ears listening to judge [her]" (Watson 201). This statement is a direct reference to multiple consciousness, as ears have the human ability to be "watchful" judges. Watching is associated with vision, not hearing, so through this imagery, Watson demonstrates that Jade constantly assesses herself in the perceivably judgmental "eyes" of those prejudiced around her. Her senses are overwhelmed by her cognizance that she is constantly being judged by her peers, mentors, and teachers, not only as a black person who is "too black" (201), but as a female (who is not gentle, sexy, or feminine enough); an immature, "sass[y]" teenager (186) who cannot control her attitude and emotions (199–200); and a member of the lower class, or "some 'hood girl" (114). She adapts the way she speaks to not be affiliated with stereotyped behaviors they are condemning—i.e., she controls herself and does not "laugh loud and free" in the fear that she will be perceived as "too rowdy, too ghetto" (201). Such behavioral modifications mark Watson's departure from Du Bois' double consciousness theory by illustrating how Jade sees more than just "two warring ideals in [her] one dark body" (Du Bois 922). Although her actions exemplify the desire to attain a "better and truer self," it is not a "double self" of "American" and "Negro" that Jade recognizes in herself (922) but a self-fragmented being in various pieces, each corresponding to her intersecting minority statuses.

Watson includes the theme of opportunity to demonstrate the mistreatment Jade perceives befalling upon herself and other black girls because of their various marginal status. The word "opportunity," according to Jade, "follows [her] like a stray cat" (Watson 19). By comparing "opportunity" to a lost animal, Jade expresses that she feels bombarded with opportunities, some of which she does not want, because people assume that she needs those opportunities. Jade repeats the word throughout her narrative (eight times in Chapter 2) and makes "*oportunidad*" (Spanish for "opportunity") the title of Chapter 64 (232). When Jade's guidance counselor, Mrs. Parker, informs Jade that she has been selected to participate in Woman to

Woman: A Mentorship Program for African American Girls, she frames it as a "good opportunity." Her reasoning is, "Statistics tell us that young people with your set of circumstances are, well, at risk for certain things" (18). Mrs. Parker has good intentions yet fails to consider Jade's wants (i.e., to eat, travel abroad, speak Spanish, leave her neighborhood) by viewing her by her race rather than a human with desires (17). Jade's multiple consciousness enables her to see how her "circumstances" interact with each other to define how others (like Mrs. Parker) ascertain her worth and needs. Unfortunately, Jade also understands that, although she may *want* to refuse the opportunities that Mrs. Parker offers, she cannot, explaining, "Girls like me, with coal skin and hula-hoop hips, whose mommas barely make enough money to keep food in the house, have to take opportunities every chance we get" (7). Thus, Jade is cognizant of how Mrs. Parker reduces her to a statistic or a representative of an entire culture, but she reluctantly accepts this mistreatment, knowing that because her opportunities are so limited, she simply cannot refuse.

Watson also challenges Du Bois' conceptualization of opportunity through Jade's reactions to mistreatment and characterization. According to Du Bois, "The American Negro . . . simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American . . . without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face" (922). Beyond removing his indisputable male-centric language, Watson develops a narrator who is tired of being seen only as someone who can be *given* opportunities rather than an individual who can *give* to others.

Jade introduces each chapter with a Spanish word and its English translation to accomplish this altruistic objective of giving to others. By doing so, Jade potentially educates her readers in the Spanish language while casting herself as a source of linguistic knowledge and authority. Watson also amends Du Bois' theory when Jade speaks up when she is not nominated for the study abroad program to Costa Rica, the one opportunity she wanted. Jade asks her Spanish teacher, Mr. Flores, how it is fair that she, "the girl who tutors half the people chosen for the study abroad trip," cannot go (Watson 199). In essence, Jade experiences the "doors of opportunity" closing on her face, yet she pries them back open by standing up for herself. Consequently, her efforts secure her a spot in the study abroad program the following year and garner Mr. Flores's apologies for overlooking her (252). Through this triumph, Watson conveys how African Americans

are not entirely locked out of opportunity because of their race, contrasting Du Bois' veracious note of their condition during his lifetime. By refusing to remain silent about oppression, Jade ironically uses her multiple consciousness—her awareness of how her different identities cause others to see her in constant need of "fixing" (205)—to bring about change in her favor.

On the topic of oppression, Jade undergoes several incidents of mistreatment in which her multiple consciousness leads her to question her self-worth. One scene that exemplifies the intersection between her race, gender, class, and size transpires at a store catered toward skinny girls. Suspecting her of "loitering," and perhaps even robbery, a white salesclerk follows Jade throughout the store and asks if she can hold her "quite large" bag behind the counter. Observing how the white female customers are still holding their bags, Jade refuses and walks out, clearly infuriated by the disparate treatment (Watson 134–35). This almost criminalizing encounter parallels a 2017 report conducted by the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, which found that "adults view Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than their white peers" (Epstein et al. 1). Essentially, because Jade is black and womanly plus size, the salesclerk looks past her youthful innocence as a developing teenager and sees a dangerous adult woman who does not belong in the store. Like most persons displaying multiple consciousness, Jade can recognize that her mistreatment is based on her multiple social statuses and frames it as such (Harnois 972). Jade describes the salesclerk to her white friend Sam as "racist" and identifies her body size as another factor when, insulted by Sam, Jade asks if "big girls can't go into stores for skinny girls" (Watson 136). When Sam claims the clerk was "just trying to do her job" (137), Watson highlights Sam's racial color-blindness and ignorance of Jade's lived experiences and reveals Jade's "unique standpoint" from which she can critique herself, Sam, and the salesclerk. Through this metaphorical peephole of multiple consciousness in the often-shut door of opportunity, Jade can see how her identities render her vulnerable to "adultification" and discrimination.

In final consideration, by portraying a high schooler navigating a discriminatory world that ignores her desires and views her as a statistic, Watson proves how multiple marginal identities can intersect to cultivate critical reflection and self-loathing. As Jade contemplates, "I wonder if there's ever a way for a girl like me to feel whole" (Watson 86). The narrator must endure differential treatment, not only as an African American

but also as a plus-size person, a member of the lower class, and a teenage girl. Subsequently, her experiences extend beyond the scope of Du Bois' race-centric double consciousness and instead to the self-destructive realm of multiple consciousness.

Note

Du Bois describes the "Negro" as a "seventh son" and primarily in terms of "he." He characterizes the "history of the American Negro" as an internal battle black men have historically experienced with only two of their identities ("American" and "Negro"), defining this "strife" of double consciousness as the "longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (922).

