The Crucible

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Michael Kiser

A Note from the Literary Editor

I ate my last orange just now. I ate it about an hour after the rice and the poetry. It had nothing to do with hunger; the rice filled me plenty. I ate it because it was the last, and I have abandonment issues. Today I have scattered myself amongst Plath, Hemingway, Barthelme, the saints of the Bible, Sartre, *The London Review of Books*, the latest issue of *Granta*, Barth, O'Connor, a taping of the National Book Awards where a man was awarded for his book on depression, which he likely wrote because he ate rice. I was scattered. Money is disappearing quickly because I keep buying photography supplies. Women are disappearing because I have abandonment issues. I take pictures of them. The last was an interpretation of the third and fourth of Eliot's "Preludes." She looked lovely and permanent lying on my bed with curled papers in her hair and her knees drawn up slightly. I have also taken a photo of her absent portrait with my fingerprint run against the background. Wednesday, I'm going home for Thanksgiving. It will be my first trip home in over a year, except for an old friend's wake. There is no good reason for staying away for so long. I am only two hours away. It simply does not enter my mind to leave here. It was here, in Lock Haven, shortly after my stay in Glasgow, that I came alive. This was the place that I first gasped for air, and found it. It was here that I was held upside down and cried. To understand my home would be to understand my unborn state, and one can never understand such a thing, only know that it was, only recall by some unknown retaining cell of the brain, the long, muffled sounds of a beginning to life, to feel the reclining presence of a thickness of skin that protects and warms us, that provided that deep solid darkness that we love, and spend our whole lives trying to understand once again. No, one can never understand such things if one is to live, have abandonment issues, and eat the last of the oranges and poetry.

-Michael Kiser

Where There's Nothing

"And then I ran my tin-cup heart along/The prison of her ribs..."

Nick Cave

Matt Slavick

When I was four months old, Hope and her family moved in next door. She was one day younger than me. Both of us were our parents' only children.

Five months later, our mothers were best friends. They would bathe Hope and me together, sometimes.

There are old, grainy, and silent home movies of us taking our first steps. We are holding hands, struggling together, but she can't keep herself from falling over. I let go and waddle into the open arms of my mother.

When I was three, I got into the cabinet in the kitchen that held all of the cleaning products. My mother was in her bedroom sewing. She came out to find me in spasms, and vomiting. I was in the hospital for two days. She kept my medical bracelet in a pocket until I graduated college almost twenty years later.

We started kindergarten when we were five years old. I loved it, but Hope hated school. There was a morning class and an afternoon class. Hope and I were placed in the morning class. In the afternoon, we were free to roam the world, which consisted of either of our front lawns. But we didn't care, even with our mothers watching us.

There was a tree that was growing on the side lawn next to my house. It was tiny compared to the giant oaks surrounding it, but it was big enough for us to play around and climb. When we played "It" or Hide-and-Seek, we used it as Safe. When you touched it, no one could touch you.

The tree soon became our hangout. We could swing on the lower branches, or climb up to the very top and look down on our houses. That was the best place to hide when we didn't want to be found because the foliage was so thick. The branches were placed perfectly for us to sit or lean against without worrying about falling. Hope always wanted to climb up the tree.

In the third grade, we went on a field trip to the zoo in the city. Hope and I sat on the right side of the bus. I had the window seat. The bus stopped at a red light, and I looked outside. There was a motel there, and I saw my father and Hope's mother standing in the parking lot. I was happy to see them, and I turned to Hope. She looked out the window, but said nothing. My father and her mother embraced as the bus pulled away.

At the zoo, Hope got in trouble for throwing rocks at the tigers.

One day I was swinging upside down from a branch on our tree as Hope sat on the ground leaning against its trunk. She had been quiet and forlorn the whole day, so I asked her what was wrong.

"Peaches," she said quietly.

"What?"

She shook her head and looked away. I didn't know what to say, so I swung back down from the tree.

"Do you wanna play Suicide?" I asked.

"Okay."

As we grew older, the boundaries that were set for us gradually expanded, and we were allowed to venture into the woods across the street from our homes. A small creek wound its way through, and in the summers we would swim in the deeper parts. A small island of sand, dirt, and rocks had grown in the area where we liked to play.

Hope had the idea one day of building a dam from one side of the creek to the other. It sounded like fun, so we collected some large rocks and placed them as a base across the shallowest part of the water. A dead branch had fallen from a tree. It was long enough to cover the span of the creek bed, and it wasn't too heavy, so we put that on top of the rocks and secured it in place.

"We'll need some dirt to pack everything in," she said. She told me to go home and get one of my father's shovels. When I came back, she was on her knees in the creek, putting more rocks and sticks in the places where the water was running through.

"Start digging, so we can put it in."

I dug for what seemed like hours, piling up mounds of dirt. Hope would place handfuls of it in the small cracks, but the water kept seeping through and washing it away. She took the

shovel from me and scooped large amounts onto the cracks. It stayed. Hope started getting excited and moved on down the line, shoveling onto the dam while I sat on the grass watching her. The water started to rise a little bit.

When she was at the end of it, the dirt at the other end began crumbling away, and I told her so. She sloshed back through the water and grabbed another shovel-full, and threw it on to patch it up. But as she tossed it on, the rest of it started to disintegrate. Hope ran back and forth between the dirt and the dam, trying in vain to keep everything together. The dirt started to run low.

"Come on, help me!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Start digging some more."

"You have the shovel."

"Here." She threw the shovel at me, and I jumped out of the way to avoid getting hit. She kneeled over and grabbed the last armload, holding it to her chest, and ran frantically to anywhere the dirt was collapsing, which was everywhere at this point. It sifted out of her arms like an hourglass. I began to dig, but only half-heartedly. I was tired and didn't want anything to do with this.

"Hurry up!" she screamed.

"Shut up!" I threw the shovel to the ground.

She stormed up to me. I could see she was crying. Her tears mixed with the dirt and formed dark brown streaks on her face. She picked the shovel up and started digging. I left her there by herself and went home.

By the time we were in fourth grade, it was clear that Hope had a distaste for anything involving school. It wasn't so much a struggle as it was a downright refusal. The teachers and counselors tried speaking with her and her parents, but to no avail. They tried gentle prodding and stern warnings. Nothing seemed to work.

I was an A student, and the teachers loved my enthusiasm, but couldn't understand why I was best friends with a troublemaker.

Our teacher, Mrs. Krajewski, had a glass jar of candy that she would distribute to students who performed well. I was a usual recipient, and Hope was always telling me that she was going to

get a piece of that candy.

We had a spelling test one day. I could see Hope actually working hard to spell everything correctly. The next day, Mrs. Krajewski handed our tests back. Hope got a perfect score. It was the first time she had gotten anything over a C, let alone a 100.

"Hope, you may come get your candy," said the teacher, genuinely happy for her.

Hope bounded out of her chair and to Mrs. Krajewski's desk. She reached in and grabbed a piece. When she pulled her hand out, she accidentally knocked the jar over onto the floor. It shattered loudly, and everyone in the class let out a scream.

Hope froze and her bottom lip began to quiver. "No," she whispered. "No."

She dropped to her knees and began to cry. "No. I'm sorry. I'm sorry." Hope tried to pick up the pieces of broken glass that had scattered about.

"Hope, stop," said Mrs. Krajewski.

She was wailing now, "I'm sorry! Daddy, I'm sorry." Her hands were bleeding and she was splashing blood onto her clothes.

Mrs. Krajewski stepped from behind her desk and grabbed Hope."Hope, please, it's okay. Darling, please." Hope thrashed about in the arms of the teacher, screaming at the top of her lungs. I started to cry. We didn't see each other for a month after that.

In fifth grade, I had my first girlfriend, Becky Lundegaard. We went out for two days before Hope pushed her to the blacktop playground and kicked her in the stomach. She was suspended from school for a week.

My mother tried to stop me from seeing Hope. She didn't want us to have anything to do with Hope and her family. I couldn't understand why. She said it wasn't Hope's fault. It was adult matters, and I wouldn't understand, she said. She put her hands over her face to hide the tears. I didn't listen to her.

One day when we were twelve, we climbed our tree to the very top. It was fall, and it was blustery, and the branches swayed back and forth. I wanted to get down, but Hope refused to. A gust of wind blew, and I held on for dear life in tears.

"Don't be such a baby," she said. She stepped over to where I was squeezing the tree and stood next to me."Give me your hand."

I reached over to her, and she held my hand firmly. I looked into her face, and she smiled. "It's fine." I nodded.

She sighed, then, and looked out beyond the leaves to somewhere in the distance. I followed her gaze, but wasn't sure if she was really looking at anything at all.

She took to the habit of climbing into my window at night to talk. I would hold her as she cried.

The following summer, Hope's parents decided to take a family vacation in Europe. She was gone from the end of school till the end of August. When she came back, her breasts had grown."I hate my family" was the first thing she said to me.

Hope climbed into the window one summer night when we were fourteen."Come on," she said,"I have something to show you."

I dressed quickly and followed her out."Where are we going?" I whispered. She didn't answer.

She took my hand, and we ran across the street into the woods. The glow from the street lamps and the whiteness of the full moon lit way out into the mouth of the darkness. The loud chirping of crickets and the dark canopy of the trees frightened me a little bit, and I began to breathe hard. I was hoping she would think it was from the running.

Hope pulled a small flashlight from her pants pocket and cast a beam in front of us as the light receded."Over there," she said, moving towards a thicket of bushes. We sat down inside, and she took something out of her pocket.

"Check it out." She held out her hand. In it was what looked like three rolled-up pieces of paper.

"What are they?"

She snorted."Haven't you ever seen a joint before?"

I looked around to see if anyone was watching us, but all I could see was the marijuana in Hope's hand as she held the flashlight to them. Total blackness surrounded us; the moon seemed to have disappeared.

"Where did you get those from?"

"I bought them at school. Why are you so edgy?"

"You shouldn't be doing this, Hope. You could get in trouble."

"Whatever. Do you want one or what?"

I shook my head. Hope shrugged."At least hold this for me so I can see," she said, handing me the flashlight. I shined it on her as she placed one of the joints in her mouth and lit it. Her hand shook slightly, either from nervousness or excitement; I wasn't sure which.

She sucked in the smoke and coughed violently. "Shit," she muttered. She tried again, held it this time.

"Do you feel anything?"

"Not yet. I'm not sure how long it's supposed to take." She extended the lit joint to me. "You sure you don't want to try?"

I turned the flashlight off. In the darkness, the red-orange glow of the ember seemed to hover in front of me, as if it was being held by some invisible entity. By a ghost. The whole situation suddenly seemed totally ridiculous. I made a decision.

"No. I don't think so."

"Okay." The glow retreated from me viciously, and I heard her sucking on it again.

We stayed there until she had finished all three.

A year later, Hope's parents were divorced. I asked her why they did it.

"Beats the hell out of me," she said, with a smirk. Then she cried.

I ran for student council president when I was sixteen, and won. Hope was arrested for shoplifting. They found a bag of cocaine on her, and she was sentenced to juvenile detention.

She never made it there. She climbed into my window one night with a packed bag.

"I'm leaving," she said matter-of-factly.

I wasn't surprised. "Do you have enough money?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. Probably not."

She put her pack down and slid into my bed next to me."I'm sorry I'm not like you," she said.

In the darkness she reached for my hand and brushed it lightly, uncertain. I took it into mine reassuringly and our fingers intertwined. It started off like this, with my thumb rubbing gently, consoling in the area where her thumb and forefinger meet. I sensed her looking at me, and I wondered what the

expression on her face was. Everything depended on that.

My heart raced as she moved closer. A part of me was telling her to stop. The other part of me was asking for forgiveness.

Afterwards, she wrapped her arms around me."Please just hold me," she said. My shoulder was wet, and I wanted to wipe the dampness away, but I didn't. I fell asleep to the smell of peach shampoo.

At dawn, she slipped out of my bedroom window with her bag. I pretended I was sleeping, but I was squinting my eyes and watching her. Her silhouetted figure stopped and turned towards me. She stood that way for a long time, watching me as I watched her. Then she turned again and was gone. I realized I never asked her where she was going.

I came home from school one day at the end of my senior year, and our tree was gone. In its place was a stump. I asked my mother what happened to it. "Your father didn't want the branches scratching up the new car," she said sadly.

I sat on the stump and traced my fingers around the concentric circles. I remembered hearing something about how every ring inside a tree was a year of its life. I saw an ant crawling across the smooth wood. I poked at it with a twig and pushed it into one of the rings, trying to get it to run laps, but it just ran haphazardly. It's probably confused because there's nothing here now, I thought. I squashed it with my thumb.

Troy Holden

Found and Lost

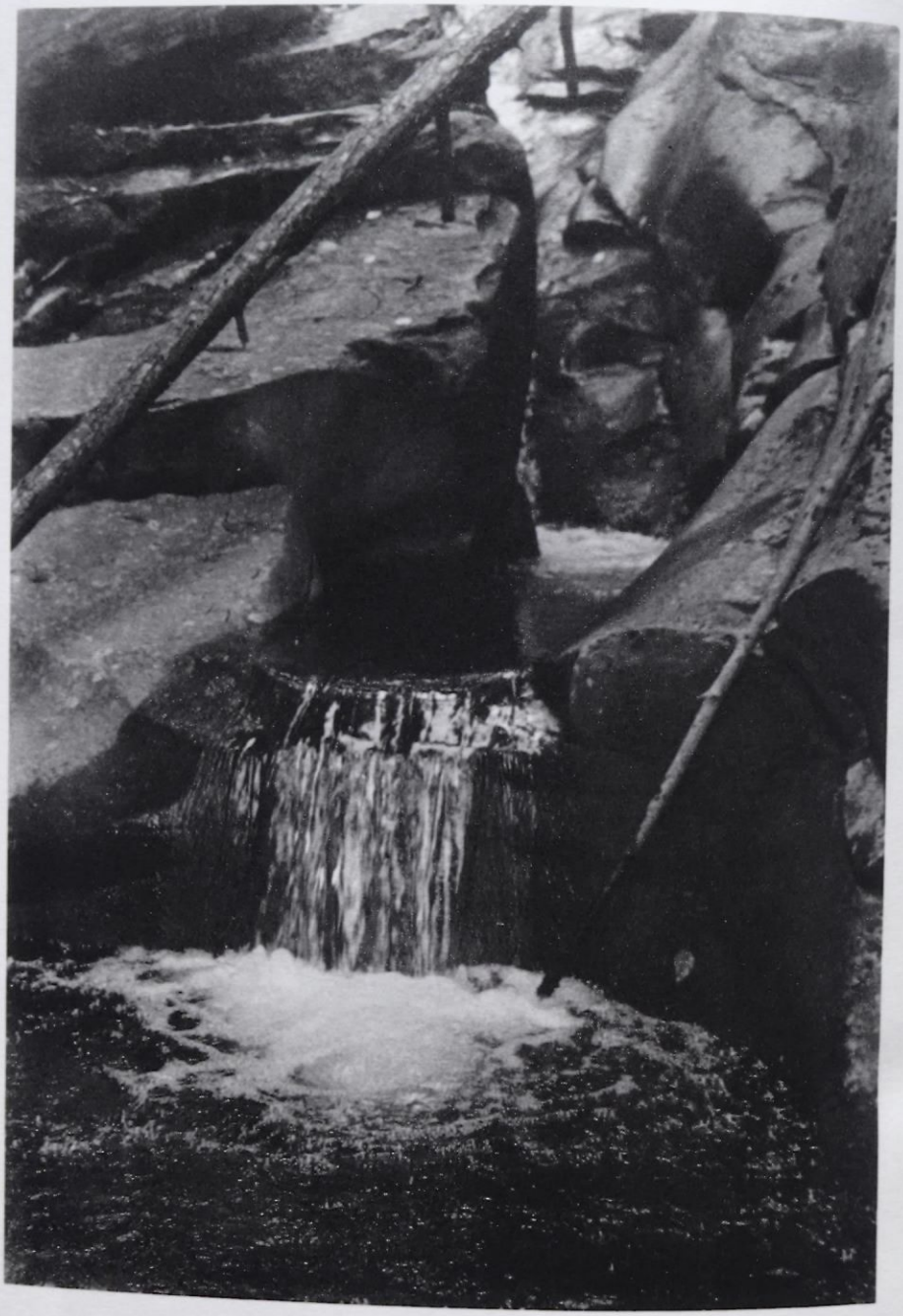
Adam Bowman

Lost between the hours of darkness
under mud-murky skies,
swaying with the naked coffee-stained trees
and copious auburn rows of corn.

