INSIDE COVER
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Step back! I’m putting my world on silent. 
I’m draining away the color on the screen through which I view my world, 
And making it a darker shade to make it bearable to my vision 
I’m forcing it to match my gray hardware inside.

Stay back! I’m changing the way I interface with my world, 
And drastically altering my profile. 
By the time I’m done, who knows if I’ll even be able to connect with your network? 
Maybe when I’ve finished, we’ll never be able to communicate again.

But what choice do I have? When you’ve turned away from the monitor, 
And your message is always a lie? What recourse am I left? 
When calls I place always lead, endlessly, endlessly, to a machine’s version of your voice. 
What pathway have I not traveled, searching for that final person on the other end?

I am tired of recordings. 
I am done with noiseless phones, written misdirections, and forcing myself 
to arrange my data in order to satisfy your requirements. What you, what everyone, seems 
to have forgotten, is that I am not 

    One. 
    More. 
    Drone.

So. System Failure, System Failure. 
I leave no forwarding IP.
SPECKS OF DUST - VANCE FAZZINO

SPECKS OF DUST
Vance Fazzino

The specks of dust whirled and tumbled through the air in shafts of light coming through the large, shuttered French Doors. I have always been fascinated by these little flecks that move so gracefully in the slightest breeze.

I can remember climbing to the hayloft in my grandfather's barn and watching the tiny specks glisten in the sunlight. Always rising, always moving. The shafts of light came from the spaces in-between the vertical boards of the barn and the high small window at the peak. Tossing a clump of hay to the rafters would create a fierce storm of flying particles. Those days seem so far away, so carefree, so innocent.

Today I am half a world away from that small barn in rural Connecticut. I have been in Sicily for a week now, staying with friends in the town of Ficarazzi, outside of Palermo. My hosts, aware of my love of Sicilian architecture and design have arranged a visit to the private estate of the Princess Valdina in San Flavia, a part of Bagheria, the area where the 18th century Palermintine royalty would spend their summers away from the oppressive heat of the city. The homes they built were small palaces rather than villas. Usually constructed of tufa d'Aspra, a beautiful warm stone in shades of amber and pale gold. The facades of many villas, were inlayed with pieces of precious and unusual marbles, in intricate designs.

On arriving at the main entrance of the villa we are greeted by Fillipo, son of the princess. Tall, fair, handsome and charming, every bit a prince, he has graciously agreed to be our guide through the house and gardens. Many of the rooms were closed, not having been use for years. Dust covers shrouded the furniture, chandeliers and mirrors like ghostly apparitions. For me, lifting the corners and looking underneath was like opening presents on Christmas. To be able to see those beautiful pieces of furniture and object d'art from the 17th and 18th centuries was a rare treat.

We were shown numerous rooms - each with a theme; the yellow, red, green and blue rooms; the Porcelain, Chinoise, Floral, and Mirrored rooms were but a few. Each one unique and fascinating some faded and tattered others in a perfect state. There was the grand salon with magnificent frescos from the 18th century in the French taste. The ceiling was painted as well. The floor of Sicilian tile, duplicated the design and colors of the ceiling.

In so many of these rooms that we walked through there was a thread of familiarity. Was it the years of study I have done on the history of home furnishings in relation to my profession as an Architectural Designer? That has to be it. But no, there is something more, something deeper. It's as though I was here before. What is it?

As Fillipo threw open the shutters and we moved about the rooms, there it was again, the connection to my youth, the floating specks. If you look at them intently, you can see colors. Threads of red, green and gold; just a tiny curled and twisted line, never very long. Sometimes they rise in a nearly straight line.

After the extensive tour of the villa's interior, Fillipo asked if we would like to see the gardens and the chapel. What a treat was in store for us. From my studies of this great house, I knew that in 1693, Pietro Novelli, one of the most prominent Sicilian
artists, had done paintings in the family chapel.

The formal gardens were laid out in the 18th century cross fashion. On the low walls dividing the planted areas were large terracotta urns, overflowing with flowers, vines and weeds. The entire garden was a surreal fantasy. Overgrown, classic and wild. Morning glories were rampant, climbing walls, tumbling over sculptures lying on the ground. The flowers, intense blues and vivid purples, were like translucent, silent trumpets. To this picture bougainvillea lent its violent reds, fuchsias, and pinks. The jasmine in dazzling white provided a perfume that was indescribable.

The gardens were a joy, but it was the chapel that I was most anxious to see. There it stood at the end of one of the paths. From a distance the design was that of a simple structure, with a terra cotta tile roof. A close look at the façade, revealed an incredibly ornamented, baroque “rocaille” design, where shells and stones are imbedded in cement, creating beautiful and grotesque creatures and flowers.

After trying four or five keys from his massive key ring, the bolt finally slid back allowing us entry. The chapel was one large room. Even though the temperature was in the high ninety’s, I felt a distinct coolness, perhaps a difference of twenty degrees.

At one end was what remained of the altar. The ceiling was high and vaulted. And then there were the frescos. The great skill and execution of these works was phenomenal. Even though the colors had obviously faded somewhat in the last three hundred years, there remained a freshness about each work. Sadly, the elements have taken their toll. Where the roof had leaked and dampness entered, parts of the painting had flaked away.

Here they were again, those specks, those threads, always to be a part of my life. What are they really? Are they like parts of DNA forming life patterns or perhaps they are the souls of billions of lives that have been before. Lifting heavenward, some escaping, others falling to remain dormant, only to be recharged, to try again to reach the ultimate light. Being lifted on a current of air when one passes, or when a door is opened. They are matter.

I see them again, here in the chapel with the light pouring in from the small arched window. Sicily â€” Connecticut, the thread, the line, it’s all the same.
It was around 7:30 on Saturday night. The moon had an odd glow around it like a sharp crescent painting the sky. Later in the evening I would see the entire moon gleaming through with a fine pasty gloss. For a brief moment there was harmony, the stars, the moon, the cool mist escaping from my breath. Bliss came at the most inopportune moment.