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The Failure of Trading Sexual Favors for Political Standing in Delarivier Manley's *The New Atalantis*

Emily Venkatesan

In the eighteenth century, the political position of British women prohibited direct participation in the public sphere. Enacting change or securing a sense of legal safety required women to submit to advantageous sexual unions in the form of marriage and risk abuse without any real legal recourse. Although the patriarchy promised to protect female political interests through husbands and fathers, women retained little economic and physical autonomy and marriage constantly failed to protect them. Responding to this catastrophic power dynamic, Delarivier Manley penned her dystopian novel *The New Atalantis*[1] and aimed her satire at the root of patriarchal suppression: marriage as a sexual contract. Sexual fulfillment and the promise of legitimate heirs provided women with a bargaining tool for political power, but cost the women social respectability when sexual scandal emerged and thereby, created an unsustainable system of exchange.

[1] The novel as a mode of literary expression in British society inserts several unique voices in the national narrative of England. Bradford Mudge contends the novel facilitated social commentary from a female perspective: "The mature theme so much a staple of the fiction of Behn, Manley, and Haywood became an emblem for other fears about increased literacy, social mobility, and chaos" (130). For Delariviere Manley, the novel proved an effective outlet for critiquing the constraints the British socio-political system placed upon women.

Narrated by jaded female quasi-deities that highlight the invisible force of female power, *The New Atalantis* relies on the structure of scandalous stories of affairs and sexual exploitation to criticize the lack of political and economic access offered to women.[2] In *The New Atalantis,* Manley satirizes the lack of political freedom England affords women by granting women sexual power as their only tool for securing fraudulent social power through a husband.

Dominating the discourse of *The New Atlantis,* sex and physical desire for the female body function as the primary stand-in for political metaphors. Melinda Alliker Rabb contends that Manley's yoking of satire and sex is unique to her era as, just like "male satirists found a metaphor for social and moral disorder in madness, Manley had found an equally powerful metaphor in sexual promiscuity" (*Satire and Secrecy* 12). Inverting the use of sex to control women, the text grants women political power through male desire. Toni Bowers claims the metaphor of sex imbues the entire text with political meaning: " . . . political partisanship becomes a feverishly sexual business, and sexual encounters are always a form of partisan contest" (163). Every aspect of the feminine sexual experience correlates to a political structure, including the female body. In the case of *The New Atalantis*, the female body is the harbinger of denied political power. Ellen Pollak observes the link between power and sex, arguing that "Manley also activates the traditional courtly convention whereby heterosexual love is figured as a relation of dominance in which women (as objects of desire and admiration) hold sovereign power over men" (230). However, Pollak then qualifies the political power ascribed to the female body as specifically virginal sexual desire; once the men of Atalantis erode a woman's sexual virginity, any power the women obtain dissipates and the text exposes the fragility of the female political position.

By separating the social consequences of sex on the women and men of *The New Atalantis*, recent scholarship highlights the political feminism

[2] As a form of political expression in an era of censorship, the secret history offered a means to comment on current events without legal reprisals: "Secret histories, which unfolded sexually scandalous narratives of private escapes in a now-remote court, were read by nobles and bourgeois alike and developed as a kind of outsiders' history at a time when both groups found themselves excluded from political processes" (Parsons 45).

present in Manley's work. Inevitability, in the text, the consequences for female promiscuity are tragically negative, whereas the men of Atalantis comparatively escape unscathed. For women (per Rabb), "sex leads to pregnancy, childbirth, and sometimes death" ("The Manl(e)y Style" 139). Though much of Manley's work criticizes male Whig leaders, her choice of subject makes "the narrative of the victimized woman a basis for a deep critique of social values" (Nováková 15). Centralizing the female experience with scandal also surfaces the critical role women play in British society and the extreme risks required to survive. Amanda Paetz Hiner even suggests that Manley's own entrance into authorship stems from the inability to advance: "her participation in political journalism may have had as much to do with her own need to legitimize and elevate her role in society" (73). Versed in the same trauma as her characters, Manley infuses the female political experience within her Tory satire. As a victim of a fraudulent marriage, Manley understood the political consequences of sex and sexual misconduct, but she also favored the Tory party in much of her literature. In the eighteenth century, England's dominant political parties consisted of the Whigs and the Tories, and Manley directed the most villainous characters to living men in the Whig party.[3] Christopher Bertucci explores the extent of Manley's feminist views, concluding that "she repeatedly draws attention to issues of female education and sexual double standards, such as how women are unfairly held to a higher—and perhaps unrealistic and unhealthy—standard of self-control over the passions" (82). The dangers women face in Manley's work convey her intimate knowledge of the discrepancies in the British political system. Writing political criticism as an attempt to garner power without marriage, Manley documents the challenges of women entrapped in the British system as objects of sexual desire and victims of violence.

Not only does Manley subvert the traditional societal assumptions for her satire, but she also upends the standard conventions of the genre *The New Atalantis* professes to embody. According to Eleanor Shevlin, "Manley's decidedly pro-Tory roman á clef [novel with a key] revamped

[3] For an extended discussion of Manley's use of the New Atalantis to target specific Whig party members see Ruth Herman's "Enigmatic Gender in Delarivier Manley's *New Atalantis*."

this tradition of political critique and prescriptions by replacing utopian with dystopian themes" (166). Instead of politicians protecting the interests of the nation, the men in Atalantis function as unchecked tyrants, and Manley elevates the women to act as surrogates for the abuses of England. Atalantis, as a dystopian landscape, morphs into a political nightmare of scandal and loss for female characters. The purpose of Manley's dystopian world appears contentious to the characters, as Josephine Donovan observes: "Intelligence argues the story should be told in order to expose vice, while Virtue suggests they should dispense with the story and help the woman" (971). Though they cannot decide on a course of action, both Intelligence and Virtue agree that sexual suppression of women lies at the root of Manley's dystopia. Women wielding sexual power, then, is a dystopian condition for Manley: "Unauthorized by the title of 'minister' or 'secretary' they wield considerable power" (Rabb, "The Manl(e)y Style" 134). The ironic contrast between utopia and dystopia in *The New Atalantis* services Manley's exploration of the sexualization and victimization of women in a system that denies their independence.

Asserting the exclusivity of sexual power for women, *The New Atalantis* contrasts the intellectual attributes of the female subjects with the physical features that supposedly secure their political future. The first young woman Intelligence describes, Charlot, demonstrates a remarkable intellectual capacity, but her guardian, the Duke, "wisely forwarn'd her, from what seem'd too natural to her, a desire of being applauded for her Wit, she had a brightness of Genius, that would often break out in dangerous Sparkles" (33). The Duke suppresses the attributes that should earn Charlot acclaim on her own merit. With the advent of Charlot's sexual power, the Duke offers her direct access to his land and estate instead of an inherited portion. Ironically, Charlot, awakened to the power of sexual favors, first uses her power over the Duke to gain access to more education and books he previously withheld from her (39). Intelligence makes a similar observation about the qualities of Berintha, coding her as "very witty, entirely agreeable, full of Amusement, and Coquet enough" (74). To appear desirable, she pairs her cunning intellect with her sexual power. As Berintha proves in her scheme to cause "jealousie" in her cousin, the only path to produce her desires requires

the deployment of her body as a sexual tool against the Baron.[4] Female intelligence alone does not suffice to play the games of court or social exchange (77). *The New Atalantis* makes a point to establish women as highly intelligent individuals but also mandates deference to their sexual power over men as the primary means of upward political mobility.