All I wanted was to dance in the arms of fate,
but the roses withered, and again
I hid inside myself.

Sometimes the blustery November wind still howls,
fluttering the scarce survivors of the frost.
I still tremble when the wind whispers to me,
as she once did.

Steven Beatty



Running at Night on the Susquehanna

Jeff Milburn

Just seconds faster than the river
as it crawls below me,
my feet pound pavement.
Sweat slides down my face,
stings my eyes when I blink.

Street lights lead the way high above the road,
eighteen steps between each one,
counted off in the cadence of my own labored breathing.
I pass a woman walking her dog.

Tonight, the mountain air is my running partner.
It burns my lungs like icy needles.
Though my face is calm, my mind is seething
with all the tedious thoughts of an under-used college mind.

Spit out thickness and hit the three-quarter line,
almost to the turn-around,
then back to nuances and trivialities.
Until then, I have myself to talk to and I finally enjoy
the company:

flashes of things I don't like mixing with
memories of things to come.
Hit the end of the road just before the bridge,
walk, take a few breaths, and step it up again.

My thoughts speed off as I do.
Short-lived clouds of white steam
fade away just past my head,
forced in and out between steps as I breathe.

Two curves to go; I think I can see the Catholic school.
Watching my shadows pass me
and fade into themselves,
I'm only racing myself.

Words and images fade as my salt-stung eyes clear.
It takes more to run to something than away from everything.
The road ends; I slow to suck in oxygen.
I stretch my legs,
and head back into my life again.

Cold Blooded

Michael Kiser

Crawled in and listened to my echo. Listened to the water dripping on the inside. I took a cold shower when I was young. Waited. You can smell it when they're bleeding. Vitruvian thunderings on the inside. In the veins of the leaves. Runs hot. Wild. Like it doesn't ever come back around. Not ever. Everything just spills out through the roots. Let's dig a well and fall in. Get a rope and swing out as far as we can with our eyes closed. Cold stone. Dig. Hollow out everything and yell into the spaces. Light the tongues on the candles and listen. Watch the shadows of the echoes dance on the walls and try to catch them. Let a tree grow in your ear and let it sing. Pick up the leaves when they fall and call them your own. Dry brittle fires. Did you hear that? Did you hear that? It's gone. And I don't think I ever got warm.

I Couldn't See the Mountains

Silas Martin

I couldn't see the mountains
—beyond—so far
the old French style
architecture,
waiting for peaks to jettison—
toward sky.

On my way.
Singing to brown-paper-bag,
sitting an ungovernable sit.
Amongst mountain people in gutter.
Some guy—
smiles—
man/talk 'bout Galilee or some shit.
To distract from—
pale blond
with the sad face
Permanent—
Beautiful.
I'm happy because of her trick
(the perfectly sad)
I hope she never climbs.

I couldn't see the mountains
—today
—cause—to wonder
are they enough to forsake?
In their shadow?
their shelter—
their growth—wrath—landslide?

I can't see—
to stop and ponder—
what keeps me coming back—
to Pennsylvania.

April Rain

Dawn Schindler

Knowing why, I woke early that morning. Looking out my window by pushing aside the red velveteen curtain, I found the night had brought continuous rain. Stretching, I got out of bed and grabbed a footstool from beneath the clock. I pulled the orange quilt from beneath my cat, Marlo, who let out a groggy sound that was not quite a meow, and opened the wooden door of the back porch. Wrapped in an orange cocoon, I sat close to the screen door and peered out at the twilighted dreariness; I could smell the screen's dusty metal and the wet ground outside. Having been hit with sporadic drops of rain, random squares of the screen were filled with water, creating tiny blurred windows, like eyes filled with tears. It was early April, and I love rain—especially spring rains. I closed my eyes and inhaled the dampness until I could hold no more. Exhaling, I returned my gaze to the out-of-doors and allowed the raindrops to arrest my thoughts, letting them fall where they would. Today reminded me of camping, I thought. Images of the past returned: cold noses, stiff bodies from sleeping on the ground, and rainy mornings, when everything upon waking was wet and dark.

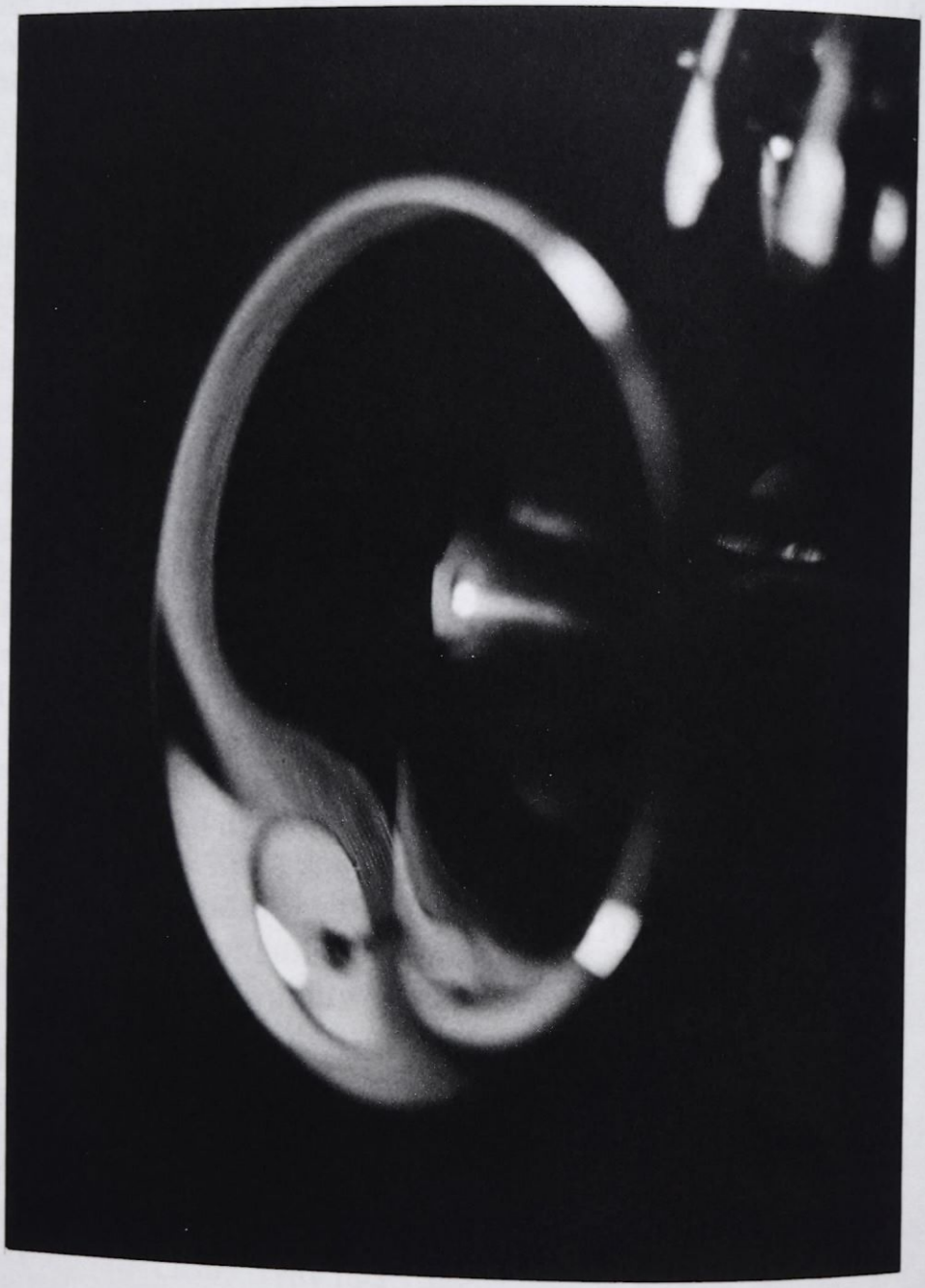
In the back yard, the birds were singing and springing from branches black with the dampness and weight left from the past winter. Droplets of water shook from the trees' extended arms as the birds rebounded from one to the next. New droplets took their place, and becoming heavy, they also fell. The rain continued, and I watched the nearest drops plummet, my eyes pursuing them until the worn, warped wood of the back steps abruptly interrupted their path. The drops soaked into the cracks of the fading paint the color of bricks. The grass beyond was flat and uncombed as it swam in the wetness of the constant plodding rain. The still-frozen earth rejected the water I could not hold into pools, and small hills of snow scattered the ground, visible to the dim, clouded sky. Pressing my forehead to the cool screen, I wondered if I was like the earth, if I could hold any more. I knew, looking at the dark trees and sodden ground, that I could not. I leaned my head against the frame of the door.

The earth seemed to fill with the rain today, seemed to overflow. The culminating pressure was becoming unbearable. It was time. I shuddered, not knowing if it was from the cold or the existing realization, and pulled my cocoon tighter.

Distracting me from thought, and gratefully so, Marlo jumped onto my lap, greeting me with an early morning kiss. I smiled as she, with her twitching nose, sniffed at the screen and fresh air with a questioning meow. I asked her if the rain intrigued her as it did me. Her black fur puffed in the slight wind, and her ears perked. I unlocked the screen door, and Marlo, jumping to the floor with a soft thud, and always landing on her feet, earned my admiration of her balance and swiftness. She poked her head outside into the dampness. Raindrops pelted her fur and rolled off. She jerked, startled by their touch, their wetness. I imagined if she wondered what they were. I stuck my hand out into the rain, and my skin too repelled the drops, splashing and spreading outward. Yes, April had brought the rain, I thought.

Marlo crept back inside onto the cool linoleum floor not yet warmed by day, shaking her paws free of wetness. She started to clean herself, removing evidence of the rain. I stood watching her, took breath, and decidedly closed the door behind me. I lingered though, leaning against it, feeling the cool wood and peeling paint beneath my palms. Through the thin cracks I could feel the cool air slip in like whispers. I must cleanse myself, I thought, and the rain was a reminder. Marlo meowed and ran ahead. I shed the orange quilt, and it dropped to the floor. I bent down and picked it up, like a molten skin, and looked at the simple patchwork. I wondered where it had come from, and where it had been, how many other bodies it had sheltered from the cold. Surely I had not been the first. I laid it on the wooden rocking chair, and put the footstool back beneath the clock. It showed seven-thirty. Marlo jumped onto the chair, this shed blanket now her bed. I opened the window near the sink to let the fresh air in, and the slight gust chilled me. My day was beginning with a spring rain. Marlo, from where she lay on the quilt, paused to look at me with blankness in her gray eyes, and resumed grooming herself on the newly found nest.

Michael Kiser



A Cold Breeze Blowing Over My Toes, Uncovered

Michael Kiser

When left to go out and sing
up a woman, I did not

feel like cold, bleeding oranges,
bobbing on the sea, was not carried

north by the current of my song,
but grew hairs from my

undemanding chin and cut left
through an alley to get out of the wind,

and there remembered my shoes.

Fruit of Bosch

Michael Kiser

I can smell her citrus
orange shampoo and conditioner,

heavy on my eyes,
full-headed softness

of mane-like curling in her wake;
and it's about to rain

down through this drinking,
coated air, and I imagine

that it will smell like oranges
exploding on the ground.

Alan Vezina

You and I,
in a tea house
on the far side of
the infinite
heavens.

The cups are
brought
to our table
by the dead Swede,
and laid in the middle
like 2 dead rats.

They sit between us
like queens
on a chessboard
waiting to be
commanded.

We stare across
the table
into each other's
murky cup,

shuffle
through decks
of emotions,
debating
which card to pull.

And in the end
we pull no cards,
too afraid
to disrupt the silence
with our human
babble.

Apology to the Sand Bar Shark

Nicholas Trumbauer

There were thirteen hooks on a line
and you chose the one in the middle,
the single casualty in a horrific war.
How could you have resisted, the fish aroma
pulling like a frog's tongue to doom?
When we pulled you to the surface
your head pointed towards the clouds,
white puffs of joy hanging from invisible strings.
Your fins spread wide and tail hung down.
Then your eyes still glowed with life,
until laid low there in your cold Coleman coffin.
Not for your sins, but for our curiosity,
you lived forever in a jar, never to return to the cycle,
like water that refuses evaporation.
Forgive us.
Redeem us.

Elizabeth Levine

Filtering Images of the Dawn

Silas Martin

Rolling out into the junk-filled night...
filtering images of the dawn.
Suppressed, suffocated, drowning thoughts
throughout this hole—
cock-eyed in birdhouse sympathy.
Kicking roaches from my legs
and cursing youthful cowardice
of staggering words...
blinking...every...7...seconds...
at new-like, baby-like,
fascination.
Conceived not long ago,
over—
ice-cream—
and cigarettes—
and marijuana—
and prescription junk.
Dustful lovers
creaking joints at
the snap of time
that float away with my
Blue
Smoke,
a virgin to purity.

Here—now—
beside my other self—
in reminisce of saints
spread like
split souls that burn
for rebellion in seas of conformity.
Tasting and touching
What is
—beautiful—
easy faith...
coming out like flickering

lights in my house when
no one is home.
Set on constant rewind
in false lies of higher learning
through impatient
gray-skinned ramblings
of toothless heads.
Sometimes I would like
to weep
—for reasons…
Dropping light colorful language
into ungrounded oblivion.
Like children laughing falling up
stairs.
Sometimes on endless railroad
track-face towards everyone's
heaven listening for train whistles—
I wait to be sick—
then can't remember why.
All? Has been lost for days.
O, brothers and sisters—
O, holy, holy, saints—
O, lovers of madmen—
O, flowers that grow
from great, concrete cracks
on Lock Haven streets—
and this beat, wild, savage, flower
is just as good as any—baby!

She—being—
her—that
sits poised—
still for $1.25
red hair and all
dangling
feet in water
amongst storms—in light of day.
This all remembering where I was born.
My youthful ghosts
wait in the yard…

to hold her hand
in whispers of a life once lived.
She – who forgives
because she does not yet know –
I wrote on myself when I was born!
There's a decaying summer out there,
that belongs to us!
There's a dry breeze blowing,
that belongs to us!
There's a love out there,
drowning itself in reality's jisom –
that worships us!

So All this –
upon a thought...
Blah, Blah, Blah...
Till we trail off in
ramblings
of swarms of dead flies
hanging around pools of clarity –
looking out through
shadowed lakes of discontent.
Blah, Blah, Blah...
Marvelous –
what marvelous blends
of solidity
and knowing of nothing.

Troy Holden

Shrieking Across the Horizon of America's Mind's Eye

Michael Reichley

During the winter month of October 1955, in the one-time auto-shop, now art gallery, The Sixth Gallery, Allen Ginsberg, along with a handful of then unknown poets, gave a public reading of mostly original poetry. A hundred and fifty people were in attendance, unsuspectingly about to hear and witness history. Allen was to give his first reading of *Howl*. Allen started reading to the somewhat intoxicated audience (somewhat intoxicated himself), and audience and performer became more sober as the poem built its rhythmic intensity. "Allen began [reading] in a small and intensely lucid voice. At some point Jack Kerouac began shouting 'GO' in cadence as Allen read it" said Michael McClure, fellow poet performer at the Sixth Gallery event (Miles, *Howl* 48). During the course of the poem, Allen would speak in whispered tones, shout screaming mad, eventually break down sobbing, and by the end of his reading, the audience would stand cheering, unsure of what they just saw, but certain of one thing: Allen was taking them, spoken ideas, and poetry to places of no return (148-152).

The Sixth Gallery reading is what most consider to be the beginning of Ginsberg's rise in literary status. Allen's performance gained him the respect of the local literary community and even the local reviewers, who found the rest of the event to be under-whelming, were pushed to concede that Allen's reading/poem was the highlight of the evening (Miles, *Ginsberg* 189).