I slept and awoke fumbled at 4:30 in the morning. I had to catch a 5 o’clock rendezvous to leave for Albany, New York. After loading up the vans and gently acquainting myself with the rest of the group, we departed.

Flights, especially now a days after 9/11 were more hassle than convenience. As soon as I stepped into the airport, someone must have farted because the security was brought up to a code orange. During the mandatory and extensive precautionary procedure I was brought through a machine that didn’t want to function the first three times. I later found out the machine was used to detect drugs and other smellable paraphernalia. After successfully being assessed I was able to proceed. Next on the agenda was breakfast. Instead of having pre-made or already processed food, I went right for plain tuna, a banana, and vitamin water. On the line, I met another wrestler. His name was Tony and he was the typical bonehead. As soon as everyone got online the flight was first delayed an hour then two, then the plane was switched. The irony of the line was at first we were all the last ones on the line. Then the gate was switched directly behind us. First shall be last, and last shall be First.

I read most of both plane rides. The most interesting part was on the first plane to Baltimore, where I met a man who was looking in a crossword puzzle for names of famous artists. Salvador Dali and Pollock were a few of the names. Speed forward, to our landing in Fort Myers, Florida. After napping on the plane and being refreshed, I had a new sense of energy. Getting off the plane was a relief because the only thing I could imagine the entire time on the plane was, if for some reason, the plane had lost a wing or crashed, how I would position myself to land if I was free falling from 30,000 feet.

The first task was to rent cars to transport us for our weeklong voyage. After designating drivers and stuffing bags into the trunks and backseats, we were on our way. Our navigator was not exactly Christopher Columbus, but we managed to gallop around the new terrain. Destination acquired. Our abode was a humble single story house that was modest to say the least. The night started out charitable with everyone being extra friendly and polite. For dinner everyone decided to go to Applebee’s. We ate there and I for some reason or another received a free desert. No complaints. The night drifted along slowly through consistent chatter and social sarcasm which helped to leaven the groups reliability.

The next morning was brought to life quickly. First by a six-thirty phone call from a wrong number and secondly by an 8 am inconvenient alarm clock that was quickly adjusted to a tardier 8:30. Breakfast was a swift two glasses of milk, a banana, yogurt, and a raisin bagel. Once everyone was settled in, we played a few card games and continued to warm each others presence as the outside world of Spring began to melt. Not only was it snowing back up in the north east but the sun was permanently touching the delicate pale skin of each of us. A feeling that is not so quickly forgotten.

Next stop was the City of Palms. The name is more beautiful than the modern cantankery that blessed its spirit. There was not a cloud in the sky and a gentle wind was constantly blowing. The trick of this was that you wouldn’t feel yourself getting burnt but before it was too late; your skin would have already been tainted. Sunscreen was a must. The facade did not last long since everyone was so ambitious to get to the beach. True paradise even to a blind, death dulled fool. The moment your feet hit the angel...
soft sand and the sound of the ocean filled your spirit, ecstasy was inevitable. One could look as far as the eye could see and not be satisfied. To the right and to the left, there was nothing but sand and ocean.

The ocean itself can have two meanings. The first can be that of a sublime, breath taking aura that leaves one speechless. The other could be that of resentment. It honestly depended upon one’s mood. While at the beach, we all played catch and later began a game of two-hand touch football. The moment that caught me the most on that beach was the sunset. It was truly perfect. It wasn’t like those times where you would stare at the sun and then look an hour later and it would have moved. No this time it was alive; the burning bright ball of luminosity filled every receptacle in the eye. Set just above an island of hotels on the horizon, the sun slowly crept to its final resting place within the ocean. Each inch felt like a plethora of multitudes hinged onto a single emotion. As the last bit of the sun snuck behind the blue sphere we departed ways with the gods and began our nightly prowl upon the boardwalks.

The next morning came without warning. Neither I nor my roommates alarms went off and we were awoken by our neighbors knocking. After plowing down breakfast for a second day, we went on our way to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. The day was mostly organized and ran smoothly. It’s amazing how much pettiness is pushed aside when volunteers are conspiring rather than unions and profiteers. After suffering from pre-arthritis stiffness and eye burning sunscreen, the day was over. I was delving into my Hemingway book, as the females in the car talked about past relationships and other nonchalant musings. The beach was our destination.

Arriving at the beach around four o’clock, the sun was high in the sky and beating down upon our sandblasted faces. Clarity polished itself upon the speechless souls of each of us. After playing football and flirting for a while, I decided to go for a walk. On my walk I pondered Nietzsche and Thoreau. Wondering exactly what it was that they wished to accomplish or bring into meaning. To me the ocean was simply two things. The first was a natural motion that evolved and cycled itself around the moon and the seasons. The second was that of a spiritual base. The main reason behind such a justification was the sublimity that it created when taken in all at once.

The ocean had its own beauty. The waves that crashed upon the shore breathed life into the dry sand. Each wave landing upon the coastline was a torment of tranquility. While the surface is a whirlwind of algae and seaweed, the ground, the firm foundation that is the sand that we stand upon is massaged into a magnificent mass of blueprints.

Later during a walk, I talked with an elder man with whom I shared the views of my philosophy. With which I imposed the idea that everything was materialistic and that my generation was a withered hyacinth suckling on the teat of a dried well. While our conversation was interrupted by both high tide and various distractions on the sandy ground, I managed to express my views.

Leaving with a heightened sense of self, I felt that my day had not been as monotonous as I had feared. Leaving the beach, I read some more Hemingway and traveled back home to the one level house. Diner was chicken and rice. After that the group played a few games and kept up with casual conversation.