Once a woman in Atalantis consumes a man's sexual ideations, marriage functions as a state recognition of a sexual exchange between women and men for political power. An intergenerational exchange of advice produces the female philosophical approach to marriage in Atalantis:

> she would advise her as a good Friends, to push her Interests with him, that he might marry her; advis'd her to bestow no more Favours, till he paid her price; made her read the History of *Roxalana*, who by her wise Address brought an imperious *Sultan*, contrary to the establish'd Rules of the *Seraglio*, to divide with her the Royal Throne. (45)

Citing a woman who rose from concubine to politically competent ruler binds the sexual role of wife to state power. According to Intelligence's story of Zara, marriage supersedes independent wealth as Zara "was of the Opinion that Cohabitation makes a Marriage; she wou'd have given ten times her Fortune, if she had had it, that *Mosco*, as he sometimes gave her hopes, wou'd leave his Wife and cohabit with her" (141). A sexual exchange that does not entail the finality of political avenues proves fruitless for women. Instead, the women deploy their sexuality as a bargaining chip for the longevity of their access to material and landed wealth. The appeal of marriage, in the case of Zara and her peers, defies economic benefits as they lose what little control they hold over their dowry, but they will receive a legalized position to exert authority in society through their husbands. The position of wife carries enough value, even after the husband's death, for the wife to continue to protect herself, as Astrea laments "a Widow, and

[4] Maura Smyth explains how the impulse to suppress female desire for the sake of men exploits the flaw in English utopian literature: "Astrea's final, unexpected condemnation of the 'unforgiving' male sex for 'arbitrarily decid[ing] that woman was only created . . . to adorn the husband's reign, perfect his happiness, and propagate the kind' attacks the very kind of Baconian society that does not allow women to have spaces that are for female use only, but inevitably purposes them to aid in masculine endeavors" (224).

rich, and yet die so soon! was it of Love, Grief, or Old-age?" (52). Power originates from mere association with the influential men of Atalantis. Marriage legitimizes sexual desire and the system of exchange.[5]

In the absence of political power, women in Atalantis harness their sexual desire as a tool for domination over the will of their lovers. As Intelligence and Astrea insert moral lessons in each anecdote, they observe within the women a "violent inborn desire of pleasing so natural to Ladies is the pest of Virtue, they would . . . assume that native Empire over Mankind, which seems to be politically deny'd them" (34). With the recognition of the politically charged motive, each sexual rebuff and insistence of innocence transforms into calculated strategies intended to increase desirability in the eyes of men. Contrary to their own beliefs, men, as the moderators of political power, become the object of female sexual desire. Intelligence likens the trade of sex for power to a game of cards: fraught with risk but lucrative if the player observes the patterns of play (72). The women in Atalantis first consume the minds of the seducers, and then, after an attempt to pay credence to social norms through marriage, offer to subdue the lovers' passion in exchange for political control. As one of the last heroines Intelligence and Astrea observe, Louisa's story adheres to the same pattern of exchange in a conversation with Hernando while he invites himself into her bed: "Oh Sir, says she, what are you about? Do you mean to ruin me? I mean to love you, Madam, to adore you, to die for you, I mean to marry you, if you will make me so happy, you shall command me as you please" (137). Louisa, despite her youth and inexperience, recognizes the sexual nature of the encounter and questions whether she has power over the terms. In response, Hernando proposes he serve as Louisa's political puppet for anything she desires in exchange for fulfilling his passion. Deprived of political independence, the women of Atalantis perform under a system that commodifies sexual appeal to purchase male power proxies.

Despite their lovers' promises of political power, women of Atalantis incur severe social punishments by maneuvering their sexual assets that stunt their upward mobility. After watching the eventual decline

[5] While men seem to be at liberty to pursue any desire, they also threaten women who express desires, sexual or otherwise, with social ruin: "Women who follow their desires, the duke makes clear, will find that 'under the most flattering appearances is concealed inevitable ruin.' The harangue ends with the quotations from no less authoritative sources than Pythagoras and Plato" (Bowers 174).

of Charlot at the hands of court gossip, Astrea states, "a Woman once departed from the Road of Virtue, is made incapable of a return; Sorrow and Scorn overtake her, and as I said before, the World suffers her to perish loath'd, and unlamented" (50). Interestingly, Astrea does not condemn ruined women for failing and, instead, casts the blame on the society that considers them unworthy of redemption.[6] Still, the social price for completing the system of exchange consists of a ruined reputation and a blockade from any further attempts to obtain political power through marriage or sexual favors. One of the ladies believes a man when he claims to be the King of Egypt, which results in a loss of funds and imprisonment: "this tumbled the Lady and all her Wealth into his Arms, she wanted to be a Queen, but having once possessed himself of that, he shut her up of her own side for a Lunatick; holding a large Estate by her Life" (104). The Lady's political ambition blinds her to the tricks of a man and physically imprisons her instead of socially liberating her. Ultimately, the system of exchange fails the women of Atalantis as they pursue political power because no higher authority obliges men to comply with the terms. Mirroring the social expectations of British women, *The New Atalantis* critiques the English political system for arranging an exchange built on false promises and proves dangerous exclusively to the women attempting to abide by the system.

Manley asserts that, not only does the lack of political security affect the noble classes, but similar injuries affect the lower echelon. According to Intelligence, locations such as taverns and opera halls prove similarly inequitable and harsh for working-class women. The actresses in Atalantis "are not incourag'd and paid according to the merit of their Performance" but rather on the "whims and liking" of the male poet (129). Similar to the plight of the noblewoman exchanging her maidenhood in hopes of power, the actress attempts to advance socially on the opinion of one man. Moreover, working-class women in the country live in fear of falling for a

[6] Invoking the purpose of utopian and dystopian that looks to "nowhere" yet everywhere, Manley contends with a system issue she chaffs against for the rest of her career: "for her claim that 'politics is not the business of a woman' is obviously ironic, given that, as Rachel Carnell points out, Manley's planned 'tragedies for the stage' dealt with royal lineage just as *The New Atalantis* had, taking up the very political themes that had led to her initial arrest" (Temple 574).

"Soldier of Fortune" and his fanciful lies (55).[7] In the same vein as Charlot and Louisa's experiences, soldiers take maidenheads under the pretense of marriage and leave "nothing in the room but a Big Belly" (55). For working-class women, the impact of sexual power is even less potent for securing a future in Atalantis. Without representation or hope of political power, women live fleeting and dangerous lives. Intelligence references a poem contemplating the life of a woman that concludes on a dour note: "The Thorns that former Years have sown, / To crops of late Repentance grown, / Thro' which we toil at last" (107). The fate of all women rests on an inevitable fall they spend the rest of their lives attempting to reconcile. Manley posits little hope for the circumstance of women as long as the power dynamic remains in favor of a male-dominated society. The universal failure of the only political exchange system for women in Atalantis contributes to Manley's critique of British failures to provide adequate representation for women.