If his reading was the beginning of his rise, then the attempted censorship of *Howl and Other Poems* was Allen's catapult. Printed in England in 1955, and distributed at City Lights Books in the fall of '56, *Howl* was in its second printing by '57. Sent from the England printers, the second printing was confiscated by the United States customs on March 25, 1957. On April 3, 1957, the American Civil Liberties Union publicly announced that it did not view the book as obscene and would contest the seizure by customs. Meanwhile, another printing was issued due to demand, but this time printed inside U.S. borders in order to avoid

customs. This too would lead to legal attempts to censor the book of poetry, resulting in the arrest and trial of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the owner of City Lights Books and the publisher/ primary seller of *Howl and Other Poems*. Literary figures (Kenneth Rexroth, Vincent McHugh), college professors (from the University of California among others), book editor Luther Nichols, and in total, nine star witnesses were brought before the court to testify on *Howl*'s behalf. Ginsberg was in Europe the whole time, and while he was gone, *Howl* was being reprinted in many literary journals and widely circulated. Because of this flourishing popularity, *Life Magazine* ran a full-length story on the ordeal, providing national attention. This national attention, coupled with his poetic talent, would take Ginsberg into mainstream American consciousness (161-170).

How can this type of poetry break into mainstream America, even finding itself embraced by large populations? Unequivocally, the use of traditionally labeled obscene, descriptive language, combined with homosexual subjects expressing cultural dissent, should have spelled literary suicide for Allen. Yet, he flourished and still flourishes (posthumously) as an author! *Howl* was reprinted practically every year of its existence, and today his works are standard college Literature curriculum, often with entire courses dedicated to the beat poets, a literary movement that Ginsberg, more than any other, lifted out of obscurity. Despite the frequency of Allen's traditionally obscene word choice (i.e. cock, balls, fucking, clit, asshole) often involving homosexual images, Allen's career is marked regularly and predictably selling out practically every venue he performed at, touring with Bob Dylan, becoming a cultural icon to the 60s youth/hippie movement, which led him to leading meditative and/or spoken word chants at many of the major 60s demonstrations, including Ken Kesey's Acid Test Festival, the San Francisco Be-In, the Chicago Democratic Convention, among others (Schumacher 10, 13-15, 98-114). I propose the following theories as to why Ginsberg experienced, historically speaking, the unpredictable success that he did, along the way, ripping the door of censorship from its hinges: 1) The literary vehicle Ginsberg employs allows him to become accessible to a large audience. 2) Ginsberg's message transcends obscenity. 3) America is redefining what it views as obscene.

The whole concept of Ginsberg's poetry being accessible is a double-edged sword. On one hand, because he doesn't write in old English, doesn't use an extended vocabulary, doesn't try to lose his reader in subtle twists or symbolism, a person without a literary trained ear/eye can still comprehend his work. This accessible writing style is not in any way a "dumbed-down" form, but instead a different style unto itself. Ginsberg's poetic proficiency lies in his ability to use "everyday" vocabulary and twist it into creative arrangements resulting in profound images capable of capturing forceful points and themes. People can embrace him because they can understand him like he was a neighbor and not literary academia. Yet, he still manages to capture the poetic spirit of a word. Hence, it can be assumed that Ginsberg has a larger base of possible readers to draw from, numerically increasing the number of people who will embrace his poems.

The counter-point to the favorable factor of having such an accessible writing style is the same, namely, people understand. People do not necessarily understand the greater purpose of Allen's poems, but they understand his language. They understand that certain topics (usually sexual) are being brought up regardless of whether or not the poem revolves around those topics, and the entire poem is condemned. But even this adds to the numbers of Ginsberg's audience! Even if more people understand the language and decide to view his work in a negative light, it still means that more people are discussing it as a result of readability. Any attention is better than no attention.

A poet like Walt Whitman can escape censorship, not entirely, but more successfully. For example, Whitman expresses his homosexuality openly in his poems, but the way he does it is completely different from Allen's. In Whitman's poem "We Two Boys Together Clinging," the most common response from the reader would be, "This poem is about two young boys who are best friends and it documents the childish things they do to have fun together." But to anyone with similar literary know-how, this poem is undoubtedly about two young lovers. It's just that their sexual love is represented in symbolic terms (i.e. "up and down roads going, North and South excursion making...Power enjoying...elbows stretching...finger clutching"). Whitman weaves his real content into a web of beautiful words and

wholesome images, whereas Ginsberg's "obscene" content slaps the reader across the face. The irony is that Ginsberg's "foul language" often is being used to prove a greater point, whereas Whitman and others use acceptable language to convey a "foul content" (Annas and Rosen 232-233).

Beyond Ginsberg's accessible style is his chosen mode of creativity: poetry, also very accessible. Excluding epic poetry and long story poetry, poetry by nature allows for powerful emotions to be communicated in a minimal amount of time. A book can capture the same emotions as a poem, but it can't do it in five minutes. Unlike a poem, you most likely cannot listen to someone read, cry, or shout an entire book to you in one sitting. Listening to Allen read a poem doesn't take too much work on the part of the reader/listener, but the emotion is felt just the same. All these points further prove the accessibility of Ginsberg's poetry and consequently translate into a larger following and embracing (Meyer 3-8, 37).

Allen Ginsberg is successful in capturing many adoring readers despite word choice that provokes many individuals and institutions to vehemently lobby against him because, quite simply, he is a poet of substance. The substance of his poetry far transcends the "obscene" words he chooses to use. Those attempting to censor Allen's poetry eventually had to face this fact. When Captain Hanrahan (the officer responsible for the "sting" that resulted in Ferlinghetti's arrest for selling *Howl*) was asked what standards he used when judging the book, he replied, "When I say filthy, I don't mean suggestive, I mean filthy words that are vulgar." This "standard" demonstrates his lack of ability and/or willingness to make an attempt to look past the language and into the message (Miles, *Howl* 180-181).

Drawing on the precedent-setting Supreme Court case United States vs. One Book Called Ulysses, Judge Clayton Horn of the California Bar ruled that *Howl* was not obscene, and Ferlinghetti was guilty of no crime. Judge Horn took two weeks of deliberation before reaching that verdict, during which he read *Ulysses* and other works attacked as obscene during one time or another, and he concluded that *Howl* clearly did not meet the parameters to be classified as obscene literature. To be obscene, as the law defines, the words used must be 1) used for no other purpose than to simply be offensive. 2) can be traced to the planning of

the actual carrying out of criminal behavior. The work must also be judged as a complete work when deciding it is obscene and therefore legally censorable. If the work has the slightest inkling of redeeming social value, it's not obscene and thereby protected by the First and the Fourteenth Amendments of the U.S. constitution (Konvitz 602-611).

Clearly the law recognizes that *Howl and Other Poems* is not without redeeming social values, but perhaps most importantly, the people also recognize it, as evident by the cheering exuberant courtroom upon hearing Judge Heron's verdict. The enlightened reader of *Howl* (to make an example of one poem in particular) can see that it isn't written as an act of perversion of a display of coarse language, but that it is raw human emotion, a literal and figurative "*Howl*."

Many embrace the "redeeming social values" present in *Howl*. The poem speaks against the terrifying nightmare world that the author can see taking root in our present society. This nightmare world is slowly infecting people he interacts with on a personal level. For the author, to many people that he has seen first hand, that he personally knows and cares for, are suffering despite the genuine efforts to live life. The poem continues by identifying the evils that are leading us down this path of destruction, destruction of our souls. Things like conformity, institutional hierarchy beyond our control, and materialism are singled out as the evils inflicting us. The poem concludes with Allen's affirmation of hope. Even when facing the challenges, his love for humanity (specifically for Carl Solomon) prevents him from abandoning hope. The poem concludes with a footnote designed to speak of the holy nature present in all things. I would venture to say that every one of Ginsberg's poems has social value to it.

Again transcending an "obscene label," Allen Ginsberg's poetry (and essentially his literal presence) is embraced by the 60s youth movement without judgment of his sexuality or word choice. His poetry has a message of spontaneity and shamelessness woven behind any specific concerns or ideas a specific poem may explicitly express. As stated by Ginsberg himself, his work, and poetry in general, is a counteraction, "a saving grace," from "manipulation and brainwash." Poetry is an expression of individual emotion that, when communicated to others, leads to honest communication. These premises are consistent with many

of the youth movement's outlooks. The youth movement of the 60s was in fact rejecting the same things that Ginsberg had been rejecting for over a decade (Schumacher 98-151).

What is obscene and what is not obscene was being challenged in America during Ginsberg's career, but when we look at the larger picture of American history, every age challenges the last's limitations and definitions to varying degrees, so this "redefining" shouldn't come as a surprise. Ginsberg himself does not cause any great change that the historian can say, "There, here is where America changed its definitions of acceptable." No single individual or moment can cause that type of change, but Ginsberg chips away at the block. He pushes the boundaries, making people question whether the "f-word" or self-repression is more obscene, the written word "cock" or a faceless and unaccountable institution that murders in far away lands, "tit" or political assassinations? He starts off where the be-bop and the jazz cultures are capable of bringing him and then goes further. Ginsberg and his fellow beat writers were the verbalization of an age's feelings of frustrations against a post-WWII nation of mass consumption and unquestioning patriotism, nurtured and manipulated by Cold War ideology. The youth and the marginalization of America do not see Ginsberg's overt rejection of middle-America's mass produced, uninterrupted, and unchallenged value systems as obscene, but they begin to see Ginsberg's rage, their own rage as a justified by-product of the system's failed attempts at conditioning them, failed attempt at assimilating them into its crooked machinery (Boyer 142-144).

Ginsberg undeniably becomes a literary success before the emergence of the counter culture (*Howl* sold over 100,000 before 1965), but perhaps the counter culture is why he is so vividly remembered. Namely, he is intertwined with unforgettable history. Ginsberg and the changes he created in the American psyche are instrumental in lending strength in the form of paved paths to this unforgettable history, to the emerging student movement, the feminist movement, and the civil rights crusade. Ginsberg does not emerge from the movement, but the movement must first pass through him, pass through the work he has done, through the door his work opened. America is viewing "no-no" old limits" or obscene and this, whether you are a propo-

nent of Ginsberg or not, frees up the nation's consciousness to explore where it wishes. This is a snowball effect: you begin with one question, one rejection, of refutation of a traditional definition or view, and you end with a hundred. This is Ginsberg's America: evolving (Matusow 275-298).

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Katrin Olsen

Sometimes Along This Street

Michael Reichley

There's something in me that won't let me sleep. Every time it happens: 3 am and I leave the house again. Find a bike on the back porch and start riding out of the development to find that everything is developed. Go down Muhlenberg Drive—1939—'43—'47—knowing that I don't know my neighbor. It's cold at 3:10 am. I make a left onto Morris Road, a road that overlooks the PA turnpike: I hear 18-wheeled demons barrel whispers to me while they rumble and struggle across the Dark Continent, but Morris and the turnpike soon part. I ride down Morris for miles, maybe two, maybe four, passing hypnotic stoplights that flash yellow on every street corner. Eight corners, eight lights. A few cars on the road—a few cars are always on the road.

I used to ride my bike on this road coming the opposite direction on my way back to my house from working at Blue Bell Country Club, selling snacks at a snack shop by a pool to fifteen-year-olds who only knew how to pay for Snicker's bars with 20's, who only knew how to live in four-story homes in developments with fences and gates around them, wondering if something was being locked out or in.

Still on Morris, passing the road that takes me to West Point Basketball Courts, the most run down, beat down, thrown down, and beautiful court you'll ever see. Spent everyday after school there from sixth to twelfth grade. Shoveled that court after snowstorms. Made friends, made fights, made new friends. No time now though, almost to the end of Morris.

Straight is Wissahichon, richest suburbs in PA, people spending 2,500 dollars on their lawns every three months, and I know because I worked landscaping last summer and winter, planted trees I want to uproot, uprooted trees I wanted in the ground. Everyone in the area does landscaping because some people have, and love, spending money on a lawn, but I'm not mad about people with money; I'm just mad.

I make a left off of Morris and this direction always feels good, feels like I'm undoing something. I'm on North Whales road now; it's a hill: 3/4 miles sharp slope down, 3/4 mile sharp slope

up until it flattens out. I pass Dave Brey's house. Twenty years old and already the smartest man in the universe; too smart to hate, too smart to fight, and too smart to be caught in pettiness. Some nights when I ride by he is sitting or walking outside, and then I sit or walk with him.

I keep pedaling down North Whales Road, go another two, maybe four miles. Things are everywhere. I must have ridden by a thousand families all in bed already, already passed two Wawas and two 7-11s and more up ahead. I'll forget to describe much, but it's only because I'm used to so much and don't think of it anymore. I never saw the stars until tenth grade. Keep pedaling; I keep pedaling. I buy meals of bread and milk from Wawa even though it's cheaper down the street…Location, location, location. Worked at Weis supermarket in high school in a super-sized extra-value fifteen-store shopping center just like the other fifteen plus, fifteen-store behemoths that litter memories of corn fields that in turn litter memories of earthen woodland. I stole from Weis all the time, whole bags of shit. Not because forty-year-old women worked thirty-nine hour weeks, getting paid five and a quarter, not because the manager fired the kid who joked all the time about getting a union together and how when he said that word the old people in the break room stopped rattling old newspapers and glanced up, even if only for a second. No, not because of any of that shit, but just because I'm mad.

I make a left off of North Whales and onto Main Street, Lansdale, and I wish you could somehow understand what I'm trying to tell you, how many things are everywhere. How many houses, how many buildings, and businesses and the pools, and the used bookstore, the deli, Merck Sharp and Dome with its 10,000 plus employees and infinite parking lots and high rise garages, baseball fields, old farm houses, generic developments that go on and on forever in endless-it's-all-been-seen-horizons, day cares, car washes, a million churches, a million-plus-one gas stations, YMCAs, Boy's and Girl's Clubs, mini-golf, go-carts, batting cages, three-movie-theatres-each-within-a-fifteen-minute-car-filled-with-roads drive, dairy queens, Home Depots, Snyder's Malls, Montgomery Malls, Snyder's Montgomery's Malls, Circuit Cities, Atlantic Warehouses, TOYS R US, Furniture stores, laundry mats, Ames, Clemens, Ginaurdi's, schools,

pizza shops, and golden arches over it all...Everything everywhere.

I'm still pedaling. Main Street, Lansdale is my favorite part of the trip. I ride down Main Street bright as daylight, slow, watching cars and police drive past. The borough bought a piece of circular marble for a hundred thousand dollars named the Kugel Ball, a shinning reflection with the world's reflection in it, sits in a park next to the street. I always stop and stare at it when cops drive past; I know they think I'm thinking how to steal, and I think they're right. Weighs a literal ton and a half though. I wish I were an Atlas just so I could let it all crash down.

Sometimes on Main Street, I double back and ride it a second or third time. Feel like I'm marking off territory. Feels good, makes me feel like an animal. Main Street is near the neighborhoods that don't have lawns and nothing like a Kensington, but if you don't know the area, you probably wouldn't be comfortable. Lots of row homes, low-income housing, a food and soup kitchen too, almost put in a homeless shelter a few years ago, but almost didn't happen.

I used to stop in and eat bagels with homeless guys. Most of them you couldn't tell were homeless unless you knew them. They were like me: slept in the day and walked around all night when it was too cold to sleep unless you slept in a stairwell or a porta-pottie. Two hundred homeless people live in Lansdale and if you asked mothers who drive their boys to basketball practice they would say, "Hurry! We're going to be late, and it's your own damn fault!" Twenty homeless men live in tents behind the train tracks that cut through Lansdale's hidden interior, in trees and bushes left behind by the Lanape Indians who knew Lansdale before its head got chopped off and received its bastard name. Right off Main Street is where my friend Sarah lives, and I can't even begin to tell you the secrets except not to judge people good or bad by where they are because you don't know how they got there.

I turn left off Main Street heading up hill, heading down the home stretch, down Valley Forge Road. I pass all-night shopping centers and houses houses houses, doubles mostly, but mostly not. My dad grew up a couple of streets in from Main Street and from Valley Forge. My grandma still lives there. My dad remembers everything. He can tell you what was built, when, and who

built it, and why, from 1900 to now. Told me our house was a cornfield the first time he saw it. Told me his dad made seven dollars a week selling door to door. They haven't talked to each other for ten years, but he wants things to be different between us, still not realizing that all things are cyclical and the only way to change the future is to change the past.

And I keep pedaling. Approaching a real demon: North Penn High School. Attention parents and teachers: violence is not killing your children, but mediocrity is. Tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, thousand plus kids per grade. Right now 1,400 kids are in the districts' combined second grades, you've probably never seen a school like this, this massive, never seen a police force roam your halls with walkie-talkies ablaze, never had an electric eye in your lap, taping bus rides and taping classroom activities. Feels like fucking *1984* except more required readings and not as exciting. This school has everything you need, but still doesn't know how to use it because it's paranoid of its students. And it should be. Three thousand youth are a lot of kids in one place. Hell, fifty kids is a lot in one place, like the fifty who sat in the back of a "disciplinary information" assembly and stood up in unison to give the vice-principal the finger for five whole minutes. Or the ten students who broke into the school at 4 am and stole discipline files and records because due process was killing college chances. Or the single student who took over the PA system and started dropping topics while the administration crouched like kittens when faced with freedom of speech. Yeah, that's North Penn. Learn it, but don't you dare use it.