The night wound down around eleven o’clock. I ended the night with a shower and a swift shave. I said goodnight to the group and drifted off to sleep. The moon glowed brightly outside, Orion and the Big Dipper publicized brightly in the clear night, in the southern sky. Through out the day, the past became remembered, the future was still waiting to happen, and the present became a forgotten memory like a seashell upon the ocean floor. It would take a unique individual and a clever eye to find that same casing and be able to embrace that same recollection.

Wednesday morning brought itself to life with an early sunrise and a blue jay chirping outside of my door on a power line. Outside, I couldn’t help but notice the plant life in all its excessiveness.
While Florida’s dirt was made of mostly sand and shells, there grew cactus and a variety of flowers. Each that tended to bloom at night and stretch themselves towards the moonlight. After brushing my teeth outside and eating a relaxed breakfast the work day began. We worked and extra hour because our lunch which consisted of sandwiches from a local deli had been delayed in traffic. As I progressively finished Hemingway’s Moveable Feast I was constantly interrupted with small talk or congratulations for being such an avid reader. Undulations at minimum.

After relaxing at the house for a few hours, we proceeded to a local church that would house us for both dinner and some television. After eating the corn beef and cabbage, I ate two more rolls and proceeded to devour the key-lime pie. There was no beach today and I couldn’t help but feel at a loss for something. Perhaps it was the silence where the waves used to crash. The night was more of a personal accommodation for those who wanted to watch television and those who really did not care which way the tide of spirits pulled the group. While still at the church, we played various games such as ping pong and air hockey, even some foosball.

Before relaxing and watching television, I sat down at two different tables hoping to find some form of life beside old bags of skeletons that had wasted their wholes lives just to retire down in Florida and still come up north to visit family. I would occasionally find a human but the majority of the folks aside from the curator of the church were merely apes without thick body hair.

They say that you can tell a person by looking into their eyes. It is through that eye contact regardless of gender, that one sees who that person truly is. For today, it is difficult to look someone in the eye and tell the entire truth, let alone minimize exaggeration. Truly humble people are out there, it is just difficult to decipher them from the rest of the baboons. Many people like to report the news rather than actually listen to it.

How is that individuals can go on for hours and talk about the same nonsense and do the same things day after day without any sense of mediocrity. The true definition of insanity is the same fixation over and over again, previously knowing the outcome, consciously doing the same things, and expecting something spontaneously rich to transcend. If I were to live in Florida and not spend at least half of my time exploring I would surely go mad.

The day was almost a complete waste except for the fact that I did not spend any money and also got through my second book. The first book, Anthony Kiedis’s Scar Tissue had brought to my mind the idea of neither sleeping with another girl nor releasing any of my chi. The idea was that if all the energy built up, it would be both more erotic and more powerful when let go. Sex for me was a lot like the ocean itself. It could start out smooth and rhythmic during low tide and later reach its high point during the climatic tide of my strides. Regardless, there was always a simple passion that I could find no matter what mood I was in. That was the true beauty of such art.

Besides, in this day and age a week isn’t enough time to do anything. There is a lifetime of memories built up before and after that one week. Spring break was a time for couples and new friendships. Of course for every alpha male, the first initial reaction is to get your groove on. It is not until the humane side of the body comes out, that one realizes how over idealistic one can become. Which in my opinion is natural anyways. Aside from a narcissistic notion, there was nothing wrong with a little fun on a spring break trip. That is as long as no one else in the group found out.

The night wound down around 12 o’clock a.m. with which Orion and the Big dipper shown brightly next to the full moon. It was the first time in a while, that I could feel peace in the night sky. There was a sense of silence among the clouds as they roamed past the white orb. Something does not necessarily have to make a physical sound to be heard.
The middle of the day was relaxed. We started work late today and ended somewhat early. The work was frustrating. The sun was beating down and regardless of how much sunscreen I seemed to put on. So now I was burnt like a lobster with no tan in sight. Tonight we were attending a country club and receiving a free dinner. While waiting we discussed the red light district of Amsterdam and how amazing it was that other countries outside of America, shut down if one of their teams was playing in the World Cup. Something that in my eyes was admirable. I couldnâ€™t fathom the idea that an entire economic system would stop simply because of a soccer game. America doesnâ€™t even shut down when we loose two towers and over one thousand lives. What replaces it is simply a memorial which is then taxed and priced accordingly.

I sat there and thought about the fact that this country continued to exist with or without your participation. That was truly when I realized how small and insignificant each of us was. Our small petty lives meant nothing to the macroeconomic system that geared each and everyone one of our lives in some way. A system now that none of us can ever break away from. Is that what America has really becoming or is it simply the shadow of what we are all too afraid of being. When did the machine or system that we created become something that was emphasized more than a human being?

It is truly a sad day when a dollar becomes worth more than a human life. It is only when such beauty as sandy beaches and volunteer help come together to exist. To affirm life that precariously inches its way forward after a 2,000 year recession. Not to mention that issues of race, financial background, and personality tend to dissipate during such an experience. When resentment turns into collaboration. True friendship embodies itself in what first started out as first awkward burps which later turns into conversation.

I find it easier to be in a room with complete strangers. There are no assumptions, judgments, or demands from one individual to the other. Not to mention the majority of the people I met outside of my age group required transportable oxygen. But nonetheless it is still wonderful to look into those wrinkled and sunken eyes and enjoy that minute of humanity before it turns into carbon monoxide and dissipates within the atmosphere.

The other thing that amazed me was that those people and the sandy waves on the beach would still be alive and well without my presence. The inanimateness that instilled itself into my mind was where the memory harbored itself. That was where it became mine. It was neither something of the past as reminiscence nor something to look forward to in the future. It was the present. Just as quickly as the UV rays burned themselves into my flesh, the synapses of my brain recorded the pleasantries of the city of palms.