Reflecting on the unequal political power dynamic of the British system, Manley crafts *The New Atalantis* with the same imbalance, assigning women moot sexual power and men economic and political authority. Though women wield immeasurable power as an object of desire, once men procure them as wives, any perceived female power quickly evaporates. Moreover, the role the women's sexuality plays in their acquisition of power never appears as a choice the women freely make. For any woman seeking political power, the social system of Atalantis and England requires sexual engagement. Manley claims the women that pursue political capital in the form of puppet husbands become the object of exploitation. Additionally, despite the need to exercise sexual power to obtain political power, often the women Intelligence describes are left ruined or in scandal. Others die as a direct result of their affairs with married men. The system of Atalantis seems to punish the women for attempting to use the only resource they have for securing a stable political position. Manley asserts that women are born with nothing but their sexuality, and the only means of dying with more stems from the leveraging of sexual favors against the men holding a monopoly on political and economic power.

[7] As a female author, Manley would have understood this standard personally: "Women, she says, should have better things to do with themselves. The frustrations of an aspiring professional female are apparent" (Herman 183).

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"But I am. *Soy dominicano. Dominicano soy*": Code-switching in *The Brief Maravillosa Vida of Oscar Wao*

Mía Zendejas

I cannot count the number of times that as a child, my father said to me, "*Un día* you will thank me for *nunca* stopping to *hablarte en español*." This is not only a sentiment that I appreciate now more than anything, but it is also one that rings true in Junot Díaz's novel, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao,* which embeds code-switching throughout the course of its fragmented narrative. Code-switching, or bilingualism, can be understood as the practice of alternating between two or more languages in discourse. Ofelia García notes that "bilingualism is not about 1+1=2, but about a plural, mixing different aspects or fractions of language behavior as they are needed, to be socially meaningful" (119). Through consistent code-switching and a unique use of footnotes, Díaz mirrors postcolonial struggles. He ultimately critiques the censoring of *lenguas nativas* in literature and fosters a heightened form of global diversity in the literary world.

In Díaz's groundbreaking novel that takes place during El Trujillato (the Trujillo Era), readers initially journey to understand the life of Belí, an orphan who comes of age through the supervision of her aunt, La Inca. Readers later discover that Belí is the mother of the main *protagonista*, Oscar, a depressed Dominican writer who seeks to reach his goal of experiencing love with a woman before he dies. He fails relentlessly and is not considered Dominican because of his inability to meet machismo expectations. However, Oscar develops an infatuation for Ybón, an older woman already

in a relationship with the Capitán. Oscar succeeds in having sex with her prior to being killed by the Capitán's friends. Yet, Oscar's legacy lives on through his best friend and the primary narrator Yunior, who prominently implements code-switching in his narración.

Díaz ultimately broke the mold of narrative framework through his frequent code-switching and unique use of footnotes. Ellen Jones praises Díaz for this innovativeness in her scholarly article, "'The página is still blanca': Reading the Blanks in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao.*" She argues that Díaz utilizes code-switching to create a narrative that "does not assume the right to an easy understanding" (293). Through this linguistic technique, Díaz critiques how Westerners often assume the right to colonize and deem English as the superior language. Accordingly, Jones explains how code-switching embodies the blank spaces created by a *cultura* of censorship.

José Espericueta's article about the postcolonial legacy of the West outlines the tragedies of what Díaz describes to be the curse of the New World, the fukú. He more specifically addresses how the narrative style of *la novela* reflects the deep postcolonial oppression experienced by the Dominican Republic. His article "rearticula también poderosamente la experiencia (poscolonial, inmigrante) individual dentro de la más amplia experiencia estadounidense" ("powerfully rearticulates the individual experience [postcolonial, immigrant] within the broader American experience"; my trans.; Espericueta 89). Furthermore, in their article about trans-languaging, Natalie Seif and Sol Rojas-Lizana establish how Díaz's use of Spanglish "interrelaciona la diáspora dominicana con el imperialismo estadounidense" ("interrelates the Dominican diaspora with US imperialism"; my trans.; 130). They also demonstrate how the footnotes function to both criticize and decolonize Trujillo's legacy. To advance these theorists' arguments, this paper will analyze specific instances in the novel where code-switching and footnotes are strategically implemented to mirror decolonial thought.

Oscar code-switching throughout his college days in America outlines the struggle that individuals from postcolonial countries face as they navigate their identity in an imperialist country. For example, when Oscar arrives at Rutgers University, he is made fun of by white students who "looked at his black skin and his afro and treated him with inhuman cheeriness" (Díaz 49). It is clear through this dehumanizing racism that the

"colonial actions and attitudes [are] the primary organizing force within international relationships" (Smith 139). Colonial attitudes are so infiltrated into the minds of those from postcolonial countries that minorities discriminate against other minorities. For instance, Oscar is not accepted by "The kids of color, upon hearing him speak and seeing him move his body, shook their heads. You're not Dominican" (Díaz 49). This ironic and oppressive dynamic reveals how postcolonial thought has prompted the colonized to discriminate against others who were also colonized. Oscar uses code-switching in his *respuesta* when he repeats, "over and over again, But I am. *Soy dominicano. Dominicano soy*" (49). It is essential for Díaz to have included code-switching in Oscar's proclamation that he *is* Dominican because the English language has only one form of "to be." On the other hand, the Spanish language includes two forms of "to be," which adds a layer of meaning that is otherwise missing. Oscar uses "soy," which is the form of "to be" that suggests a *permanent* characteristic. As a result, Oscar not only relays that he *is* Dominican, but he also communicates that he *is permanently* Dominican; forever and always the *identidad* of his native culture. Oscar's use of "'plurilanguage' que representa a las comunidades diaspóricas dominicanas" ("'plurilingualism' that represents the diasporic Dominican communities"; my trans.) thus outlines how he experiences a split identity (Seif and Rojas-Lizana 131). He ultimately must prove himself in two different nationalities. Through his code-switching, Oscar mirrors the postcolonial struggle to embody one's native culture while physically inhabiting a foreign nation. He is "caught between cultures, of belonging to neither rather than to both," ultimately experiencing postcolonial "unhomeliness" (Tyson 403).