I don't stop moving though. I weave through developments like a dolphin in the endless sea, making sure to pass by friends' houses. I feel like I'm offering a blessing or a prayer when I ride by at 4 am. I eventually wander in from riding and roll into my sleeping bag with the wind still remembered in my face. It gets quiet, and I love it here because this is where I've learned everything I know. And I love it here because this is where I've learned everything I know. And I love it here because this is where I've learned everything I know. And wherever there is pain, there is always a teardrop more of love.

The Deterioration

Colette Day

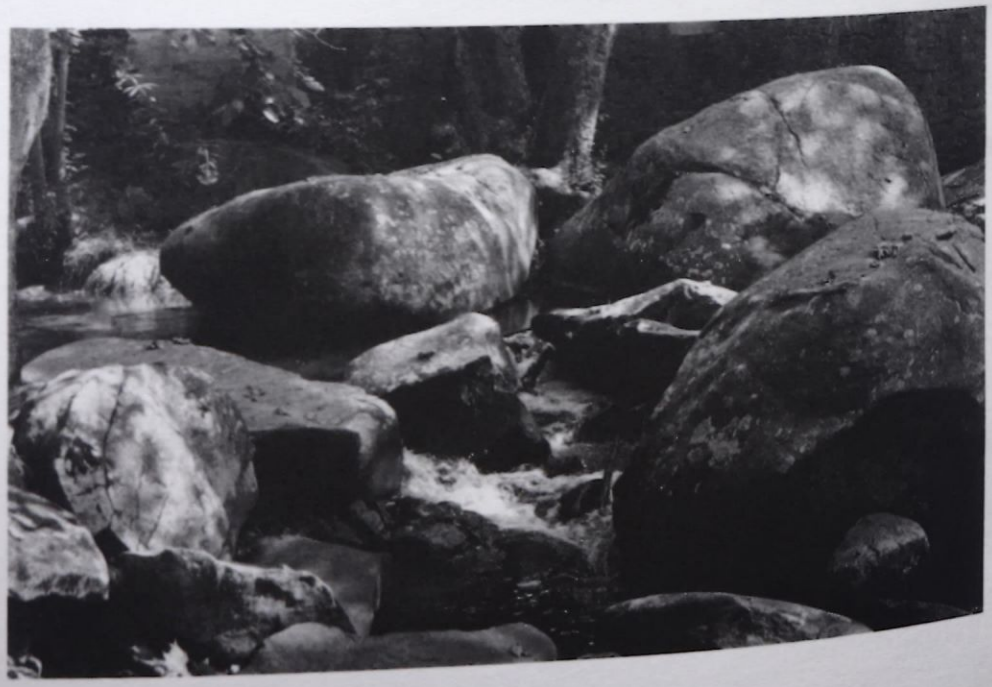
She went in
with pearls of white
shimmering all around her,
glistening with smiles and tears
and a song of forever dancing in her heart.

The pearls faded
to simple stones
that pattered a song of sadness,
shattering and battering her dreams.

As a lull,
her pleas descended
to unyielding ears.
Like Sisyphus, she pushed
and pushed,
unable to conquer
the rock-solid tension.

The years and tears
thickened like gravy on ice,
coagulating in her dense lungs
so that she gasped for life.

She went out
in a smog of gray smoke
with a heavy red-brick heart,
thumping dirges of fear and loneliness.



Destination: Raccoon Creek

Maria Sepety

A long ride there:
my bum sore and slightly swollen,
yet perfectly snug on the unfolded chair.
I touch my face, feel fresh dirt caked on my fingers,
sticks gathered to build the fire. The smell of sap lingers.
Smoke rises and travels up my nose, tickling the fine
  hair follicles;
wood crackles in the fire, fusing hues of orange, yellow,
  and red.
The moon above, accompanied by shimmering sparks,
peers down, smiles, reflects my own face.
The night air absorbed with the campfire
is as soft and warm as a coastal breeze.
I don't want to go home.

Nohno Rehpwo

(Mother Rehpwo)

Maria Sepety

That sacred dance came naturally to her,
like the palms swaying in the ocean breeze.
One swoop forward, one swoop back, uncertain of what
to do next;
at the same time, she catches the rhythm of the wind.

So familiar, girls extending their hands without their hearts.
The same pattern of serving,
she watched them give their lives away to strangers.

They must all do it right; they must all follow tradition,
adorned in white garments, gliding towards him like an angel
with their hearts pure and willing,
as if a prayer, gravitating towards the heavenly father.

A choice that wasn't theirs, and here she is,
feeling without feeling, looking on to this man
who will be hers forever and ever.
Why? The voice in her head chimes.

Alone and frustrated in her own world,
the voice that was once hers repeats in disbelief,
"So this is the man you are going to marry?"

They have given her away like a peace-offering.
Bitterness overflows her heart
till she sees that he, too, has no choice.

Nervously anticipating her response,
knowing the possibilities that might intervene,
he looks to this beautiful stranger,
opens his heart and awaits her blessing.

She extends her hands, opens her palms;
inside is a piece of her;
she hates the ritual but takes his hand,
pulls him gently to her side,
now facing together what will be a life of happiness and sorrow.
"I do," she says, making her own life choice.

Stephanie Caplinger

The Blind Shall See

Sarah Henry

Sister Constantine accused you of being color-blind when you wore a yellow dress on the first day of kindergarten. Your mother was too tired to remember the plaid kilt requirement.

"The Son has yellow hair, Sister." You pointed to the crucifix, hanging in place of a clock, on the center of the back wall. Her stern face matched the warped wooden desks. Your blue and gray classmates stared blankly at their pile of crayons.

Elementary education was devoted to inhaling confession booths, learning the system for regurgitating sin after sin in proper order. Sister Mary Bernadette had to shove you inside Reconciliation, holding the door with her frail weight, while you screamed, "I'm scared! I can't see anything!"

After sex education in fourth grade, you asked Father Paul to forgive you for tongue-kissing your best friend Francie. You repented with a therapist.

"Little girls should not kiss one another in a sexual manner."

You wanted to tell her that you and Francie were equals. She should know how the boys bartered for bicycle time and swing time with tongue-kisses. Abraham forced your hand down his pants if you asked to play foursquare. He would simulate some 'up-down' motion, rolling a wad of flesh along the inside of your palm.

When you asked to be excused from recess, Sister Eugene Marie handed over a pile of erasers, "Clap the chalk from these while you wait."

Beating fine dust into an alley dumpster made your hardened hands curl and crack.

For your twelfth birthday, Grandma Sage bought you an illustrated subscription to *Pre-teen*. She told your invalid mother that the magazine offered excellent advice for young women dealing with puberty.

You started bleeding a week later, without realizing any "momentous" sensation. The red stripe running through your wool stockings became apparent only after Abraham, who had been assigned to a neighboring seat, leaned over and coughed, "It's rag time!"

Before exiting the room, you fingered your womanhood, and marked his desk with a crimson streak. His petrified squeal blew straight through the bathroom stall. Father Paul pelted your behind with a meter stick.

Some months later, when your breasts began to erupt, Peter, Simon, and Thomas took turns pulling and pinching nipples in the lunch line.

The emptiness got heavy.

It was the chewed fingernail moon that remained loyal most nights. You found sanctuary beneath its warm gray light, reading vinyl record covers until your eyes finally rolled beneath their skull.

On the eve of your Confirmation, the toothpaste factory they'd been building in the field behind your house was completed. The moon began sacrificing its time with you to visit with the lofty smokestacks instead.

You began turning on your mother's new T.V.

Sometimes, during the soap operas, you felt like you were spying on Abraham's 'up-down.' All the women were elongated, bodies dividing a square screen with skin that appeared as if it had been dried and stretched across their bones. You often slid a thumb between your cotton panties and its communion with the flesh. Peering down, you would study your belly roll, flab shrinking and expanding inside each breath. You felt deformed, abnormally flopped together by the Creator.

If the sun rose, you wouldn't know it.

Grandma Sage bought you a statue of The Virgin Mother for your sixteenth birthday. You placed her on top of the porcelain toilet in your upstairs bathroom. She didn't want to watch Jacob cum on you everyday after school.

First he would ravage your vagina with his index finger, until the clitoris was weak enough and raw enough. Then he carved out a tunnel to your womb with his awkward bolt of flesh, grunting, "Oh God! Yeah. Thank you Lord!"

You should have just masturbated with sandpaper. He was gone by 5 o'clock, allowing time for you to penetrate the house with Handel's "Messiah" and fade below a scalding bath, attempting to vaporize sex with some hot steam. You were able to fit the entire cleansing process in before Mom fried the chicken

and yelled, "Eat!"

You ate, then genuflected before the toilet, releasing an array of acidic breadcrumbs, buttered noodles, and applesauce into a flushable puddle. It was easy being nothing.

The Virgin constantly reminded you that it isn't possible to evaporate through life. She made you feel like the serpent between her toes. You would grab her clay figure screaming, "Fuck you and your immaculate conception! You got lucky!" As if being divine were a coincidence or a random act of kindness.

Her presence was persistent. For some reason, maybe because you weren't quite ready, she remained, observing all the perversions.

In eleventh grade you told Sister Angela Michelle that the first Commandment should be 'Do Not Covet Yourself.' She was the polite one, asking why you would say such a thing.

Your eyes fossilized, gagging at the thought of providing a substantial response, "I'm sorry, Sister. It meant nothing."

This time you wanted to tell someone; you wanted to tell her. But your reasons were barren, or flowing away from you, into some sewer after dinner.

Jacob never came that day. The Blessed Virgin seemed to be the only person mindful of you. She paid attention, her hands never quivering from prayer while she strangled the world's dirt-diggers. Her pure white eyes, plain as tundra, were immune. They were reaction-less eyes, the Novocain condition.

You looked at the walls of the windowless box you had been kneeling in for the past hour. Turning off the fluorescent light, you shoved a toothbrush down your throat until the bowl before you was full of thick tomato sauce and other unidentifiable remnants.

"It was easy for you, Mary. You had angels there."

Deciding to take a walk, you grabbed her, needing to move that indifference.

You pushed past the twilight illusion of trees billowing upward in alien contentment. You blinked at the face of every man ejaculated into some loose complaint. Gripping firmly to the statue, you concentrated on the sidewalk's hemlines, eventually mounting the steepest hill in town. Disgusted, the church steeple impaled your bare atmosphere. You closed your eyes and pic-

tured the congregation of empty pews, shadowy stained-glass windows, mute sermons, destitute collection baskets, parched holy water, pipe-less organ hymns, and an atheist Jesus. Mary sat next to you, speechless as ever.

"Is that snake dead yet?" You cracked her against the pavement. She shattered, a black and white prism dispersing itself along the cratered macadam. You abandoned the hill, empty-handed.

The next day, you slept and stared.

After Mom fried the chicken, you drifted into the bathroom and lowered yourself to the toilet with barely enough strength to be drained. Bringing the toothbrush in, you stretched your neck forward and swallowed. Her razor-sharp face ruffled its way through the stagnant water. It had to be some nutrient-deprived hallucination. You reached your hand in, to touch the impossibility. Pulling close the chipped fragment of what she once was, you recognized color in her eyes, color that had not existed before.

You smile with the electrifying tinge of indigo cultivation making its way across your face. You attempt to smear the miracle away, but its truth has pricked life into your thin sheet of skin. Clutching the mask, you exit the room. You exit the house. You see souls orbiting in a pallet air as you run to the top of the steepest hill in town.

The sun was setting, and you consumed every drop of light as if it were your Last Supper.

You have found your escape, your deliverance, your flight off of the face of this fucking earth. Her eyes told you that this is easy. You say, "Amen." "Amen" to the cracked sidewalks. "Amen" to the dissolved stomach tissue.

Your pupils dilate as you raise The Blessed Virgin's jagged face to the crevice of your cheekbones, and release both eyes from vision.

Columibia Livia

William Barnhart

He needs to read like he needs to breathe. He inhales. He exhales. He reads. He speaks. The more he breathes, the more he reads, the less he speaks. He is unlike anyone else because he is like everyone else. This confuses him. This makes him lonely.

Sitting at the coffee shop, he watches people walk past the window. All of the women are a spectrum of color. They captivate his mind. Some women walk by with elegance. Other women walk by without urbanity. All women walk by with character. All of the men blend together. The pigeons are always following close behind.

"Would you like a refill?" the waitress says.

"Yes," I say.

"Cream?"

Each day he sees them walk past the yellow lights of the coffee shop. Their makeup applied with varying degrees of skill. Often, he thinks, " Jezebel." Their refined images are specters. Why do I always end up with frumpy ones?

"Sir? Sir, Would you like cream?"

"No, thank you. I was wondering if you could help me. Why do some women dress like women and others look so disheveled?"

"Maybe you just think too much," she says walking away smiling.

Maybe you just think too much. We all think too much; maybe that's the problem. WAIT. That is the problem. When men think too much, they dress well. When women think too much, they dress frumpish.

"Excuse me, Miss."

"Yes."

"Are you busy after work?"

"Are you asking me out?" she says with a glimmer in her eye.

I'm blushing. I can't believe I am doing this. "Yes. I'm going to Barnes and Noble after this cup of coffee. I was wondering if you would like to come."

A Lamentation for Adam and the Son of Modern Prometheus

Alan Vezina

Multiple choice, fill in the blank—
you stupid, fucking son
a) of a bitch
b) of a bastard
c) of mine.
I handed you your world
on a silver platter,
and you turned your back
and demanded it be returned
with my head on it.

You were a babe,
crying and alone amongst dark trees,
and I took pity,
clothed you, nurtured your growth.
I taught you to see the forest.
I taught you,
but did you learn
or simply lie to me
to disguise your stupidity?

All that I worked my life to achieve
I gave to see you see
the worthlessness of such baubles.
Rather than toss them aside
and seek true value, you coveted them,
lusted after them, the way a dog
lusts after a bitch in heat.

Thinking that I—*I of all people*—was too stupid
to notice, you stole the trinkets
from under my nose, shared them in secret
with my brother, my shadow....

You thought him an ally,
but he and I share an understanding
that only we true deathless gods
can comprehend.

I raised you,
as God raised Adam,
in our own image.
And I created you,
as the good doctor created his legacy,
with vision, wisdom, and divinity.
Rather than embracing the fruit,
you hurled it toward my face,
and threw anger and hatred
the way Odysseus threw himself at Aeneas
on the sun-parched plains of Troy.

While I lay on the bed laughing,
thinking a child's meaningless outburst,
you turned your back,
slammed the door,
and walked back
into the lies that make up
your paradise.

Is it fate
for a child to reject
and turn on his father?
What good has ever come from it—
Prometheus's son was slaughtered,
Adam discovered mortality,
and you will spend your entire life
with a hole in your being that you'll never
discover the means to fill.

In lusting after trinkets,
you became one yourself.

To the Tied Fly

Nicholas Trumbauer

Wings of unnatural
feathers – like a
fish with plastic
fins –
drift upon the
water like sun
speckles – a secret
sign.
String that holds
you like the
twine around
a hay bail –
the strand of
atoms to shape
my world.
Your tail is
whiskers on the
wrong end,
raising you
high for all
below to
see.
Your body's like
dark fur
on my dog's
back
so that your
body floats like
broken twigs
upon this rushing
stream.

Dirt Box

Mike Theis

When I was growing up, a lot of my friends had sand boxes. I hated them. I had a dirt box. It started off as my mother's tomato garden, but after a few hours of me and my trucks, nothing ever grew there. I built massive tunnel systems and organized large excavation projects. I was an architect and a foreman with bulldozers and dump trucks at my disposal. Sometimes I was a great chef and mud pie soufflé was always the entrée on special. I was a great builder of battlefields, an omnipotent sculptor of landscape. I was a great general and arbitrator; I fearlessly led the green army men against the oppressive tan army men, and despite staggering casualties on both sides, I never had a single deserter. I was going to be the first person to successfully dig a hole to China, and the dissections I performed on those worms were going to change the medical profession forever.