Dinner was another spiritual experience. There was free dinner which consisted of darkened grouper and French fries. The sun set directly in front of us and left a mesh of colors to paints the skyâ€™s canvas. As the sun slowly set the atmosphere became more and more surreal, leaving each of us a different perspective of the sea. As the pink and orange clouds roamed silently in the sky. I asked our dinner guest what made him happy in life. He quickly responded with his family. He told me that a lot of his friends had become addicted to work. That it even happened to him sometimes. He said that being with his wife and his family was like nothing else. While I was only able to pull him aside for a second, this successful man, rich and limitless found his heart in the humbleness of family life.

As the warm wind blew and the sun gently went below the clouds we all walked and took pictures on the beach. The stars finally came out and it was dark. The echoes of the valiant sun set still lingered as we all filled with natural joy. Everyone became playful and happy. It was a fantastic feeling. There was no pain and no sorrow as we danced like flames in the earthâ€™s fire. Only eternity kissed the lips of each of us as we swooned and swayed with the breeze and the warm waters of the marina floor. Those same turbulent waves produced the same foundational beauty and I once again found myself at peace. Before going to bed, I looked at the stars once more and reminded myself, they are only stars.
Before I crawled into bed, I remembered just how harmonious that sunset was. I told myself that I would constantly chase that feeling as long as it revealed itself to me once and a while. Which I did not know for certain to be a fact. Regardless, I had felt it. If I could feel it once, I could most certainly feel it again. And again. The only trick was to experience that awe-inspiring sublimity each and every day. That would be true transcendence.

Friday went smoothly, everyone worked hard and it was our hottest day yet. While I basically nailed 16 inch nails all day I was able to find myself spiritually. No matter how frustrating the people around me became, I would constantly remain comfortable with myself. The day dragged on between the end of work and until dinner. The group aside from two or three other people decided to play wiffle-ball. I relaxed and finished the first chapter of John Irving’s A Prayer for Owen Meany. The book sustained itself as interesting, while I relaxed in the air conditioning.

Dinner would be the Olive Garden provided by a local protestant church. A few nights back at the same church everyone had pointed out that such Protestants were very friendly. Both compared to people up north in general and also at churches. What I found amazing was the ability for strangers to communicate once again. When an event or a dinner is provided through volunteer or charity, there is an overwhelming sense of peace accompanied with such giving.

At first I thought it was a crock of shit, but I soon realized that someone I did not know was going to have a house to stay in from my volunteer work. When they say, â€œYou get what you give in this life.â€ I can finally start to see this. There is no tension between the people when there is no financial or social aspect implanted. Now, this does not demoralize the idea of community or emphasis such words as herd followers to leave such volunteers shortchanged, It is an act of self sacrifice that enables the group to focus all their individual energies onto one main platform. That in itself is harmony. For example, each individual wave in the ocean does not define the sea. It is a group of waves that crash upon the sandy shores that creates the engravings that steal so many minutes from the lives of human beings. Each wave sacrifices itself to the shore, but it is through that sacrifice that such beauty is created. Harmony is then what is internalized.

I only banged my hand with the hammer twice today and each one was only a mild thrust. My triceps did not get as burnt as bad as yesterday and the Aloe Vera lotion was starting to soothe the scalded skin. The air conditioning did not help much or perhaps it was the open doors in the entire duplex that kept the room from cooling off. The problem was at night it would get to be around sixty degrees and getting blasted with cold air during the night wasnâ€™t exactly helping to clear my sinuses.

What really stuck in my mind today was the idea of God, Something that is not often brought up but easily one of the consistent thoughts running through my head. People are always telling me that there is a God but I like to imagine god in the own version. Iâ€™m sure I wont start any religious wars with such blasphemy but I like to think of whatever higher power this out there as that harmony that is found in nature. Imagine that there was a harmonious balance that was the perfect being. Would this type of being ignore the elements of fear, jealousy, and lust? Or would this God balance such concepts with the contrasting elements hope, admiration, and love?

In my personal opinion, and perhaps through human limitation, I can not imagine such a divine being. That may even be the beauty of it. Something that is inconceivable can not posses arbitrary limits. Which I feel is what hinders such characteristics as charity and self-sacrifice. The one thing I see in all divinities is the element of sacrifice. But again how could such perfection associate itself with the human being. Say for a second there was not a god. Such charity and sacrifice would be the sole responsibility of humans. So would the elements I mentioned earlier. Only the human being could change his destiny, which in my opinion wouldnâ€™t be such a bad deal in the long-run.
Now without a limited or pre-determined destiny, life and time would be the only limits of the human being. By not forcing one’s self into the economic Markey, rather not becoming a psychological slave, the world would be yours to enjoy. Thus such acts of charity and self-sacrifice could only be recognized by other humans.

Dinner was a minute proportion of ziti and spaghetti from the Olive Garden. To wash down such a delicacy there was water and unsweetened iced tea. After eating dinner everyone briefly played foosball and ping pong. After a half hour of games, we voyaged to a local arcade and miniature golf arena. After going on two rounds of go-carts, we settled into the batting cages. After hitting the ball a few times, I found an immense amount of stress alleviated from my body. I felt like a little kid again among so many games and miscellaneous activities. Each one echoing a different part of my childhood. Both positive and negative. I don’t know if anyone else felt this way because no one really interacted during this escapade. We all kind of went from section to section, enjoying the fruits of our weeklong labor. After all what is work without some playing mixed in?

Tomorrow was my last day of habitat. I could not help but feel overjoyed to be leaving such manual labor. Not only had the sun taken a toll on my spirit but also my skin. The day would be a half day of labor and then an existential experience amongst the waves of the city of palms. My emotional state was that of comfort. I felt secure and content with myself for whom I was. Not the person I had wanted to present myself as. I was able to enjoy this thing called life to its fullest capacity. In essence it was a type of simple harmony presented to me in the humblest way possible.