Similarly, Díaz reinforces the necessity to implement code-switching *en literatura* more abundantly by continually referring to Dominicans *en español*, rather than in English. One such instance is when Yunior thinks, "it's against the laws of nature for a *dominicano* to die without fucking at least once" (Díaz 174). Díaz most likely writes Yunior to say *dominicano* instead of Dominican because English is an ungendered *lenguaje*, whereas Spanish emphasizes the masculine and feminine in its linguistics. Referring to the entire Dominican nation with the masculine "o" ending rather than the feminine "a" ending further emulates the machismo aspect of Dominican *cultura* that Oscar and Yunior both spend their youth trying to realize. Code-switching to Spanish is beneficial because of the way it

"[facilità] representaciones culturalmente matizadas que no serían posibles usando solamente el inglés" ("[facilitates] nuanced cultural representations that would not be possible only using English"; my trans.; Seif and Rojas-Lizana 131). Therefore, code-switching is necessary to truly relay the deep and complex effects that colonialism has on an individual's journey to recreate a narrative for themselves post-colonization.

Code-switching embodies the decolonial thoughts an individual experiences after being pressured into an oppressive mindset that condemns their native culture's view of success. For instance, when Constantina is talking to Belí during their lunch break, she says, "You could have the whole *maldito* world if you wanted" (Díaz 113). Saying "*maldito*" in Spanish instead of "damn" *en inglés* emphasizes how Belí can truly have the two worlds that she identifies with: the *República Dominicana* y *América*. Belí uses code-switching herself when she replies, "'All I wanted was to dance. What I got instead was *esto*,' she said, opening her arms to encompass the hospital, her children, her cancer, America" (113). Belí says "*esto*" in Spanish instead of "this" in English, suggesting that her Spanish roots overrule that of her English oppressors. She desires to rise above the *limitaciones* of the American dream and have a greater freedom that surpasses the postcolonial label that she is a Dominican woman having to prove herself in America. The code-switching in this scene illustrates an elevated form of inclusivity that welcomes the idea that "La decolonialidad propone pluriversalidad en lugar de universalidad" ("Decoloniality proposes pluriversality instead of universality; my trans.; Seif and Rojas-Lizana 134). In other words, no single correct way exists to civilize or exhibit cultural expression after being colonized. The decoloniality fostered through code-switching critiques the imperialistic attitude to view one culture as superior and universally applicable.

Díaz demonstrates the life-long effects of colonialism through the code-switching that occurs during Oscar's failed suicide attempt and his eventual death. Oscar exhibits decolonial thought in his suicide note to Yunior that "He signed off: Your *Compañero*, Oscar Wao" (Díaz 191). Oscar intends to leave the earth with a combination of an English and Spanish farewell, ultimately demonstrating a refusal to fully assimilate into the Western culture that oppresses him. Instead of merely writing "Your Friend" in English, Díaz chooses "Your *Compañero*" to express the intimate companionship Oscar and Yunior share properly and more meaningfully. Finally, when the *Capitàn's* friends are about to kill Oscar, they say, "Listen, we'll let you

go if you tell us what *fuego* means in English" (322). Although Oscar replies with the correct answer "fire," he is killed regardless (322). He ultimately dies trying to prove he knows the meaning of *una palabra* in a language that is not his native tongue, emulating how the colonized often died trying to prove their cultural worth to their colonizing oppressors. Oscar's last words being in English also illustrates how he was never able to escape the damaging postcolonial effects despite his best efforts to decolonize his language and thoughts. As a result, Oscar and Belí's code-switching showcases how *opresión poscolonial* continues not only in aspirations but also until death.

Moreover, code-switching created a fragmented *narrativa* and the extensive use of footnotes implemented throughout the text illustrates the fragmentation that occurs during a postcolonial *experiencia* (experience). The narrator explains how the name of a place was included in the first draft of the novel, but it was corrected because their "girl" Leonie pointed out that this place, in reality, had no beaches (Díaz 132 un). The narrator even admits, "Leonie was also the one who informed me that the *perrito* . . . wasn't popularized until the late eighties, early nineties, but that was one detail I couldn't change, just liked the image too much. Forgive me, historians of popular dance, forgive me!" (132 un). The narrator is honest about the questionable historical context that they provide to readers, ultimately critiquing how history is often mutable when the victors—the colonizers—write it. More specifically, colonizers often fragment *la historia* (the history) of those they colonized by reworking it to reflect their cultural implications.

The already fragmented narrative becomes more so when the narrator interrupts their thoughts with their own sarcastic, parenthetical side commentary. For instance, when Jack Pujols is rumored to be a confidant of Ramfis Trujillo, a footnote clarifies, "It was only after the *cubano* refused to accept the boy as blood that Trujillo recognized Ramfis as his own. (Thanks, Dad!)" (99). Díaz pushes against the general public's expectations for the novel by creating a nontraditional and seemingly colloquial narrative style, reflecting the colonized's attempt to defy postcolonial effects on thought and culture. The narrative becomes decidedly complex with the opinions provided in the footnotes, leaving readers to question which *información* is reliable and which is fabrication. This ambiguity mirrors the trust issues that the colonized understandably develop after being infiltrated with a culture that is not their own. The narrator continues in the same footnote

with other parenthetical interruptions such as: "(Lil' Fuckface, as he is affectionately known)" and "(Kim Novak, how could you?)" (99). The humor incorporated throughout the footnotes symbolizes a potential coping mechanism that the colonized use to work through the pain and hardship that comes with trying to navigate a postcolonial world. Therefore, the witty, colloquial tone and questionable history presented in the footnotes *fragmenta la narración* further and, ultimately, reflects the fragmentation of decolonial thought and identity.

Although some may argue that code-switching is distracting and disruptive to the flow and understanding of a text, the beneficial *resultados* that come from code-switching far outweigh the effort needed to decipher an unknown language. Code-switching puts readers into a new world of understanding because many words in different languages are non-transferable and hold greater meaning in their *contexto* original. Even if all readers cannot understand the words written in a native tongue, code-switching allows the text to not be deprived of its true nature and value. Díaz himself even says, "I want people to research, to ask each other, to question. But also I want there to be an element of incomprehension. What's language without incomprehension? What's art?" (qtd. in Jones 292). Readers are often uncomfortable when they come across something foreign, but it is in uncomfortable situations—within reason, of course—that people grow. Code-switching forces the reader to become uncomfortable, pause, and search a word they do not know, ultimately exercising an effort to know the culture they are reading about in a more authentic manner. Díaz's refusal to completely write the text *en inglés* is also a refusal to conform to White privilege. His novel defies the pressure to assimilate to a new language or cultural context to be understood. Instead, the text remains to unapologetically be what it truly and genuinely is—and that is the true essence of diversity and inclusivity: to not censor what naturally is. What someone, something, or someplace naturally is should be accepted without ratification, judgment, or contempt.

As a result, writing in a fragmented narrative where code-switching and footnotes are consistently implemented distributes *el mensaje* that cultures should not be censored for the ease or sake of others. A culture should be studied in its true essence, or else it is not a pure reflection of cultural *realidad*. Writers who incorporate code-switching in their works critique authors who completely translate their texts from their native tongue

because they are, in a way, doing their culture a linguistic injustice. As modernity and technology progress in many societies, language continuously heads toward becoming a lost art form. Although people read books by authors from other countries, many still do not want to go through the trouble of navigating *conceptos culturales* they do not understand or read in a language they do not know. To foster global diversity, one must not merely avoid falling prey to a narrative of modernity and coloniality, "sino de reexistir frente a ellas" ("but rather to re-exist in the face of them"; my trans.; Seif and Rojas-Lizan 133). Therefore, the code-switching that occurs in *The Brief Maravillosa Vida of Oscar Wao* works toward solving *discriminación lingüística*, and wonderfully welcomes a genuine form of *diversidad mundial* in literature.