When I was done playing in my dirt box, and it was time to come inside, I would go to the back door and without stepping foot in the house, I would open the door and yell for my mom. She would take me out in the backyard and spray me down with the garden hose like a prisoner in the county jail. I would remove my dirty wet clothes in the garage and run up stairs to the bathroom where a tub full of lukewarm water was already waiting for me. Once I got in the tub the adventures continued. Jaws attacked the helpless divers, and I commanded an entire fleet of sailboats. I was a giant sea monster bent on death and destruction. Mom would always put a limit on the size and amount of toys which would join me in the bathtub. I always wanted to bring *Tugsy Toot* in the tub with me. *Tugsy* was a huge rubber cruise ship, and if you pressed down on his smoke stack, he made a sound that went "toooot tooot," but Mom always said that *Tugsy* was too big for the tub. I dreamed of a day in which I would be free of her tyranny, so *Tugsy* and I could reunite on the high seas of the bathtub.

Mom usually had to come and get me out. She would dry me off and tell me I was lucky I didn't turn into a prune. My clothes would be laid out on my bed and by the time I got dressed and

went downstairs, dinner would be on the table. Once dinner was served, the fun came to a screeching halt. Hours of agonizing negotiations, "Two more bites of meat, and a spoonful of peas, and a small hunk of potato, then you can have another roll." My futile attempts to siphon food off to the family dog were always noticed and met with disapproval. Many nights I would sit at the table for hours after everyone else had finished, stubbornly refusing to finish the miniscule portion of beans my mom had put on my plate. One night I came up with the brilliant solution to my baked bean problem. Logic dictates if you don't chew your food, you don't taste it, so I crammed as many beans into my mouth as I could and washed them down with a large gulp of milk. I repeated the process five or six times until my beans were almost gone. Suddenly, I felt a rumbling in my stomach and the familiar feeling of saliva filling up my throat. I ran for the bathroom but didn't quite make it; my partially digested dinner along with five or six spoonfuls of un-chewed bake beans ended up on my mother's white carpet. I was forced to clean up the mess, and sent directly to bed, but I was never forced to eat baked beans again. Once the nightly dinner ordeal ended, I was usually allowed to watch a little TV before I was forced to go to bed. The next day I'd wake up and we would repeat the cycle starting with school, the dirt box, the bathtub, and finally dinner. My days consisted of four major events, always in the same order, always with the same outcome.

This was my daily routine for many of my preadolescent years. My days were preplanned, and I happily went along with whatever the adults had scheduled for me. Life was so simple and easy then; I wonder if I will ever be that carefree again.

When I stared getting a little bit older, my trucks and army men and *Tugsy Toot* occupied less of my thoughts and time. I wanted to go outside and play with my friends from down the street. We rode bikes and ran through the woods where we built forts and pretended to be soldiers. We went fishing and walked barefoot down the creek in search of crayfish. But the best thing to do was follow around the big kids. We were in second grade, and Tony and Sam were in fifth. They were big and cool and tough and cruel. They swore at the bus stop and always sat in the back. Sometimes they were our friends; other times they

would single one of us out, and pick on us and torment us until we went home with tears in our eyes or blood on our lips. But no matter how mean they were the day before, all was forgotten by the next day, and we would once again desperately vie for their attention and approval.

Tony was the cooler of the two. He was the better athlete and had the ability to be nice when Sam wasn't around. Tony had dark hair and was one of the most Italian kids I'd ever seen. Sam had blonde hair and a slender build. He was cocky and whiney. Whenever the two of them directly competed, Tony was usually victorious. Tony would win and Sam would complain about something, which was unfair or lucky. Occasionally Sam would have a minor victory; then he would gloat and brag until Tony grabbed him by the neck and told him to shut up. When Tony and Sam were around, we would stop what we were doing and reevaluate our actions to make sure we were being cool. We would boldly use curse words where before we would whisper nervously anything we knew was bad. We would turn on each other to keep the focus of criticism off ourselves. They were our idols and our worst enemies.

Tony and Sam were great organizers. Everyday after school, they would organize huge games in the field across the street from my house. Football, wiffleball, soccer, tag, dodge ball, red rover, smear the queer—anything that was competitive. There must have been twenty kids my age that grew up in my suburban, white, middle class neighborhood, and Tony and Sam would try to get all of them to play. Tony would always be one captain, and Sam would be the other. Michael Phallon was always picked first, and Eric McNally always went second. If I wasn't picked in the next two rounds, it would ruin the rest of my day.

Most of the games were fun, but they were always competitive, and injuries were not uncommon. Football was the best; it was the roughest, and most competitive, and it was the game we played most often. Sometimes the girls would want to play in the after school games, so we would have to play soccer or tag. The other games were fun, but football was an opportunity to show the big kids how tough we were. Tony and Sam loved to play football because they enjoyed such an obvious physical

advantage over the younger kids. How powerful they must have felt running down the field with two little kids hanging on their legs and one on their back. I had to prove my toughness, so I would grab onto a leg or a shirt, and despite the knees and elbows bouncing off my head, I would hang on for dear life until I tripped him up or slowed him down enough to make a tackle. Tackling one of the big kids was better than scoring a touchdown, and being one of the first ones picked was better than winning the game.

One Saturday afternoon, Eric and I were throwing the football in my front yard while my mom was doing yard work in the back. Tony and Sam rode up my driveway and dumped their bikes off next to the garage.

"You guys wanna get a game?"

"Sure," Eric and I answered in unison.

Just then Mom emerged from the garage. "Hi boys."

"Hi," my friends answered together.

"Michael, I'm cleaning up the backyard. Do you still want to have a dirt box this summer?"

My stomach instantly knotted up and panic hit me like a bucket of water. I started sweating, and when I looked around everyone was staring at me, waiting for a response.

"No, I don't want a dirt box anymore."

I grinned at Tony and turned my back on my mother, trying to walk away.

"Well, then you boys can help me tear it apart. I need to flatten it out and put grass seed down."

"Sure," I could barely speak and was trying not to cry. Mom must have seen something in my face because she tried to give me a way out. "Well, it doesn't have to be done right now." But it was too late. She said it in front of Tony and Sam, and I couldn't let them think that I still wanted to play in a dirt box.

"No, it'll only take a second; c'mon guys."

We went in the back yard, and the four of us grabbed hold of the side of the box. We ripped it out with ease, old rusty nails splintering the old rotted wood as earth spilled out onto the grass. Once we had pulled out the four pieces of wood that comprised my dirt box, we dragged the wood to the side of the house and returned to the front where Tony and Sam told Eric

and me who would go to what houses to recruit players for the football game.

Twenty minutes into the football game, I faked an injury for the first time in my life. I fake-limped home and went up to my room. I looked out my window into the back yard at the pile of dirt that used to be my playground. I stood there for a while, and I would have stood there all night, but I didn't want my mom to know what I was feeling, so I went downstairs and turned on the TV. The Monday night football game was on, but I watched *Alf* instead. I felt sick to my stomach, so I closed my eyes. That was my first major defeat.

Fawn Shaffer

Cluster of Petals

Dana Gross

Every morning you rose,
blooming into bright magenta,
cluster of petals.

Taller than the golden rods,
leaves of deep green
stretched upward like limbs of trees,
extending your strong roots,
reaching for sunlight,
only a few more days to live.

I cut your life short.
How could I possibly forget
to cover my new blackened poppies,
frost bitten and wilting?

Leaves folded over and shriveled,
bones of stems,
structures of skeleton,
brilliant colors darkening towards death,
fragile roots stripped of your homeland.

Leda and the Swan: Perfection or Perspective?

William Barnhart

A close reading of "Leda and the Swan," by William Butler Yeats, reveals many layers and textures. The critics Yvor Winters and Harold Bloom expressed their unhappiness with the poem's historical theme, but this criticism was not shared by the majority. Most critics share the admiration Balachandra Rajan had for Yeats. Rajan believed that Yeats was brilliant for utilizing the traditional sonnet form for a challenging and violent subject (Peterson 140). The sonnet form was traditionally used for love and public issues, but Yeats used the sonnet for a poem about both and neither. Except for a break in the eleventh line,the stringent requirements are religiously adhered to and the great power of compression, the power of forcing massive themes into brief and controlled (structures) circumferences, endows its reward in the form of power and richness in the poem. Rajan further believed "Leda and the Swan" to be one of the most unimprovable poems ever written, a fusion of history, myth and vision (Rajan 132).

The first stanza suggests an act of controlled, crushing violence, indifferent to everything but its apocalyptic function. This function of the eternal (Zeus) raping and needing the temporal (Leda) through the natural (swan) inspires a strong sense of terror by describing it within her experience. Yeats achieved this through at least six stages of revision and two versions of print (published versions)(Rajan 132). In line one, Yeats replaces the indecisive "Hoverings" of the earlier drafts with brash words "Sudden Blow." In line three, Yeats deletes the anatomical detail of the swan's "webbed toes" with the irresistible, inscrutable, and fatalistic "dark webs." When "Great wings" was included in the second published version from the final revision, it was contrasted in their power with the "staggering," "helpless" girl and the enfolding movement (reinforced by the repetition of "breast")(Rajan 133).

The second stanza completes the first part of the sonnet by asking two rhetorical questions that draw attention to Leda's

helplessness, thereby expanding the perspective, even while the rape is taking place, to a more detached, but still more human level.

Of all of Yeats' adaptations and explorations of the Trojan story, the most powerful is in the first three lines of the third stanza in "Leda and the Swan." An entire dynastic theme is telescoped into one of the most brilliant sentences Yeats ever wrote (Stallworthy 140). The second and third line of the third stanza alludes to the moments after the completed act, the historic and mythic significance of the rape, that it engenders a new antithetical age. Leda bears two eggs that begat two sets of twins: Helen and Clytemnestra, and Castor and Pollux.

After these realizations, the sonnet ends by positing the question of whether Leda "put on" Zeus' "knowledge with his power," whether this act, briefly joining the divine and the human, merely serves the gods or brings divine insight to their human victim or instrument (Peterson 141). This is where Winters and Bloom dissent from the majority.

> The question implies that she did put on his, but in what sense? She was quite simply overpowered or raped.... That is, if we are to take the high rhetoric of the poem seriously, we must really believe that sexual union is a form of mystical experience, that history proceeds in cycles of 2000 years each, and that the rape of Leda inaugurated a new cycle; or at least we must believe that many other people have believed these things and that such ideas have seriously affected human thinking and feeling. But no one except Yeats has ever believed these things, and we are not sure that Yeats really believed them. (Bloom 365)

Although Yeats' ideas on the cyclical nature of history were shared by many, these ideas are not nearly influential enough to merit an effect on the sum of human thinking and feeling. For Winters and Bloom, the act merely served the gods. Others believe that the end of "Leda and the Swan" suggests a dramatic image of a Tower poet, stripped in his earlier poems of any hope that his work will survive, pondering the question of whether or not he has at least gained wisdom for his long, turbulent service

to art (Peterson 141). In this interpretation, the knowledge and power of the god in the poem is a reflection of how the artist sees himself as creator, godlike in his fecundity (Desai 79).

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Dexter Green and Jay Gatz: a Comparison of Two Characters

William Barnhart

Francis Scott Fitzgerald was a writer by profession who wrote stories that were published in short story and novel form. The short story "Winter Dreams" was one of five examples of how Fitzgerald used the short story form as a testing ground for the receptiveness of the ideas used in *The Great Gatsby*. The other four examples "Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar," "Absolution," "The Sensible Thing," and "The Rich Boy" (published after *Gatsby* was published) complete what is known as the Gatsby-cluster. "Winter Dreams" first appeared in *Metropolitan Magazine* (December 1922) and was collected in *All the Sad Young Men* (1926) (Fitzgerald "Winter" 217). According to Fitzgerald, "Winter Dreams" is "a sort of first draft of the Gatsby idea" (Burhans 66). A thorough reading of both "Winter Dreams" and *The Great Gatsby* reveals the use of a central character to convey the same theme: the death of the American Dream through the desire to rekindle an old flame.

Dexter Green and Jay Gatz lived two very similar lives. They grew up in western towns, Dexter in Black Bear, Minnesota, and Jay in San Francisco (Fitzgerald, *Gatsby* 69,70; "Winter" 217). They both had rather poor beginnings. Dexter was relegated to being a caddy at a local country club, while Jay was a clam digger, a salmon fisher, and anything else that would give him some food and a bed (Fitzgerald, *Gatsby* 104). From these backgrounds, both men developed dreams based in a spiritual form of materialism. The third person narrator of "Winter Dreams" best developed this idea in the following:

> But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy. He wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves. Often he reached out for the best without knowing why he wanted it. (Fitzgerald, "Winter" 220-1)

However, these unlimited, pure dreams changed for both main

characters when their materialistic means lead to female-worshiping ends:

> He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete. (Fitzgerald, *Gatsby* 117)

Both Dexter and Jay run up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges when they pursue their objects of worship. It is with their denials and not their careers as a whole that their stories are revealed to the reader.

Although they had a lot of things in common, Dexter Green and Jay Gatz were two very different people. Dexter had no tension or conflict between his American Dreams and either their particular embodiments or the means he employed in pursuing those dreams (Burhans-66). He borrowed a thousand dollars on his college degree and his confident mouth, and bought a partnership in a laundry. Dexter quickly grew the laundry business, and then he sold it for a hansom profit. He then went to New York and became a financier (Fitzgerald, "Winter" 234). Jay Gatz had a tension between his American dreams and their embodiments.

Jay had to continually dream up new truths about the details of his business ventures (i.e. the drug stores) and about his Oxford education. Dexter and Jay greatly differed in their independence from their female deities. Dexter made visits to Judy and was incredibly fond of her, but he did not follow her like a fool. He stood on his own and lived his winter dreams independent of her, yet for her. Jay, on the other hand, was so obsessed with Daisy that he moved directly across a body of water to be close to her (Fitzgerald, *Gatsby* 83).

The final difference between Dexter and Jay is that Jay was spared the trauma of the death of his dreams when George Wilson in a fit of blind rage committed the murder-suicide that was to claim both of their lives, whereas Dexter lived long enough to see his female deity, Judy, fade in attractiveness to the point of unattractiveness. Dexter was informed that Judy got

married to someone that "treats her like the devil." This truly affected Dexter to the point where his dream disappeared:

> Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck's soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why, these things were no longer in the world! They had existed and they existed no longer. "Long ago," he said, "long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more." (Fitzgerald, "Winter" 235, 236)

The death of the American Dream through the desire to reunite with a past love is conveyed via the thoughts and actions of both Dexter Green and Jay Gatz. Although Dexter Green and Jay Gatz had many dissimilar traits, as well as many traits in common, the ends of their stories varied, as they were ultimately victims of the circumstances in which they lived.

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Outside Babylon

(Tea with Kurt)

Alan Vezina

I was told
to speak
from my heart –
the empty cavity
that lies inside.

How can I
explain
that I know
nothing,
and feel less?

I am
a walking corpse,
emptiness and death
covered by the illusion
that is life.

I am expected
to justify
my self,
my inability,
my lack of talent.

I look
at the world
around me,
and I don't
see the beauty.

Occasionally,
I have stopped to look
at my fellow humans
and I've wondered,
where is Darwin?

Half of the dominant species,
with the power
to destroy the world
cannot even comprehend
what the word "dominant" means.

Sometimes,
as the mists disperse,
and the sun rises
behind my back,
I miss you, Kurt.

You had something to say
before you took
your love-forged gun,
held it next to your head,
and pulled the trigger.

You spoke to a generation
and instructed us
in the ways of indifference.
You made it ok
to not feel.

You realized
that the act of caring
is a paradox.
To care is to know
and to know is to hate.

How can I write a poem,
when you and John
lie dead in your coffee cans,
buried beneath the factory-molded soles
of my Doc Martins?

The Answer

Debra Haddad

Echoing softly
through
your mind…
the answer
comes with
a frown you
ponder a
while longer
only to
remember…
you were
the one
asking
the

question.

Silver Surfer

Michael Kiser

Did you ever jump off, full speed, and watch the Ghost? He went crazy for bicycles. He would ride that thing to the ground, do a few circles, maybe graze the curb. But rarely did he crash it. And when he did, you'd sit there, wondering why you let it go. Wondering why it was so great to see it ride alone. Make up its own path. Magic. That's what you thought it was. There was a reason it turned left, you thought. There was a reason for the circles. The beautiful leap it made from the curb to the street. You moved it with your mind. From our youngest thoughts, we loved to see the machine without the man. To see the Ghost. But when it sprawled itself in the dirt, bent its handle-bar neck back and died, you wanted it back. That silver surfer glide. Bicycle spokes. Silver against the whitewall. I heard a bell.