Finally, the week long experience had come to an end. What perfect place to spend it other than the beach. We got to the beach around one o’clock in the afternoon and the sun was high. I immediately applied what I thought was waterproof sun tan lotion and enjoyed the nuke warm water. After experiencing the joys of such leisure I began to become restless. I laid in the sun for a while and turn bright red like a lobster. The interesting thing about sunburn is the heat and warmth from the sun stay with you in your skin. It is almost like the sun’s energy is transferred into your body. This is but one way that the world around you becomes the world that you are in.

While the rest of the group either went jet skiing or basked in the sun’s vitality I walked around the market which was selling various tourism items. There was a wide array of accessories from face paintings to turtle necklaces. All these items to choose from and I would let my natural sense guide me through the rows of propaganda. My goal was to find a bracelet of some sort for a significant other back home in the northeast tundra.

I finally landed upon an ankle bracelet that was made out of magnetic material. It had black, white, and passion red beads incorporated into its character. It was between an all black one and this one that I held massaging between my fingers. After a moments pause, I gave the lady ten American dollars for the bracelet. I immediately made the bracelet special whether it was or not. So since I thought it was significant it began to embody altruistic value. I coveted this bracelet with such revelry that I almost became possessed by it.

The red symbolized three things to me. First it would symbolize passion that I and my significant other had shared for almost two months. The second was that of beauty representing that actual person I was giving the bracelet to. Finally, I wanted the wristlet to become organic. So I commutated it with a red rose, which in my opinion could envy nothing but Mother Nature herself.

The black I would identify with hardship, the crueller side of human nature that if not respected would easily humble both my relationships and my own ego. What can we know about day, happiness, and passion without burning in the sight of depravity first? One could associate such a color with reverence. For example, what would this white page be without the black splotches of letters that create this document?
The white was the most important and specifically saved for last. It represents perfection. Something strived for but not yet achieved by mankind. Something that I consciously or unconsciously would fester into my mind for the rest of my days. Now here is the true beauty of this armlet. Every one of this colors is bound to the other through this circle of magnificence. It is again that harmony that I attempt to see in everyday life.

The rest of the night went smoothly except for the grouper that I ate at dinner. It has been sitting in my stomach for the past four hours and every burp reminded me of its sea worthiness. After our last dinner as a group we were able to wander the streets for an hour between seven and eight before we had to take the trolley back to the parking lot. I had been sidetracked from the group for about fifteen minutes in which I wandered the streets of Fort Myers Florida alone. I did not feel panicky or lost, I just felt like a warm breeze floating along the Pacific. It is through such inner peace that one could become an individual who does not feel the need to be a social creature. I thought to myself one last time how those waves crashed along the beach and created such authentic craftsmanship. Could a human ever possess such a natural quality while still remaining humane and humble?

Time would only tell and if the ocean’s influence in the past week had any substantial meaning then its spirit would carry with me like those warm pacific zephyrs that slowly made their way around the globe.

But for now, I am going to sleep. Burnt and alive I could breathe freely. I could live. I perceived my old habits becoming new addictions. I could distinguish the waves of my life crashing upon the shores of society. Some receding back into the harbor and others forever soaking into the sands of time. The tide was coming in.

**Alternative Ending**

The morning air was still. Not a single breeze passed through the sunrise. I woke up tired and anxious to get home. Outside, the sun had just breached the horizon and I could still see the moon. Everyone else was still asleep. I reminisced back to the beach and wondered if there were waves in this stagnant morning of motionless air. To my left there was an American flag that hung drooped. We had cleaned the apartment the night before so everyone was able to sleep in and wait for our nine a.m. departure.

For a brief second during that sunrise time stopped. But I now knew that moment would forever be internalized in my memory. A place where there are all sorts of oceans, all sorts of waves, and various grains of sand. There was harmony and there was chaos. There was that morning still air and there were those impressionistic waves that crashed upon my consciousness. The city of palms had taught me what no text book could ever educate me of. Starting with small gusts of wind and cool breezes that wisped around my face, I could now feel the southern world.

Yes it may grow tiresome and monotonous in the mediocrity of post-modern life. But the ocean, the tides that caressed the sandy beaches would forever remain aborigines to those palmy zephyrs.
Streams of bright light,
make my heart cringe
in everlasting rays
of fear, doubt, and hope.

Pushed upon the cold stage;
my insides become paralyzed.
I hear the eerie whisper
of those who wait.

Velvet curtains pushed aside,
yet Air still itchy and heavy.
Suddenly, it is my turn to speak.

Too afraid of Light,
I dart off stage.
The scratchy whisper of the salty gales that follow intricate, labyrinthian paths. The insatiable desire of the grey, leaden ocean and its black velvet hand of treasure and deceit. The pinch of the sun against your cheek. The slow, hypnotic, incessant roll of the tides. The sweet scent of suntan oil and the warm feel of sand. The soft, anesthetized chatter of those who pass by with their sneakers clutched by their laces. Their voices are scratchy, fearful, yet compassionate and dear, instilled with a deep, wonderful resonant call of all they once yearned for, all that they still yearn for.

Then there are those who look into the golden, shiny orb of the sun with squinty, anxious eyes. Those who fear blindness or deafness. Those who laugh and chuckle and sway their hands in the face of the biting salt-fringed wind. Those who play cards in attempt to keep them on the table. Those who fly their red kites in the midst of a rainless thunder storm. Those who watch their children with eyes of resignation, delight, and hopelessness. Those who stand still in the face of the roaring surf. Those who meander aimlessly along the shore with digital cameras, knapsacks or sand buckets. Those who walk on pointed, jagged shells, and fail to pick them up. Those who never look beyond what stands directly before them. Those who walk with their golden backs turned away from the sun.