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KEVIN STEMMLER, PHD, is Professor Emeritus at Clarion University. His fiction, poetry, and essays have appeared in *Writing: The Translation of Memory*, *Paper Street*, *HEArt: Human Equity through Art*, *Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, and *Pittsburgh Quarterly*. He was a recipient of a 2008 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Grant. He has served on the Sigma Tau Delta Board of Directors and is currently the organization's Officer-at-Large.

JULIE STEWARD, PHD, is Professor of English, Director of Creative Writing, and Faculty Advisor of Sigma Tau Delta at Samford University. She teaches poetry, creative nonfiction, and literary theory. Her poetry has appeared in *Ligeia* and *The Midwest Quarterly*. For eight years, she published monthly in *Birmingham Magazine*, with one essay featured on NPR. Her writing awards include best essay in *The South Central Review* and the Association of College English Teachers of Alabama Annual Conference.

BENJAMIN UTTER, PHD, earned an MA in English from Wake Forest

University and a PhD in English (minor: Medieval Studies) from the University of Minnesota. He teaches at Ouachita Baptist University. When not grading or reading, he is riding his bicycle, rock climbing, or hiking with his wife, two children, and two dogs. His publications include the Arthurian poetry of Charles Williams, medieval iconography in modern American gun culture, and *Gladys the Grayish Green Dragon*.

AMY WELDON, PHD, is Professor of English at Luther College in Decorah, IA, and author of *The Hands-On Life: How to Wake Yourself Up and Save the World* (2018), *The Writer's Eye: Observation and Inspiration for Creative Writers* (2018), *Eldorado, Iowa: A Novel* (2019), and *Advanced Fiction Writing: A Writer's Guide and Anthology* (forthcoming in 2023).

Authors

ROWAN A. BECKFORD, JR. Springfield College (MA)
Rowan is a recent graduate from the English Program. He served as Editor-in-Chief of *The Alden Street Review* and was a member of the Honors Student Council. His writing has been published in *The Alden Street Review*, *The Springfield Student*, and *The Transparent Eyeball*.

EILEEN C. BURNETT University of Houston, Clear Lake (TX)
Eileen is a last semester literature graduate student with an undergraduate degree in Literature and Women's and Gender Studies. Though she enjoys writing on a variety of subjects, her passions lie in creative writing, poetry, and the creation of tales that readers in all walks of life can enjoy. She lives in a cozy blue cottage south of Houston, not far from the beach and close to horses. She enjoys living in the quiet, and, when not writing, she likes cooking, backyard fires with family and friends, and long walks with her dogs.

ARIANE C. CAMPBELL Palm Beach Atlantic University (FL)
Ariane is a junior honors student. Her work has been published in her university's online magazine, *The Sailfish Review*, and physical journal, *Living Waters*. She has

also published poetry in Mary Baldwin University's *Outrageous Fortune*, Clarke University's *The Tenth Muse*, and Shoreline Community College's *Spindrift*. Outside her studies, Ariane finds every excuse to bake, climb, and write novels for young adults.

KAYLA C. CONDE University of Florida (FL)
Kayla is studying to earn her BA degree in English with a minor in theatre. Kayla was raised by her immigrant single mother and grandparents in a small Cuban suburb of Miami. Consistently participating in the local theatre's productions and in dance classes, Kayla has found writing, specifically poetry, to be an unfleeting passion. Her works range from life in West Kendall and the Everglades in her backyard to complex instances of university life and to macabre imaginations inspired by cinema, literature, and history.

GRACE CRAM Palm Beach Atlantic University (FL)
Grace has had six poems published in both the *Living Waters Review* and *The Sailfish Review*. In 2022, she has poems forthcoming in *Saw Palm: Florida Literature & Art*, *Clackamas Literary Review*, *Susquehanna Review*, and *Euphemism*.

EMILY CLEMENTE University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (NC)
Emily is a recent graduate who studied English and comparative literature. She was President for the Alpha Phi Psi Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta and for her school's student organization for undergraduate literature. She was also a fiction staff reader for *Cellar Door* and *The Carolina Quarterly*. In fall 2022, Emily will begin her MFA in Creative Writing at Florida State University. Her work has appeared in literary publications such as *Deep South Magazine*, *Star 82 Review*, *Every Day Fiction*, *Carolina Muse*, *idiosyncrazy*, *Five on the Fifth*, and *The Roadrunner Review*.

JESSE T. CRISTOFORO Penn State/Harrisburg Area Community College (PA)
Jesse is majoring in English and minoring in American Studies. Having been raised on America's roads by a single mother and earning his supper by selling cheap

jewelry and throwing axes, he has learned to appreciate the value of a college education. With his little free time, Jesse practices archery in his backyard for when the carnival witches send their clown minions to fetch him back.

HANNA J. DENTON McNeese State University (LA)
Hanna is an undergraduate student, pursuing a BA in English with a concentration in classical languages and literatures. She is the President of the Pi Zeta Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. After graduating, she hopes to go on to graduate school and to pursue a career in academia.

EMMA-LI DOWNER Drew University (NJ)
Emma-Li is pursuing a double major in English and Philosophy with a double minor in Creative Writing and in Media and Communication. She is Editor-in-Chief of *Insanity's Horse*, the university's art and literature magazine, where several of her pieces also have been published. Her stories often center around heartfelt characters and aim to encapsulate the intricate relationships people have with family, friends, and selves. She is eager to pursue a career in the publishing industry that will allow her to develop her writing and editorial skills.

SYDNEY EMERSON Allegheny College (PA)
Sydney is an undergraduate English major, a university peer-writing consultant, an editor and photographer for the school newspaper, and Assistant Production manager for Allegheny's Playshop Theatre.

SOFIA L. ESCOBAR Hartwick College (NY)
Sofia is a sophomore, majoring in Creative Writing and Philosophy with a minor in Women and Gender Studies. She was recently inducted into Sigma Tau Delta and elected President. She won the Anna Sonder Prize for Poetry and was published in the *Academy of American Poets* for her poem "Rejecting Copper." She has also been published in Auburn University's *The Auburn Circle* in 2021 for her piece "Damn You, 2020." Recently, she was published in Hartwick's *Word of Mouth* with three poems, including the Anna Sonder Prize-winning poem.

CAROLINE GEOGHEGAN The College of New Jersey (NJ)
Caroline is a senior English major. Her poetry has been featured in the 2022 *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle* and the online literary journal *Book of Matches*. When not writing, she can usually be found with The Mixed Signals, her college's improv troupe.