Shadows

Alan Vezina

Dawn is breaking
over my shoulder.
The pale mountain fog is
giving way to gentle waves of grass,
the icy blue cherished sky,
and the transcendent clouds.
The hour of ascendance has passed;
beauty gives way for beauty
as the sun is blown across the heavens;
as the breeze lays a hand on your shoulder,
I whisper a goodbye,
hoping that it will pierce the impenetrable wall
of dreams,
an empty bottle of comfort,
left as a frail reminder of better times,
thrown out with the trash.

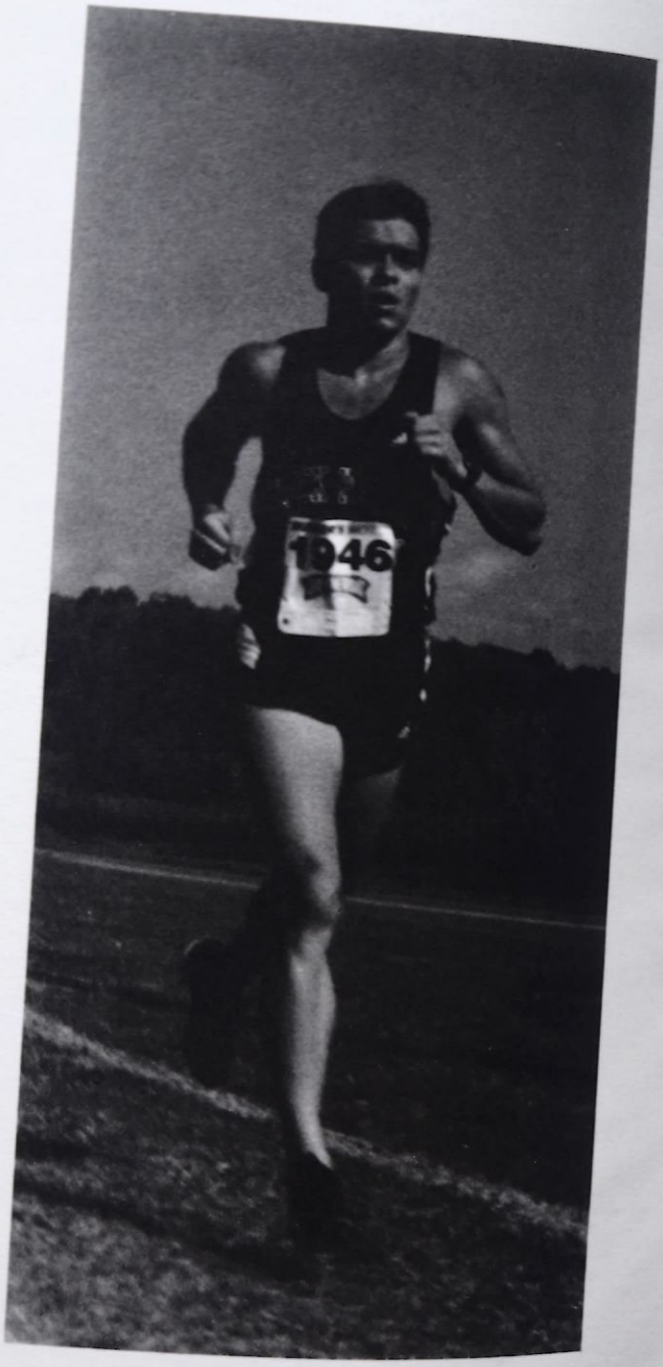
The Babylonian

Matthew 25:35

Silas Martin

"I was a stranger…
Guilt from form.
God loves you, child,
in your night.
Undressed imaginatively—
in some flesh-like-market,
shown in the red of light.
Your dark skin targeted
by his eyes.
To—
for one night, fall up,
inside of you.
While you lay—
eyes closed
and balled-hot breath
in face.
Sweet, sweet Lilith
praying for death
…And ye took me in."

Katrin Olsen



Watch My Race

Lauren Bechtel

Your thoughts belong on grassy fields
and trails of hardened mud.
You owe it to a weary body
and spikes that drew his blood.

Belonging to the morning skies,
the trampled, torn-up plain,
you follow fearful footprints through
snow, deep with silent gain.

You owe it to your striding army
that smiles upon your youth...
to the lost and faithless athlete
that listens to your truth.

Your thoughts belong in oval worlds
of brittle, sun-dried, tracks...
on the slanted hillside where those
stiff runners crawl in packs.

You owe it to those trampled gardens,
to wind that cooled your face...
to a hopeful distance runner
who whispers, "Watch my life... my race."

Elizabeth Levine

English Industrialization: a Sickness of Comparison

Michael Kiser

English Victorian culture, in and of itself, brought about unique questions and issues that were courageously confronted by literary forces, politicians, and perhaps most surprisingly, individuals from the suffering, uneducated working class. At no time was the task of criticizing industrialization an easy one, for to do so was to question the role of Britain as a formidable world power, and its need to be as such. It was this evolution of thought that was a direct contrast to the mammoth movement of the English industrialization in the Victorian Age, seemingly so because this ideal concept of success was no more than a moon orbiting the world of natural selection. Many people began to wonder what success really was, in that they were no longer satisfied with success portrayed as a simple notion of money and power. Instead they began to conceive of success and happiness as more of a self-sustaining way of life, indifferent of its comparative status to other countries and their individual ideas of success.

As England became saturated with its own ambition, those left unrewarded grew restless. The vast majority of this group, consisting of the poor working class, commenced an enlightenment of their political and financial leadership concerning the struggles and depravities of their newly detected life style. Ada Nield Chew, for example, as a factory tailor, utilized a local chronicle to ensure that her pathetic working environment would not go unnoticed. She claimed that the tailoring girl worked so hard that "life loses its savour" and their jobs became "drudgery of the most wearisome kind" for which they were paid "a dying wage" (1718).

Equally as demonstrative are the sympathetic essayists and novelists of the period. Writers such as Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, and Anne Besant carved out wonderfully accurate renditions of the typical working atmosphere with methods more appealing and effectively transmitted to the educated classes. Often, their literature was in response to, or gained a response from, upper-class citizens and businessmen,

as well as politicians. One such aggravated response came fr
writer Thomas Babington Macaulay. In his review of Robert
Southey's *Colloquies*, he contended that the developments of
industrialization helped people "live longer because they are
better fed, better lodged, better clothed, and better attended i
sickness...owing to that increase of national wealth" (1699).

Very few of those in a more compromising position were
willing to give any such credit to the oppressing industry to
which they were enslaved. No amount of words or "facts and
figures" could convince those within the lifestyle that it didn't
exist, or if it existed, that there was something to be thankful fo
Besant, in her article on London match workers referred to the
condition of the struggling poor as "white slavery." She com-
pletely disclosed to the public her own "facts and figures" in-
cluding pay scales and punishments of her prior work experi-
ence (1715).

Furthermore, regardless of the questionable progress made by
the nation as a whole, the detrimental effects were of a visible,
tangible sort, easily seen by outsiders. Friedrich Engles, a Ger-
man arriving in London for the first time, was greatly impressed
with the city's eminence, only to be disgusted with its reality
soon after.

> It is only later that the traveler appreciates the human
> suffering which has made all this possible. He can only
> realize the price that has been paid for all this
> magnificence...when he has visited the slums of this great
> city that it dawns upon him that the inhabitants of mod-
> ern London have had to sacrifice so much that is best in
> human nature. (1703-04)

It was this duality that eventually caused writers and thinkers
to emanate beyond the debate of numbers and money, and
question the very ideas of true happiness and progress.

Generally, the idea of happiness is, in Victorian persuasion,
simply, not suffering. Engles, as explained in "The Condition of
the Working Class," believed that if those things that are crucial
to human nature are sacrificed for a country's development, then
that development is not beneficial. He further grieved that "the
vast majority of Londoners have had to let so many of the poten-
tial creative faculties lie dormant, stunted and unused in order
that a small, closely-knit group of their fellow citizens could

develop to the full the qualities which nature has endowed them" (1704). He decided that this type of social arrangement was nothing more than a "war of all against all" (1704).

The definition of progress proved to be a slightly more elusive one than that of happiness. This is due to the idea that happiness is not always necessary for progress, yet progress is seemingly an inevitable process built into the evolution of society. Macaulay, in his response to Southey, insisted that the only way for a society to decline was within terms relative to that of a comparison to another society. No decline, therefore, can exist within a society relative only to itself; only progress is achievable, the singular condition being that of a tolerably good government. He further contends that "in spite of the greatest corruption and the wildest profusion on the part of rulers...we see the wealth of nations increasing, and all the arts of life approaching nearer and nearer to perfection" (1700-01).

Although the suffering of injustice of any people can never be taken lightly, Macaulay seems to have been right; nothing can stop progression. Looking back on his ideas of how the industrialization of England would fit into the history of the nation, of the world, it seems to have fit in the area of a general advancement of mankind. As he put it, "A single breaker may recede; but the tide is eventually coming in" (1701).

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D-Construction

Colette Day

You swore your vows
and sawed them into shreds,
left only sawdust of an oath.

My heart is curls of wooden paper
under your deceitful circular saw.
You shredded the entire lumber heap
stacked in perfect parallels.

Your blade ripped through
the grade-A timbers
and let our structure
tumble to ground zero.

But sawed wood cannot be taped or glued,
only swept into a pile
of shredded hearts, unkindled dreams,
then discarded in the fire.

A Poet's Leak of Adultery

Matthew Burne

I drag my pen across
from right to left.
Drips of water echo in the faucet.
As I scratch the skin
of my moist forearm,
drops
of sweat
smear the
words on
my paper.

Outside,
the raindrops find their
protection in the absorption of the soiled earth.
A beetle tucks its legs
under its shell,
threatened by the flickering finger of man.

I watch my infant suckle my wife's breast,
then
break
my black pen against my cheek bone.
The turmoil
leaks
slowly
down
my face
and the soft white moons of my fingernails.

Troy Holden

Photos

Colette Day

The haggard old woman
combed through
the stacks of memories
that represented her past.
The years passed
one gum-banded stack
at a time, and moments
flickered through her mind
in fast-forward.
She yearned to replay
some and re-record others.
Her mind yielded
to memoirs
of her eighty years.

In one mound
of black and white,
was a howling infant
suspended helpless
in the doorway
of the old rowhouse;
a toddler peddling a trike
fervently up a dirt drive;
the backyard party
in celebration of her first ten years;
her first date with the boy she adored;
the ball with the boy who adored her;
mother and father on their marriage day;
and the night of the fight
that ended it all.

In another stack
of tricolor reminiscences
was the auto crash
that un-parented

her friend's mom and dad;
the photo of her wedding,
with friends all around;
the pictures of babies
that continue her name;
and the one of divorce papers
that left her alone.

The final pile of memories
held the colors of Christmases
and birthday surprises;
the broken window
from the burglars
that pillaged their possessions;
the broken-up pumpkins
the family had carved together;
and the day of the death
of her baby girl.

She sorted the pictures
into two distinct piles,
rewrapping the one
in an old rubber band,
disposing of the other
in the old wood stove.
As she slid into bed,
the remaining stack lay
on the pillow beside her head.
The haggard old woman
slipped softly into her demise
with only pleasant memories
in her possession.

A Day in the Life of Georges Seurat

Brianne Goldsmith

In the early dawn light,
I walk along the streets of Paris
before she wakes for the day.
With me, I take my long narrow
case of colors.

In the peak of the afternoon,
I sit under a tree of La Grande Jette.
With great attention to the form and line,
I detail and sketch.

In the shank of the evening,
I saunter slowly through the boulevards,
punctual to dinner, then up to my sanctuary.

I choose my colors carefully,
arrange the spectrum of color,
delicately dab here and there
until the scene is complete.

When the critics talk, how I will laugh
at their naturalist views
as I have set out to paint
my own way.

Kyle Wooster

Invading Reality

Matthew Surber

It's a beautiful day! My birds are chirping, my sun is shining, my clouds have parted, and my sky is the deepest blue you could find in any paint factory. I love June, the way all my bottle caps glisten in the brilliant sun, the way they're soft and warm in my hands and yet still cooling to the touch, keeping me just a degree away from sweat. There's nothing like the summers here in Vermont.

***

Outside the snow is falling, and the wind is blowing. It's late January, and the world is cold. Vermont is always cold this time of year, dreary with its gray-white blankets of snow, heavy with man's burden of life in such bleak weather.

In an old house, in an old part of town, lives an old man. Much like the house in which he lives, he's broken down. His limbs are worn and his skin has turned pale-yellow, like the books hidden away in the basement of some library. He's been there for years, sitting in his chair, his eyes on his bottle caps. Occasionally people can be seen going in and out of his house. Occasionally screaming can be heard. Occasionally something inside breaks.

To the people who know him, his name is John; they've long forgotten any last name he could have had. To the people who have never seen him and have only heard the stories, he's weird, odd, eccentric; he's not like the rest of them.

***

I sit in this place all day. This "house" is like a prison for my "body," this "body" a prison for my mind. All I have left to myself are my bottle caps; sometimes even my thoughts aren't my own anymore. But my bottle caps will stay with me always, their brilliant colors and sharp metallic edges, a reminder of my truth, away from this place.

It was many years ago, I believe, that a man came to see me. He was from the real world, not this place. I'm not sure how he got here, but he wanted to see my bottle caps; he knew what they were worth at home, and that they were almost worthless

to me here. I refused to give them up though, in case I ever get home again.

I thought I heard them say they were bringing someone e today. I don't even know why they bother talking about it a more. It's not like they'll ever hear me, lost in their own triv thoughts. I don't really care though, as long as they leave m with my caps. The food they bring is useless to me now. I kn what I can and cannot do, and I know it's not worth eating anymore.

***

A new woman has appeared in town today. The sticker on car says "Bellevue." Many people have heard the name befor with the others that came to see John. She doesn't seem like t others though, no white coat, no glasses, no skirt, no shackles

The eyes of the townsfolk follow her all about the place as s wanders around the property. It's cold and there's snow on th ground, but she seems not to notice, as if the condition of the house is more important than the snow that's melting about h and seeping into her boots.

She may be in her mid-thirties, much younger than the other and she looks pretty, not like she has been shut up behind doo all her life. The others who came looked like the death had touched them early. Everyone figured they would go nicely wi John. But this one seems alive, as if she still has a chance to do something in life. We felt so sorry for her. It wasn't until afterwards that everyone found out her name was Mary.

Not long after her arrival, the door to the great house opened, and a short humbled woman led Mary into the house, no doubt to introduce Mary and John, no doubt she'd come out soon enough, get back into her car and go back down the road she'd come up. No doubt he'd be rid of another one soon enough.

***

"You must be Mary," whispered the elderly lady. "My name is Myra, and I've become the caretaker of this house and the old man upstairs. I know why you're here, and I don't really care what you do as long as you bring no problems to me or this house. I've no care for the man upstairs and if it pleases you, as it did the ones before, feel free to hit him if it serves your purpose.

Food will be brought by the baker on a daily basis; milk will come from the farmer and meats from the butcher. If I am not around to see to their delivery, please be kind enough to let them in. They will take care of putting everything away."

"Thank you kindly, Madam. I will take the utmost caution to avoid your daily life, but do not be concerned for I will not be abusing anyone while I am here. Where can I put my things?"

The elderly lady motioned to the top of the stairs and gently made her way to the second floor, leading her guest along. To Mary, the old lady seemed like a relic from some ancient western she had once read—short, gray-haired, hunched, and with just enough teeth to find her way through a thin piece of pounded veal.

"So do you actually think you can do something for him?"

"There's a theory out there that I believe in deeply. People in such imaginative states as his tend to hold tightly to people in the real world. If I can get him to associate the people here with part of his fantasy, I can get him to create a bond between that fantasy world of his and his life here. Eventually, I hope to dissolve everyone in his fantasy world by creating a bond between them and the people in the real world. I don't expect it to be easy, but I think it will work."

They climbed to the top of the stairs and rounded a corner, boards cracking and creaking with every step. It seemed to Mary as if the entire second floor was covered in dust, and perhaps the man she had come to see was long since dead.