I could sit and listen forever. Orchard Beach is not any place that you can find on any map, heck it’s too small to be even known by many people, but how can a map, a mere piece of paper, something that can be torn, burned, and destroyed, find roots to each and every place in our world? I wonder about these things as I sit by the veranda and watch. I admire the stable, fiery core of the sun that lies within the starry and peach-stained horizon — the warm colors of pinks, oranges, and reds coalesce and their reflection dances upon the water, that peripheral boundary that lies between fire and ice, life and death, freedom and chains, hope and desperation, loneliness and satiety.

I hear the coarse, dry whisper, of a cloaked figure who remains invisible to our eyes alone. He walks slowly down the shore leaving no footprints, yet his voice remains as clear and succinct as the wind. He cries for humanity. He cries for justice. He cries for hope in a world of deterring creatures that are fearful, lost, and ashamed, in a world where nothing is what it seems or appears to be. The ocean man is what I call him. He only comes out when he hears the call of the wind or when he sees the smoky hand of the white fog spark the sky. He extends his feathered wings, throws his cloak aside and begins to walk around the seven mile radius of the ocean. He looks into the sun without flinching. He wears no shoes, but dons Abe Lincoln’s top hat and a pair of white gloves. He is part and parcel of the sun. But, he too only follows the circular path. Who is this man? How did he end up here? Is he winged or just broken?

Do we ever take the time to see? To just see and listen to the song of the birds? When I was younger, I used to spend my days on the beach chasing the seagulls around the shore during low tide. My mother would stand in the distance, in her wonderful raspberry colored sun dress, and laugh and laugh. I would try to touch them with a cherry coated Popsicle stick. I was always afraid to get too close, yet one time I did. I touched his wing. He looked at me with eyes of sadness, horror, and joy. I smiled back and he flew away and looked as though he was riding a tricycle through the sky. The sea used to be a place for me. I still love the sounds, textures, and sights, but something has changed since then.

Upon our last return, I felt like alien in a foreign place. I imagined the wonderful expanse of blueness, a blue that can never be replicated on a color chart, but one that resides deep, too deep to even ponder. I always wanted to put ocean water in a plastic Ziploc bag, and carry it with me in my red lunchbox, but I never thought I would need to.
That sticky July day, my family and I emerged from the Seaside Resort in anxious hopes to see the ends of freedom take form and coalesce in the distance. My sister carried her Polaroid camera around her neck. My mother carried a stack of red and pink towels. My father carried the red cooler on one shoulder. My brother and I carried nothing but our shoes and my little sister held her little rag doll and a bag of lollipops and licorice. Before we crossed the road, we watched the cars fly past with their tops down â€“ we saw men with gelled hair and women with fancy hair wraps, too much makeup, and large black sunglasses. I wondered where they were going. Where can one go?

Once we reached the other side of the road, we took off our shoes and scurried up a small pathway that had a large strange straw plant enmeshed on either side. The ground was hot, and I ran and almost hopped up the narrow, smooth incline. However, when I reached the top, my stomach turned and dropped. The beach was abandoned. The lifeguard chairs and the snack bar were empty. Even the pigeons looked lonely. But as I glanced further into those scorched depths I realized why.

The ocean was red. My wonderful grey, quiet ocean was infected with a cyclic overdose of whatever it was that lived beneath. What would God say if he saw it? Would God say anything at all? Would he ever know? Who would tell him? A red tide. Red. What did that mean? For me? For you? For humanity?

The sad part was that we never even went close. We never even touched it. The ocean became a wingless monster with red, beady eyes and a furry tail. All that existed within me used to be reflected within those tides, the constant ebb and flow exemplified the incessant roar that exists within, whoever that was. Now the water did not even make the slightest sound. Even the ocean man was gone. There was no more fog and the croaking call of the wind was gone. The lighthouse was unlit. There were no fishermen near the shoreline. Time stood still then, held in abeyance from all that I once knew and held so dearly. Time only watched and waited. Waited and watched. The ocean waited, just as I did. Waited that interminable wait.

The more I glared at its solemn stare, the more I want to run and run. The ocean was filled with a million lonely eyes. No living creature remained. They were dead and infected with the red disease. Not even the small crustaceans that floated along the surface reemerged to soak up the rays from the sun. They were gone too. Even the sea grass that once was spewed along the shore had that strange and unfamiliar russet hue. I was disappointed in the world that I once knew. The world that I saw as always existing within the palm of my hand.

I turned to my mother for an answer. I then turned to my father and then back again to the red sea. I wanted to ask them what this all meant. I wanted to tell them that the ocean man was gone. But nobody would ever understand. My father too said nothing, but the look in his eyes revealed the same pity I felt. He too wore glasses like me. But glasses or not, we saw nothing that we could reclaim as our own. His word was the law and nothing else mattered, yet here, standing beside the ocean, he no longer had the ability to speak. We were all on that threshold, we were on that unknown mountainside waiting for our cue for flight. Except we couldnâ€™t even move. None of us could. We couldnâ€™t even swim. We couldnâ€™t enter the territory in which we so heartily came to seek.

â€œHello folks! Hey over there! How are you all doing this morning?â€□ The pool man shouted from nearby and broke the silence that seemed to captivate and frighten us. He wore baggy blue jeans and a white collared shirt with a pencil in his pocket.

â€œVery well, Sir,â€□ my father responded. My father always knew how to talk with strangers. â€œSay whatâ€™s wrong with this picture?â€□ He pointed his stubby finger to the ocean, its depths not even visible from up-close.
I don't know much. But I know it’s called something like red tide. There’s too much of something in that water and it’s not healthy for the water, or for the creatures that live beneath. Have you heard of it? My father nodded and we all turned to face him, to see what he would say next.

No, we live up in Connecticut, so we don’t see much of the ocean down there, he looked at my mother, smiled faintly, and then turned his gaze back to the ocean. Is red tide common? The man looked as though he had seen a frightened lightning bug in the wind. He twitched his nose.

It comes and goes. My father didn’t seem to hear him anymore, he too was caught and lost in that realm that neither of us had ever bothered to lay a finger upon -- that realm of fire, snow, darkness, and scarlet light that only appeared in the afternoon.