JEDIDIAH GRAHAM Columbia College (MO)
Jedidiah Graham is a non-traditional student, studying English with an emphasis on creative writing.

COURTNEY HEIDORN Azusa Pacific University (CA)
Courtney is pursuing her undergraduate degree in English and honors humanities who hopes to write creatively for the rest of her life. Her favorite genres to write are nonfiction and poetry, and she tends to write about nature, spirituality, and her disciplines of English and history. Courtney loves being from Seattle, WA, which has abundant forests where she can read and rest.

MARIANNA "MARE" E. HILES University of Georgia (GA)
Mare is a graduating English and women's studies major. The interdisciplinary nature of her studies has led her to focus on the intersectional nature of her first loves: literature and storytelling. She plans to attend NC State University for a graduate degree in clinical mental health counseling but to never stop learning or writing.

ROMAN M. HLADIO Allegheny College (PA)
Roman is a student, writer, and editor hailing from Pittsburgh. His friends have remarked that his relationship with writing is much like Kurt Vonnegut's in "Slapstick, or Lonesome No More!"—just as a blacksmith does not necessarily like his anvil, neither does Roman like his work. Yet he still persists.

MAYA JACYSZYN Saint Joseph's University (PA)
Maya is a graduating senior, majoring in Film Studies with a double minor in English and Ancient Cultures. She serves as Editor-in-Chief of her university's literary magazine, *Crimson & Gray*, where six of her poems have been published. In addition, Maya works as a writing tutor at the writing center and a hostess at Kings Mills Banquet Hall. Outside of writing, Maya loves powerlifting, attending Philadelphia Orchestra concerts, and meeting other writers.

NATHANIEL P. KECKLEY Old Dominion University (VA)
Nathan is pursuing a double major in History and English with a concentration in literary studies. He will graduate in 2023 and continue his English studies at the postgraduate level. Nathan specializes in Marxist criticism.

ASHLEIGH N. KENNEDY Shippensburg University (PA)
Ashleigh is a senior studying English with a minor in Ethnic Studies. She is a member of the Wood Honors College, a two-time awardee of the Laura A. Rice Poetry Prize, and past Editor-in-Chief of *Write the Ship*, Shippensburg's academic magazine. Her poetry has previously been published by the *Academy of American Poets*, *Literary Orphans*, and *The Reflector*. After graduating, she plans to earn her MFA in creative writing.

LAURA B. KIMZEY Bluefield College (VA)

Laura is completing her degree in English literature with minors in History and Graphic Communication. She enjoys reading, writing, and building relationships with her professors and campus community. Laura hails from the beautiful New River Valley, where she grew up with her seven siblings, all who were homeschooled by her fantastic mother (with math and science tutoring from her engineering dad). In her free time, Laura loves to spend time with family, play ultimate frisbee, and read classics and children's books.

ROMAN KNUDSON Morningside University (IA)
Roman is an English major. He has served as Associate Editor for Morningside's academic and creative-writing journals. His post-graduation plans include pursuing a career in developmental editing for fiction novels as well as continuing his own personal writing skills in creative nonfiction, fiction, and poetry.

ARYANA MARTIN Emmanuel College (MA)
Aryana graduated in spring 2022, earning a BA in English with a double minor in Sociology and African Diaspora Studies. She completed two assistantships—in teaching and in research. Captivated by many modern and contemporary writers, she considers herself a James Baldwin and Margaret Atwood enthusiast. She intends to continue her education, pursuing her MPhil in Modern and Contemporary Literary Studies in fall 2022 at Trinity College Dublin.

JANIE E. MCGANN Saint Mary's University of Minnesota (MN)
From Chicago, Janie is a sophomore studying English with a writing emphasis and Spanish. She has been published in the on-campus literary magazine *Mosaic* and received the English Department's Outstanding Essay Award. She works as a writing tutor for the university writing center to help spread her love of writing. She hopes to work in publishing after she graduates.

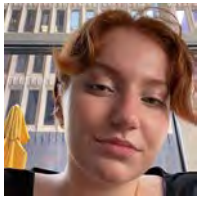
LEXI MERRING Fairleigh Dickinson University (NJ)
Lexi has previously been published in *The USA Boxing News*, *Canvas Literary Journal*, *Iron Horse Creative Anthology*, and Women Who Write's *Goldfinch*.

NATALIE G. NICHOLS Wheaton College (IL)
Natalie majored in English Writing and International Relations with a certificate in peace and conflict studies. In spring 2022, she studied 18th- and 19th-century British literature at University of Oxford and wrote her thesis on representations of imperialism in 19th-century detective fiction. She was Editor-in-Chief of *Kodon*, Wheaton's literary magazine, and she works

as a senior writing consultant. She has written essays and poetry for *Shared Justice*, *Kodon*, and *The Pub*. In her spare time, she chases her three dogs and searches for other good dogs to pet.

ANNABELLA E. NORDLUND Pepperdine University (CA)
Annabella is an incoming senior, double majoring in English Literature and French. She is from British Columbia, Canada. Her interests and passions include poetry, writing, reading, and dancing. Next year, she plans to attend graduate school and eventually earn her PhD in English to become a professor. Her favorite authors are F. Scott Fitzgerald, Emily Brontë, and Margaret Atwood.

RACHEL OUELLETTE University of Maine (ME)
Rachel started writing poetry when she was six. Years later, in high school, she saw three of her poems published in *Balancing Act 2*, the anthology of poetry by Maine women. Now studying English, she is working on a creative thesis that explores the liberating power of poetic constraint. Rachel is a member of her campus' creative writing club, "Storied." Recently, one of her poems was accepted for publication in *Asterism*, an undergraduate literary journal.



HANNAH C. PACZKOWSKI Drew University (NJ)
Hannah is a recent graduate who majored in biology and English. Their work has been published in *Insanity's Horse* and the *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*. They are the second-place winner of the 2022 Sigma Tau Delta Dennis/Stemmler LGBT& Awards.

ASHLEY H. PERRY Florida Atlantic University (FL) Ashley is a junior at the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, majoring in English Literature and minoring in Women's Studies. Her goal is to obtain a PhD in English and become a professional writer and a college professor. She has published in *The Proceedings*, the Radio Club of America's nationally circulated technical journal, and she achieved a second-place Pathfinder Scholarship in Literature from the *Palm Beach Post*,

a local newspaper. She is a writing consultant for the writing center, Vice President of her Sigma Tau Delta chapter, and Multimedia Editor of her university's literary and arts magazine, *Cliché*.

SARAH G. POULIOT Palm Beach Atlantic University (FL)
Sarah presented at the Sigma Tau Delta 2022 International Convention, where her creative essay won second prize. Next year, she will serve as one of the editors of the literary journal *Living Waters Review*. She is an honors student, and she has won the Women of Distinction Scholarship.