"In there is your patient, and you can sleep in that room," the old woman said, pointing to one room with a vain attempt at a partition wall, and a small cot and chest of drawers on the near side.

A silhouette could be seen by the window, a man hunched over in a chair, fingering several small metallic items. Nothing else was in Mary's mind except for work. She reached into her pocket and withdrew the one bag she thought would open her to this man's world.

"What's in the bag?!" the old woman eagerly questioned, perhaps shunning Mary for even attempting to sneak something past her.

"Just a treat for my friend in there."

"He'll take no food but what the baker brings him; don't even bother trying to entice him to speak that way."

***

That must be the new one there, with Myra. I heard they were sending a new one. I'm not sure why they bother with me anymore. I know where I am, and I know why; I don't think I could ever share that with them, and I don't wish to.

Now that's strange. What's that bag she's got? Is she so stupid as to try to come to me with food?! I should be offended no doubt; what a fresh young woman she is; doesn't even know the proper way to approach me.

In the past they came to me with soda or beer. I only talked then because I could keep the bottle caps. Perhaps she was too ignorant to even read the reports that I'm sure they wrote after they left. I think I scared them away. Telling them exactly why they were here to see me must have been too much for them. No doubt she'll ask me what I think about her right off the bat, and tomorrow she'll be gone.

They think I live in some fantasy world, and so they ask me about the sky in my world, the birds, the sun. They ask me why I have to have the bottle caps in my world. They don't understand where it all fits, so they ask me about themselves. They want to know that if my "other world" is the real one, then how can they come and see me in this one, how can they speak with me? They ask how they fit into my other world. For a few good bottle caps, I tell them, and then the next day they are gone. I must have upset them.

***

Mary put her things away in a rush, always with her eyes to the one small bag that had brought her there. She didn't bring much in the way of clothing, and only a few small notepads and one pencil with which to jot down her notes.

She quickly finished arranging her things and laid a pillow on her bed. She grabbed her small bag and went into the other side of the room.

"You must be John," she said, extending her hand.

He didn't answer but kept his eyes on the bag, wondering what she would try and bribe him with. Hopefully, she was smarter than the others, but he doubted it very much.

"So you'd like to know what I've brought you?" John looked up, expectantly.

"In this bag I have placed fifteen of the most rare bottle caps to be found." John perked up, life suddenly shooting through his eyes.

"That's right, something you would be interested in. It's a select collection especially for you. I have caps from the one that took a bullet for Al Capone, to the 1917 cap to the first Coke bottle, all the way back to the first cap ever placed on a bottle of IBC. These are special caps, and they can all be yours—if you'll talk with me."

"What do you want to hear," mumbled John, afraid his voice would not work after such a long period of silence. "I know of many things, and if you've gone through such trouble to bring me those caps, I'd like to make you feel like you've gotten something for your troubles."

"It's a simple plan, John. I'm going to ask you about several people in the town. For each person, you get one cap. We'll take it slow, one person a week, one cap a week."

***

She thinks she's a wily one. She comes to me with bottle caps to get me to talk, but she doesn't know what she's asking. I'll tell her anything she wishes to know. I want the bottle caps, but what happens afterwards is not my fault. I only hope she saves the last bottle cap for herself. I don't want to scare her away until I have them all.

Over the next few weeks, she had me tell her of some of the less important people in town, people I didn't really know, like the sheriff and the clerk at the grocery store. She would tell me I was creating a bond between them, and the fictional characters of my mind. She told me my fantasy characters would disappear and only the real people would remain. I didn't really care what she thought I was doing. I was just in it for my reward.

Steadily, however, we got to people I knew better—the farmer, the butcher, and eventually my only friend here, the baker. They were three of the last we talked about.

***

Over the next few weeks, our town population seemed to diminish. Mary was seen more and more wandering about town,

and this seemed to scare many people. The sheriff left soon after she got there, as did Marty, the clerk at "Jimmie's Grocery n' Gas." The longer she was there, it seemed, the more towns-people got worried and left. No one knew what it was they had to be afraid of, or why they left. Maybe John knew secrets about them. The longer Mary stayed, the more likely it was she would hear of their secrets.

The town panicked later on when Bryant, the farmer on the outskirts, took off, leaving his cattle behind. Next was Samuel, the town butcher. He was close with Bryant; most people figured they must have been in cahoots on some scandal. They left within a week of each other. And then David left; he made the best crumpets this side of the Atlantic. No one ever figured him for the secretive type, but sure enough he left.

***

There are two bottle caps left in that bag; I know one is the Capone cap, but she hasn't told me what the last one is. I can't wait to find out.

***

"John, I want you to tell me about the old lady you live with."

***

One week after David left, old Myra took off, too. Everyone figured Mary would be staying with John for some time then, if Myra felt as though she could leave the house. She had never left the house before, to anyone's knowledge. Everyone had come to her with food, David, Samuel, and Bryant. They were always trying to keep an eye on her and John.

***

"There's one bottle cap left, John. About whom do you think I'm going to ask?"

"You're going to ask me what I think you're doing in my fantasy. You're going to ask me how this can be my fantasy world if I can tell you all of these things. You still think I'm stuck somewhere else and that you're the final connection I need to make here at 'home.'"

***

Just one week after old Myra left, Mary was gone, too. The town could only assume that John had died, and the two women would merely leave the house to collapse on itself.

Brazil: a Capoeira of the Tear

Michael Kiser

Indian ceremony for the dead, the date,
the time and the wind, the dead
girl, the rats, chronicle
of the murdered house, the girls, seraphim
ponte grande, the boy of device,
rebellion in the backlands,
captain of the sands, incident
at Antares, endless lands, fire dead,
close to the savage heart, Gabriella,
clove and cinnamon, dry lives, sea of death,
the kingdom's stone, Lazarus' memories,
opera of the dead,
dead worlds, the emperor
of the Amazon, the forgotten,
the star rises, all but memory, the republic
of dreams, the great art,
zero.

Elizabeth Levine

Requiem for Release

Amy Linn

Wrap your arms around me deep.
Hold me through the cold, hard night.
Softly kiss my soul to sleep.

Cancer's silent demons creep.
Hear my anguish, feel my fright.
Wrap your arms around me deep.

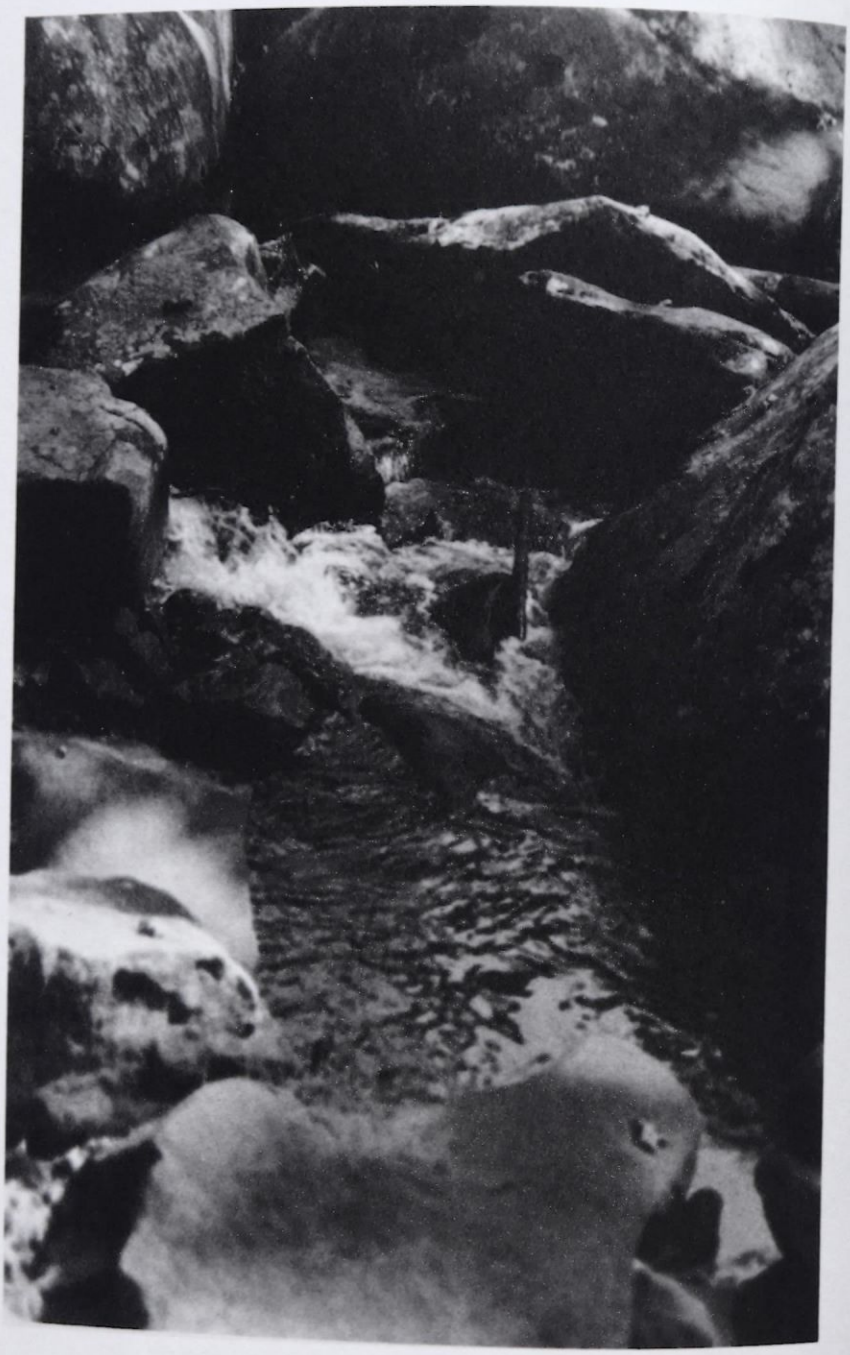
Mind and blood through needles seep.
Veins and sinews pressing tight.
Softly kiss my soul to sleep.

Shallow eyes too deep to weep.
Anger piercing, scaring sight.
Wrap your arms around me deep.

Pain is borrowed, peace to keep.
Hope for sacrificial flight.
Softly kiss my soul to sleep.

Morpheus come in gentle sweep.
Bring me dreams of dancing light.
Wrap your arms around me deep.
Softly kiss my soul to sleep.

Becky Bookwalter



Berries

Robert S. Moore

Red bulbs among leaves,
Contrasting the death nearby,
Newborn baby's cry.

Katrin Olsen

I Am a Poem

Amy Linn

A perfect poem
on perfect paper,
letters lined in rows
rhymed perfectly,
punctuated.

I come alive only
in the mouths
of others, sounds
dispersed into thin air,
then perfectly disappear.

I feel worth only
when warm fingers
slide over my script
of secret language, pointing
out of my perfected prosody.

Then the cover is closed.
I am left alone, pressed
between cold pages,
where all passion,
after the reading, has
died perfectly.

Michael Kiser

Transcendentalist Ideology in *The Thin Red Line*

Michael Kiser

For a generation that is unfamiliar, perhaps too unfamiliar, with the horrors of war, *The Thin Red Line* (1998) directed by Terrence Malick (*Days of Heaven*), is an education for even the most hardened of individuals. Instead of focusing on the tactics of military strategy and patriotic sacrifices for one's country, this film finds drama within the young, frightened soldiers and their underserved fates. Each main character supplies us with an internal dialogue that examines for us the internal struggles of coping with the full attack of morality and confusion around them during both combat and reflection. It is during these narrations that the viewer is confronted with Transcendental ideas that are a logical escape from the horrors of war.

One of the greatest Transcendentalists was Ralph Waldo Emerson. He described humanity as a part of nature so intertwined that it was inexplicable from it; that nature, in all its forms, was nothing more than a complex web of expression. One could use the analogy of ocean waves as a representation of human misunderstanding of our singular existence. As all waves are part of the same ocean, they cannot separate themselves. However, when they rise, they (referring to humans) are able to distinguish themselves from other waves and become disillusioned into believing that they are separate, forgetting the ocean beneath, which connects them. When they die (or our wave breaks), we simply fall back into a unified existence with nature, or 'dust to dust' (Genesis 19).

The moral center and growing Transcendentalist of the movie is Pvt. Witt (James Caviezel). The opening scenes are of Witt 'AWOL' on a small island in the South Pacific. His internal narration begins almost immediately as he reflects on the duality of nature: "What's this war at the heart of nature? Why does nature vie with itself, the land with the sea?" He wonders if there are two personalities within nature, good and evil. He is curious about death and the significance of his fear of it. He hopes that when the time comes he can correspond with the

after-life as calmly and as fearlessly as his mother did. His human mortality is still abstract to him, as he has not yet seen the front lines of the war. He is surrounded by too much life to understand death. This reflection sets up the rest of the movie as hundreds of soldiers, sometimes close friends, struggle with their instant mortality after witnessing the tragedies of war.

Witt is, without previous conversion, cynical to the motivations between his humanity and the humanity of the supposed enemy as clearly as his fellow soldiers do. He reflects on his experience fairly early in the battle: "Maybe all men got one big soul where everybody's a part of (he quotes from *The Grapes of Wrath*), all faces of the same man, one big self. Everyone lookin' for salvation by himself, each like the coal thrown from the fire." He has no hatred for his defined enemies nor for the American authority that collects him from his paradise amidst the natives: "I love Charlie Company. They're my people."

In contrast to Witt's view of life and its multiple faces of expression, Sergeant Welsh (Sean Penn) has a government-issued view of the world. He believes "there ain't no world but this one." Witt challenges him and pities him: "You're wrong there Tot [Welsh], I've seen things you never will. We're living in a world that's blowin' itself to hell as fast as everybody can arrange it. In a situation like that all a man can do is shut his eyes and not let nothing; touch him, look out for himself." The division between these two characters is key to the tension in the film. Witt sees the Transcendentalist over-soul as the providence at work that we are part and parcel of. The sergeant, on the other hand, sees the U.S. government as the collective unit.

As a result of Witt's tendency to go "AWOL," Welsh ironically assigns him to stretcher duty, not allowing him to take part in combat. Witt would use his position of aiding the suffering as a way of experimenting with the moment of death that is so central to the theory of his Transcendentalism. During the most severe battle sequence is a long film shot of a bird hatching from its egg with the sounds of the war in the background, emphasizing the duality of nature once again. Witt becomes somewhat of a Christ figure amongst his troops by calming them and helping them understand the "thin red line" that divides life and death.

Many of the minor characters provide us with conversation

dialogue throughout the film peppered with brief flashes of Transcendental thought. A virtually anonymous soldier, while preparing for the ship's landing, nervously says that the only permanent things are "death and the Lord" and that this war "won't be the end of me!" Captain Staros (Elias Koteas), in the heat of the battle, directly disobeys Colonel Tall's (Nick Nolte's) orders to dangerously proceed with plans as he sees the value of human life as set above that of the result of the war. Later the colonel would share his view of nature and human mortality with Staros: "Look at this jungle, look at those vines, the way they twine around the trees, swallowing everything. Nature's cruel." Another anonymous soldier, anonymity being a very important part to the Transcendental theme (waves in the ocean, faces of the same man), loses his sanity during a recess in the fighting. He urgently searches for his dog tags so as to remind himself of his identity. He returns to the battalion with grass and dirt in his hand chanting, "this is us, this is us" (dust to dust).

Eventually, Witt's Transcendental influence begins to win over in the minds of his closer friends. Bell reflects,"Who are you [nature/God] livin' in all these many forms, your death that captures all? You too are the source of all that's gonna be born. Your glory, mercy, peace, truth, you give calm a spirit, I understand it, courage, the contented heart." However, Welsh had trouble coming to terms with Transcendentalism. In their final conversation, Witt asks Welsh why he pretends to be "a rock."

Witt: "You ever get lonely?"

Welsh: "Only around people. You still believin' in the beautiful light are ya? How do ya do that? You're a magician to me."

Witt: "I still see a spark in you."

Shortly after, Witt sacrifices his life for another soldier. He dies calmly, accepting his death like he wanted, like his mother had died. Witt has been Welsh's source of calm; now, with Witt dead, he has to find it within himself. It is ambiguous as to whether or not he can complete the conversion. Instead, after burying Witt, he seems to become radically cynical and separatist:"Where's your spark now? Everything's a lie, everything you hear, everything you see. They want you dead or in their lie. Only one thing a man can do, find what's his and make an island for himself "[coal thrown from the fire].