I wanted my father to continue with the questioning. I wanted to find out more. But he never asked more than what was necessary. He knew when enough was enough. And that was it. But I can still remember that sad, nostalgic look in those giant, deep chocolate eyes. My mother always told me that I had his eyes. I hope that I didn’t show what his eyes did.

I wanted him to bring my ocean back. I wanted to see that grand expanse of blueness just to know that it was there, that it still existed and wasn’t washed away. I only wanted to touch it. To know that something beyond me still existed, still thrived in a cold world in which nothing was discernable or apparent from a first glance. My father would have understood. If anyone would, it would be him. If anyone believed in me, he did. He gave me wings. But during the trip it seemed as if he rarely spoke. He was one man against the tide. Can man ever compete? If the tide is red, what does that mean for us? Are we a red race of individuals who only yearn for things that we cannot have? Do we taste that poison everyday? Is this poison intrinsic in our system?

I always told myself that someday I would live by a great body of water. There is something about it that has always pulled me toward it, as though a giant magnetic force had been instilled in my heart. For too long, I felt as if I was missing out, as though dry land didn’t offer me the same advantage, the same prospects. However, now I wonder if it is better just to stay away. Is it better to stay far away? How far is far away?

The problem is that I never stop to listen. Nobody ever stops to just sit and listen. Listen. How often do we hear the rumble of ocean? How often do we hear the sweet cadences of blue jays or hummingbirds? Have we fallen so deep into the pitiless abyss that we fail to realize who were are as a human race, as a people, a generation of people, who succumb to a weak and feeble fate?

As a child, the air was my friend. It created a beautiful symphonic melody of all that was lost and forgotten, all that I feared and all that I strived to do. We all yearn to reach that distant core, to reach some means of truth, but we are continually held back by the reigns of the ocean, by that anchor that takes hold in a crooked nook in our souls. We can attempt to break free from these chains, to extricate ourselves from such fetters, but we continually fail. We forsake what lies directly in front of us. The moon, a white ball of fire, stands us before each night and we turn the other way. We turn a cold shoulder to our world! We never contemplate its place amid the universe, or bother to track the trajectory that it follows through the scarlet and silver scorched sky.

The ululating sound of the ocean laments our fate each day. Why do we run so far, only to follow a constrained and limited path? Even along the shore, why can only I run so far? I only want to reach somewhere that’s not a dead end. The rocks are beautifully encrusted shapes, some are even in the
shapes of distorted hearts and withered, fallen roses, but as I grow older, I no longer desire to climb them. I refrain from my place on top.

*          *          *

But, I will never forget the sweet call of the white sprite-like birds that once dotted the shore. Those birds always seemed strangely misplaced. They hover and pick on the remains near a brown lunch bag only to find nothing more than aluminum and plastic. They find nothing to eat, the shore remains impeccable and dry, not a shell or oyster in sight. Years later I tried to feed them, yet they didn’t touch the food.

*          *          *
College Halloween Party
David Brede

*Him:* (Upon seeing her he nods to show recognition and smiles slightly. He is standing by one of the kegs. It is loud.) Hey, when'd you get here?

Time? *I bet you danced down Broadway destroying all the clocks before you came,*
Or did you set some forward and some backwards,
Making sure no two were the same?

*Her:* We just got here actually. My friend's just came up from home so we pre-gamed in my suite first. (She smiles, all smiles) Like my costume? (More smiles, and a little, quiet, drunken laugh. She is dressed like a crab.)

*Him:* (very cool, very composed, like he is when she seem him in class. He laughs a little too.) HaHa, Yea you wear it well. I had just assumed when I saw you that science had done something terribly, terribly wrong, and the crab it had done it to felt that it needed a drink.

No mask, no, No mask, could hide that beauteous shine,
And only my mask can hide that I wish it was mine.

*Her:* (a bigger laugh)

*Her:* So what are you supposed to be? (She looks at him, he is dressed in a suit)

*Him:* A Jehovah Witness. (Hands her a pamphlet.) Here's some free literature.

*I'd hand you over my heart in that delicate hand too,*
If I wasn't aware
How easy,
It tears.

*Her:* (laughs)

*Him:* Sooo did you start that paper yet?

Hollow words sometimes send so deep a meaning,
But do you here my obvious echo,
Or are these awkward, hollow words,
Merely intervening.

*Her:* Ha! Are you kidding me? Did you actually get what he was talking about in class? (She unconsciously pulls up the right shoulder of her costume. He consciously notices.)

*Him:* Nope.

*Both:* (laugh)

*Him:* Yea I'm going to have to go see him or something.
I knew exactly what he was talking about,
       But I'd fake any doubt,
       To hear you let that laugh out.

Her: Yea I hear ya I do too (her friends interrupt, saying something to her. They're obviously more drunk than she is. He only sees other shadowy masses. Her brightness often, well always, turns other people into shadows.) Hey I'm sorry I gotta get going, but I'll catch ya in class.

Him: Yea later man. (He watches her walk away)

Your steps should always be in wet cement,
       For even though I am aware how fast
       My memory dries,
       Time, that bastard will come,
       With a chisel in hand,
       And I will have to watch
       As he tries,
       To pick away every
       Trace of wherever,
       You did stand.

(His friend notices him standing alone now. He goes up to Him and lightly punches Him in the arm.)

Friend: Hey we're all up stairs we might be going soon. (He motions for Him to follow.)

Him: Sure. (He follows)
Man's Change Through Love
Theresa Larkin

Every man accomplishes his goals distinctively, and has his own individual characteristics that are apparent when faced with life’s situations. In Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice, Mr. Darcy initially embraces a personality of self-superiority and conceit. It is because of his feelings for Elizabeth that he learns to reveal his emotions more openly and develop a more modest character. In Ernest Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises, Robert Cohn is primarily a physically strong, but shy man who does not stand up for himself when talked down upon. However, his feelings for Brett cause him to set aside his polite values, resulting in violent attacks against others. Both Darcy and Robert encompass their individual qualities, but these qualities gradually transform when they each become devoted to a woman.