YVETTE M. REGALADO Texas State University (TX)
Yvette is a first-generation Latina doctoral student with a super power called dyslexia. As a practitioner-scholar-activist of color, her concentration is literacy and composition. Her research interests include cultural sustainable pedagogy, social justice, and equitable access in post-secondary education.

HAILEY M. ROSE McKendree University, (IL)
Hailey is from Eagle River, WI. She is a sophomore who is studying English.

ALEXANDRA J. RYE Oakland University (MI)
Alexandra is a recent graduate who completed her BA in English with a minor in Creative Writing. During her undergraduate work, she served as Treasurer and President for Oakland's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. In 2019, she studied at the University of Oxford, where she cultivated her interest in early modern literature and an honors thesis titled "Mad Women? Heroine's Agency in Aphra Behn's *The Rover* and *The Widow Ranter*."

RODDYNA SAINT-PAUL Hofstra University (NY)
Roddyna is the daughter of Haitian immigrants and an avid reader and writer. In addition to pursuing an English major with a concentration in children's and YA literature, she is majoring in Psychology and minoring in Anthropology. She was elected Writing Chair of the

Hofstra English Society and conducts weekly writing workshops. Roddyna has received several awards, including the Hofstra College of Liberal Arts Award for Academic Excellence in English, and she achieved first place in Hofstra's Eugene Schneider Fiction Contest and in the Nancy P. Schnader Poetry Contest.

CAMERON SHORT Carlow University (PA)
Cameron Short is a recent graduate with a major in Human Biology and minors in Behavioral Neuroscience, Psychology, and Creative Writing. They have been published in Carlow University's undergraduate literary journal, *The Critical Point*, and received the Ellie Wymard Award in Creative Nonfiction. Next year, they are looking to apply to graduate school to pursue an MFA in creative writing.

KOSTANDI B. STEPHENSON Western Michigan University (MI)
Kostandi is a rhetoric and writing major. She loves poetry and is passionate about women's and disability rights.

ZOE TALBOT The College of New Jersey (NJ)
Zoe is studying English education and is part of the university's 5-year MA program. They are Co-Vice President of the university's chapter of Sigma Tau Delta and the Sigma Tau Delta Eastern Region Associate Student Representative. When not reading or writing, Zoe is tutoring or working in a theatre as a stage technician.

EUNICE TAN Union University (PA)
Hailing from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Eunice is an English major and Journalism minor who is passionate about shedding light on the invisible voices and people in our society. In her writing, she draws from a rich history of her family in Southeast Asia as well as her various travels around the world. She is the President of Union's Sigma Tau Delta chapter as well as Editor-in-Chief for Union's award-winning magazine, *The Torch*.

KELLY A. TAYLOR Chapman University (CA)
From Florida, Kelly is a writer of prose and plays. She is studying in the honors program and pursuing a degree in creative writing and history. Kelly has served as her Sigma Tau Delta chapter's Secretary and Treasurer, and she enjoys being part of the writing community on campus. She has worked for *Calliope Art & Literary Magazine* as Managing Editor and Editor-in-Chief. She is a junior editor of *Voces Novae*, Chapman's award-winning historical journal. She also served as Editing Intern for Future House Publishing. (See her work at kellyarieltaylor.com.)

EMILY G. VENKATESAN Oklahoma Christian University (OK)
Emily, from Clarksville, MD, is an undergraduate in the honors college, studying English with a pre-law emphasis and a minor in Chemistry. In her spare time, Emily takes political science courses to expand her academic interests. She serves as the President of her university's Sigma Tau Delta chapter and has held several leadership positions. After graduating, Emily plans to attend law school.

JESSICA WHITE Ursinus College (PA)
Jesse is an English and Psychology major who insists she is definitely still a writer, but she will return to her writing when she finishes knitting these socks. She is pleased that she at least has enough writing going on to have something accepted in this journal, though she is unsure how it fits in around the demands of indecisively adding a second minor late in the college game.

GRACE WORWA Gustavus Adolphus College (MN)
Grace is a senior at Gustavus Adolphus College, where she studies political science, Spanish, and English. Grace enjoys writing short stories, and she has a particular interest in feminist dystopia. After graduating, she plans to attend law school and later work in immigration law as an attorney.

MÍA L. ZENDEJAS Pepperdine University (CA)
Mía recently graduated with a BA in English Writing and Rhetoric and two minors: Creative Writing and Great Books. She served as Editor of and published in Pepperdine's Literary and Art Magazine, *Expressionists*. She also has published in *The Malibu Poetry Anthology* and *Currents Magazine* and is set to publish in *LURe*. She seeks to foster diversity and inclusivity in her writing, inspired by her Hispanic heritage. For fun, Mía enjoys surfing, people watching, antiquing, listening to The Beatles, wandering in museums, reading on the beach, and writing in local coffee shops.

About Sigma Tau Delta

Since its inception in 1924, Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society has modeled its mission to confer distinction for high achievement, promote interest in English language and literature, foster exemplary character and fellowship, and exhibit high standards of academic excellence.

In 1972, Sigma Tau Delta was accepted as a member of the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS). Currently the Society has grown to include over 920 chapters with more than 1,000 Faculty Advisors; approximately 8,500 members are inducted annually.

Sigma Tau Delta has continued to flourish and expand, branching out in 1996 to found Sigma Kappa Delta for the growing two-year college system, and in 2004 it established the National English Honor Society for secondary school students and faculty. It is now the second largest honor society in the ACHS.

Through hard and dedicated work, Sigma Tau Delta has built upon the strong foundation of its founder Judson Q. Owen, whose initial foresight shaped the Society; threee subsequent executive secretaries/directors—E. Nelson James, William C. Johnson, and Matt Hlinak—added their own visions to the Society, and many other individuals further shaped the vital, growing organization we are today.

Sigma Tau Delta's Journals

The Sigma Tau Delta journals publish annually the best writing and criticism of undergraduate and graduate active chapter members of the Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society.

Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle was founded in 1931 as a quarterly publication highlighting the best creative writing of the Society's members. At the fall 1998 meeting of the Board of Directors, the *Rectangle* went to a once-a-year publication schedule, providing a more professional look and permitting the inclusion of more student writing in each issue.

Sigma Tau Delta Review was added as a societal journal in 2007 and publishes critical essays on literature, essays on rhetoric and composition, and essays devoted to pedagogical issues.

Annual Submissions

The best writing is chosen for publication from hundreds of submissions. Not only do these refereed journals go to chapters worldwide, but they also honor the best writing in each category, with five awards totaling $2,500. As of 2016, the Sigma Tau Delta journals are catalogued with the Library of Congress. There is also an annual reading at the international convention by any of the published writers in attendance.

All active undergraduate and graduate members of active Sigma Tau Delta chapters are invited to submit their work to *Sigma Tau Delta Review* and *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*. Chapter Advisors, faculty members, alumni, and honorary members are not eligible to submit.

Submissions for the 2024 journals are due between April 24 and May 15, 2023.