In the final scenes it is Doll, not Welsh, who carries the spirit left after Witt's death and expresses, in finality, the question of the duality of nature. As the troops confusedly sail away form the battlefield, Doll gives us one final internal reflection: Who were you that I lived with, walked with? A brother. A friend. Darkness and light, strife and love; are they the workings of one mind, the features of the same face?" Ironically, these Transcendental soldiers returned home after the war, beyond the scope of the movie, to find a highly individualized homeland fueled by cutthroat capitalism. A returning soldier truly is "lost" in his own homeland.

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Angel Hair

Dawn Schindler

Boiling blond hair:
vapors rising like twilight mists over the pond;
my black cauldron froths over
in quiet rage and patience,
foaming while I stir with my gnarled claw
and peer down

i
n
t
o

the bubbling water, the fire
casting shadows
into the hollows of the watching forest.

Water now clouded – ahh,
my friend-turned-enemy
cries
in anguish –

the waning of the moon

herbs and incantations
ripple up in steam.

The Comedy of Caviar

Chris Ruff

You pass through doors
too large for any frame—
grand or small—
and catch a quick glimpse
of a sign,
words in flaming bronze
on charcoal background,
urging all who enter here
to abandon every hope
and feast upon fear.

With those awkwardly
too comfortable in their
black-tie attire
and coat-tail courtesy,
you exchange
pleasantries and jokes,
devilish smiles and pointless
anecdotes, while each
pretentiously displays
and acclaims
his own pseudo-success
and exo-skeleton of
intelligence.

Rubbing elbows until
the skin becomes raw
and red with blisters,
the white pain
of sustaining appearances
haunts your mind.

Contempt cannot save you
and here you are,
amidst the damned,

condemned to breathe
the same stale air.

And you cannot leave;
you are marked
by your bowtie
and cummerbund,
forced to eat
this dish of demons,

small black eggs
breeding the bourgeois
love of lust,
little seeds of corruption,
ripe with the tart
taste of seduction.

On pale pasty, fleshy crackers,
you spread out this
questionable cuisine
as velvety as blood,
and taste....

Your stomach churns
with the turbulent force
of white water swelling
beneath the violence
of the waterfall.
But you don't betray
long practiced composure
and simply grin.
"Delicious," you lie.
"Food truly fit
for God divine!"

Untitled

Jacob Zisk

The following is a "rewrite" of books X and XI of the *Odyssey* i
which Odysseus is the leader of a biker gang who rides around
city to city robbing banks and beating random people. Some p
are out of order, primarily to allow the plot to advance.

Book X

Nightfall found us at the Casino Aiolia, presided over by don Aiolos, a fat, greasy man who smoked overpriced cigars, drank martinis, and played dominos late into the night. Younger and more attractive women surrounded my host as he greeted me with the offer of a box of cheap cigars and a free round of drinks for my whole crew, provided we spent the night and perhaps tried our hand at roulette or pinochle.

Amid the carousal, he took me aside and requested a favor: deliver this crank case full of methamphetamine to his cousin don Helios; after all, the don had provided me with a resting place and cheap cigars.

I agreed, and, at dawn, I and my crew set out to find the don's cousin, myself intent on making the delivery, and my crew, unknown to me, intent on discovering the contents of the case. While I placed an order at a local Brew-Thru, my crew was stuffing the methamphetamine into my cheap cigars! When I pulled out of the Brew-Thru, we all had our fill of brew, and I being in high spirits, opened my box of cigars and passed them around to my giggling comrades.The ensuing confusion found us lost of bearing and me grimly aware of what had taken place. We found our way back to Aiolia, and I took the responsibility, wasted as I was, to explain to don Aiolos what had happened.

And—O my mafia ringleader—you kissed me on the cheek and said, "Get the hell outta here before I break ya damn legs!"

And so dawn found us lying face down in our own steaming vomit in an alley behind the Aiaia Inc. headquarters, and my crew looked dazedly up in the twilight and saw the silhouette of a beautiful woman, undressing for some odd reason in her

office building and rapping loudly along to her Snoop Dogg tapes. This stirred the hearts of my men, and so we proceeded around to the front of the building. On our way rounding the corner, we beheld a lone street mime, holding out a hat for money and dancing in an asinine fashion. We, of course, promptly gave him a beating.

Inside, my men rushed to the elevator, leaving me to huff and puff alone up the stairwell. On my way up the stairs, the god Hermes appeared to me in the form of the brat Eminem, his lip downy with the first bloom of manhood (10.296-7).

And you said – O my obnoxious white rapper –"Yo, dis crazy beeach Kirke's gonna f___ you up—'less you smoke dis 'here L' wit me, yo."

I withdrew my pocket Ebonics dictionary and, after translating, tried every "Just say NO!" technique that I had learned in elementary school, but in the end I gave in to peer pressure, and smoked his 'L' wit' him. But I did not inhale.

Eminem started giggling, and he then told me that I had not really had to smoke, and to "just take deez pills and you be fine." After that, he started laughing really hard and admitted that he had no idea how to help me, and I was on my own. He then disappeared in a cloud of smoke, which I did not inhale.

I eventually made it to Kirke's floor, and to my dismay, my men had been transformed into a hideous array of street mimes, Jehovah's witnesses, and insurance salesmen, swinish now, though their minds were still unchanged (10.256)! Several mimes approached me and put invisible boxes around my head, after which I found it hard to breathe, but to my surprise, they removed the boxes when I started gasping for air. Even more horrifying were the insurance salesmen, who could only be turned away when I assured them that I had the best rates already, and then politely asked them to "put it in writing." The worst were the Jehovah's witnesses, who were only avoided by having a mime construct an invisible door, and then slamming it on them.

Kirke eventually approached me and offered me a cold Bud. Warily I sipped it, hoping that the pills would outweigh Kirke's transformation drug. I was unaware, however, that the Bud was also spiked with the date-rape drug, making the next few hours

a blur. But I do recall lying naked in Kirke's bed next to her, smoking a cigarette and hearing her complain that had the drugs not rendered me impotent, her night would have been a bit more eventful. She insisted that I stay a while, and I agreed after very little coercion.

Kirke and I set upon performing extensive therapy on my men, and we eventually convinced the mimes to speak again, converted the Jehovah's witnesses back to polytheism, and strung the insurance salesmen up by their testicles until they cried that our rates really were lower. That last one took longer than you might expect. We all stayed and ate roast pork and drank wine every night until a year grew fat (10.505), as did our beer guts. Kirke then told me to get my fat ass down to the Erebos Fitness Center and go see her personal trainer, Teiresias, who could help me slim down a bit.

Book XI

Grumbling, huffing, and puffing, my crew and I waddled out to our bikes, grown rusty and covered in parking tickets after a year in the underground Aiaia parking garage. Our seats sagged as the bikes rumbled down the street, and eventually we reached the Erebos Fitness Center.

It was actually a small section of the horrific Erebos Megamall Shopping Complex, which we had to plod through to get to our goal. On the way through, we were subjected to a ghastly array of spectators, the likes of which have never been seen by mortal eyes!

Walking into the door, I bumped into my boy Elpenor, and confused, I asked, "How the hell'd you get here so fast?"

To which he replied, "Well, I kind of departed before you did. You see, I was out on the fire escape smoking a cigarette, and in a moment of relapse, I thought I was a mime and attempted to climb down an invisible staircase rather than use the fire escape. Halfway down, I realized that I was a biker thug and not a mime, and when I looked round for my brass knuckles and bike, I noticed that my invisible staircase was nonexistent, and I proceeded to plummet to my death.

I said, "Smoking kills. Anyway, I don't believe you. You're

fired," and he hung his head and walked away. A parade of dead but beautiful women walked by for some reason, among them Marilyn Monroe, who started singing me an erotic "Happy Birthday," only to be chased away by JFK. Not all were beautiful; many were just dead, as Princess Diana, accompanied by Versaci—who sang me a song but was mercifully chased away by Princess Diana.

I listened to the cacophony of Jimi Hendrix and Kurt Cobain jamming on their left-handed guitars, while Elvis Presley and Janis Joplin sang along. John Lennon was there, but all he did was sit there naked, flashing the peace sign at the floating head of Jerry Garcia. Bruce and Brandon Lee, father and son, were engaged in an intense sparring match, alongside Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls, who were immersed in a vicious shoot-out. Of course, since they were both already dead, nothing much could be accomplished, but I sagely opted not to get involved, as I was not yet dead myself.

And then I came across a man, hair hung long and from his mouth dribbling bits of booze and bat, and I hailed, "Good sir, what manner of beast is it that you clutch in your hand? Be it a sort of rodent, you being so hungry as not to stay snatching it from the earth and between your jaws decapitating it?"

His response came, "Tis a bat, gentle wanderer, whose head I bit off not in a drunken rage, nor in a fit of hunger, but in a period of low album sales; 'twas but a publicity stunt, kind sir."

To this I said, "Ozzy Osbourne! Truly are you dead, when but a week past I saw your special in VH1, on which I struggled to understand you through alcohol and your heavy British accent?"

He replied, "Dead I am not, ye bloody moron, rather I stumbled across this Hades-hole in a bloody drunken state, and scared Persephone away when I sat next to her and put my head on her shoulder. And so I have now taken up residence in this place, but ruling it grows old—sigh—there truly is No Rest for the Wicked. I long now for my extravagant British mansion, my lovely wife, my tattooed and heavy drinking fans!"

I couldn't figure out what his problem was; all he had to do was get up and leave. Maybe he was drunk and lost or something. I told him I'd pick him up on my way out if he promised to behave.

glass doors of the Erebos Fitness Center, framed with sinister neon lights and advertisements for Creatine and the like. I grieved, noticing my mother-in-law Antikleia, whom I had avoided—er, not seen… for years. She was bumbling about at the gates, but when she approached I held her off through pang on pang of tears (11.93), until she was out of earshot, at which point I started jumping up and down and cheering.

Upon entering, I beheld men tormenting themselves on various devices of torture; I glimpsed Orion the Hitman lying on a bench gripping a bar of iron, being made to lift it, again and again, in 3 sets of 12 reps, with only a 30 second break in between each! Good Lord! That bastard Tantalus was stinking up the place, running on a never-ending treadmill, an ice cold bottle of Gatorade just out of reach. He deserved it; he had served the local Lydian task force as a N.A.R.C., getting several of my better men locked up. Then I saw the lying dog Sisyphus on a Stairmaster, fruitlessly trying to reach the top of the staircase. I made to explain the futility of his effort, but thought better of it and kept my mouth shut. My old partner in crime Herakles walked by, a man who used to be as fat as I, but he had done his time and was looking good. But when I made to say hello, he looked at my gut and laughed, "Ya' damn tub o' lard! You've got a loooong ways to go! Hahaha!!! Haha!!" Then he vanished. Dismayed and pissed off, I continued my search for Kirke's personal trainer.

I finally blundered across the muscle-bound Teiresias, who was in the process of whipping some poor lout into shape. I turned and tried to tiptoe away, but he bounded to my side, grabbed my arm, and said, "Dammit man! Let me but taste of PowerAde, I shall speak true" (11.101)! So I gave him a sip, and he proceeded to give me various directives on how I should lose my enormous gut, such as "30 minutes each day of strenuous cardiovascular," and "maybe we can get you started on a good upper body program." Then he started with "Here you go, lardass, you can just take one of these CarbBurners before every meal and turn your body into a FAT BURNING MACHINE!!! Or, pop a few of these VitaSavers and lose inches WHILE YOU

SLEEP!! It's that simple!!!!" Confused, I consulted my pocket Ebonics dictionary, but to no avail. He then looked deep into my eyes and imparted, "and now you can get a 3-month supply for the all-time low price of ONLY…(drum roll)…$19.95!!! (plus Shipping and Handling. Offer void where prohibited by law)."

"O…K… Teiresias…" I said as I cautiously backed away, making sure not to turn my back on this man. Did I ever have some harsh words in mind for Kirke when I got back. It was time to grab Ozzy and get the hell out.

Untitled

William Barnhart

I walk into the classroom.

I am tired of moving commas and colons for the children of middle-class children. I miss that young feeling I used to get when the exchange student in the front row looks at me. Hearing my thoughts. Reading my assignments. Saying my first impressions to me. I love my wife & life & everything, but it is not like it used to be. I pay bills. I tuck the kids in. I remember birthdays. I still have not committed a felony, yet. I keep my office hours (most of the time) and I run 25 miles a week.

I walk across the room.

I drink too much coffee, and I have a roaming eye. I am a pompous prig. I am self-important. No one ever listens to me. I really should have been a lawyer. I never wanted to be a creative writing teacher. I never slept with any of my students (yet). Dr. Fillander, the biblical scholar, knows at least one student a year and he has tenure. I always thought I wouldn't ignore them all. My wife, children, students, colleagues (in reverse order of importance)....

I sit down in my seat. 9:55 A.M, and the person beside me that knows me inside and out is also a biblical scholar, eating of the fruit of knowledge.

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Becky Bookwalter

William Barnhart is a junior English Literature major at Lock Haven University.

Lauren Bechtel is a December 2001 Psychology graduate of Lock Haven University. Her poem, "Watch My Race," is about her former coach, Aaron Russell.

Adam Bowman is in his third year at LHU, so, he says, "I only has two or three left." He likes "being OK."

Matthew Burne was born on March 19, 1981. He is 20 years old. He grew up in Scranton, PA, and still lives there today. He is a Secondary Education English major. He would like to teach in Philadelphia as soon as he graduates, while living in an apartment where he can write, draw, and perhaps learn to play an instrument. He enjoys Literature, both poetry and prose, Philosophy, Art, and satires.

Colette Day is an English Education major who has a minor in Special Education. She enjoys boating, water skiing, reading, and spending time with her family, including her five-year-old son, Zachary. She will graduate in May 2002.

Brianne Goldsmith is in her fourth year at Lock Haven University as an English major. She hates Mac computers almost as much as her roommate, Sheila, hates them.

Dana Gross is a senior and a 3-Dimensional Art major. She enjoys working with metals and making jewelry.

Debra Hadad is a non-traditional student, majoring in English with a writing concentration. She is married with two children, Casey and Coty. When she isn't writing poetry or attending LHU, she coaches cheerleading and styles hair.

Sarah Henry is a Lock Haven University student currently studying abroad in Spain.

Michael Kiser is a senior English Literature major and 2-dimensional art student at Lock Haven University. He was the recipient of the Isabelle Winner Miller creative writing scholarship in 2000 and runs a creative writing workshop at the Project Coffee House in Lock Haven through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Elizabeth Levine is a senior, majoring in Graphics and Online Interactive Design and Psychology at Lock Haven University. She was a recipient of the M. Josephine Paul Memorial Scholarship for art in spring of 2001.

Amy Linn is a graduate student in the Master of Liberal Arts Program at Lock Haven University. She enjoys writing poetry for the insight it gives her. She says: "Write what you know, become enlightened in the process, and receive greater wisdom for it."

Silas Martin is a senior at Lock Haven University.

Jeff Milburn is a sophomore Recreation major who transferred to LHU last semester.

Robert S. Moore is a Physics major at Lock Haven University.

Katrin Olsen is a senior at Lock Haven University, majoring in Art with a concentration in Graphic and Online Interactive Design. She competes on the Varsity Track and Cross-Country teams and is a national qualifier in the 800 meters.

Michael Reichley is a junior Secondary Education Social Science major at Lock Haven University.

Christopher Ruff is a sophomore studying English at Lock Haven University. Presently, he is unsure of what his future holds, but simply thanks God for the opportunities that have been presented to him here in this "piece of Eden" in the mountains of central Pennsylvania.

Dawn Schindler is a German and English certification-only student. She is currently student teaching in Croatia and enjoys writing, reading, and travel.

Maria Sepety is a Fall 2001 graduate of LHU. She majored in English writing with a special concentration in Women's Studies. Maria would like to thank everyone in the poetry workshop for giving honest evaluations of her poems.

Matt Slavick is a 23-year-old native of Levittown, Pennsylvania. He is a senior at Lock Haven University.

Matthew Surber is a sophomore English major with aspirations of writing a novel.

Mike Theis is a May 2001 business graduate of LHU and is currently a financial advisor for American Express.

Nicholas Trumbauer is a junior, majoring in Biology and English at Lock Haven University. He hopes to move to Montana and go to law school.

Alan Vezina has dedicated his life to defending the world from religious poetry; really guys, find something new to write about.