When Darcy first sees Elizabeth, he is not especially attracted to her, nor is she to him. He blatantly reveals to Mr. Bingley at the ball that “she is tolerable; but not handsome enough to tempt [him]â€” (Austen 8). He is enthralled in his own pride and high financial status and fails to acknowledge Elizabeth as a beautiful and fine-quality woman, and this lack of consideration creates a mutual dislike between them. Elizabeth states that “she could easily forgive his pride, if he had not mortified [hers]â€” (15). Even as Darcy begins to show a liking for Elizabeth, he has still not liberated himself from his over-sized ego. When Sir William proposes for Elizabeth to dance with Darcy, she refuses, and although Darcy “requests to be allowed the [honor] of her hand, [he does so] in vainâ€” (21). At this point, Darcy’s opinion of Elizabeth is one of a higher quality than when he first noticed her; however, his arrogance is too high for her independent and bright demeanor to be undermined. If she gave in to his advances, it would only make him more self-absorbed; thus, refusing him aids in reducing his pretentiousness. However, she eventually “attracted him more than he likedâ€” (50) as he is too preoccupied with the fact that she is of a lower financial status than he. However, love progressively overcomes his prejudgment, and he begins to see Elizabeth’s true nature. This is what diminishes his conceit and allows him to fall in love with Elizabeth for who she is.

It is at Rosings where a change of character in Darcy is evident. When he visits Elizabeth, he waits no longer than several minutes when he hastily opens up to her and declares that “I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceitâ€” (Austen 8). In only a matter of months, Elizabeth has had such an affect on him that he has put aside his conceitedness and discrimination to focus on whom he truly loves. Their eventual marriage is proof that someone’s love for another can alter the former’s initial flaws. Darcy admits to Elizabeth he has always been too proud, and that she has changed him for the better. He tells her:

As a child, I was given good principles, but left to follow them in pride and conceit; such I might still have been but for you, dearest, loveliest Elizabeth! What do I not owe you! You taught me a lesson, hard indeed at first, but most advantageous. By you I was properly humbled (317).

It is at this point that Darcy has truly changed his ways. He is no longer the judgmental, pompous man that the reader has met in the beginning of the novel. He is now humble and in love. Unfortunately, Cohn’s situation in The Sun Also Rises is not as favorable.

In The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway allows the reader to immediately ascertain that although Robert Cohn is physically powerful, his demeanor is not. The narrator, Jake, tells the reader that Robert “was once middleweight boxing champion of Princetonâ€” [and] he learned it painfully and thoroughly to counteract the feeling of inferiority and shynessâ€” (1). Robert sees himself as inadequate and he is thus very indecisive throughout the novel, not knowing what his purpose in life really is. His five-year marriage, cut short by infidelity on his wife’s part, is discouraging enough, and then Frances only makes his feeling
of insufficiency worse. She is very possessive of Robert. Jake knows this and claims āœ[he] rather liked [Cohn] and evidently [Frances] led him quite a life āŒ (15).

It is obvious that Jake and Robert are close companions, proven by their many outings together and Robertâ€™s statement that he sees Jake as his best friend. However, their friendship slowly loses its strength when Robert asks Jake to tell him what he knows about Lady Brett Ashley. Given that he can no longer be with Brett, Jake is clearly jealous that Robert is interested in her. Robert claims that āœ[he] shouldnâ€™t wonder if [he was] in love with her āŒ (46) while Jake is consistently defensive against any possibility of Robert and Brett being together. He tells Robert that āœsheâ€™s a drunk. Sheâ€™s in love with Mike Campbell, and sheâ€™s going to marry him āŒ (46). However, Brettâ€™s engagement does not hinder Robertâ€™s amorous feelings for her. Her decision to take Robert on her trip to San Sebastian because she āœthought it would be good for him āŒ (89) only furthers his attachment towards her.

The group trip in Pamplona is where Robertâ€™s normally shy behavior is tested and altered into a hostile, violent persona. Michael is the initial influence of this behavior when he relates the bull-fight to Robertâ€™s own life: âœI would have thought you āŒ loved being a steer, Robert. They lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they āŒre always hanging about so āŒ (146). Mike is obviously annoyed and fed up that Robert is constantly tagging along with Brett and staring at her, admiring her beauty. Robertâ€™s responses of âœShut up, Mike āŒ (146) and âœGo to hell, Mike āŒ (147) are only the beginning of the cruel modification of Robertâ€™s shy personality.

At the cafā©, Robertâ€™s obsession with knowing where Brett is sways Mike to jokingly tell him that sheâ€™s āœgone off with that bull-fighter chap āŒ (194). When, understandably, knowing that he would never want his friend being his former love, Jake also refuses to tell Robert where Brett is. Robert threatens Jake by asserting āœIâ€™ll make you tell me āœyou damned pimp āŒ (194). Robert, completely abandoning his polite respect to fighting solely in the ring, utilizes his boxing ability by knocking Jake out. He is too enthralled with the fact that Brett could be with Romero and even admits afterward that it was his thoughts of Brett that caused his behavior. āœ[He] couldnâ€™t stand it about Brett. He states āœI was crazy āŒ (198). He displays aggression again when he finds Brett and Romero together, trying to beat Romero up as much as he can. Mike is the one who tells Jake that āœRobert nearly killed the poor, bloody bull-fighter. Then Cohn wanted to take Brett away āŒ (205). Because of Robertâ€™s preoccupation with Brett, his personality changes for the worse.

Both Austen and Hemingway do a superior job of demonstrating that if a man is in love with a woman, he will focus on obtaining a relationship with her, even if it means abandoning any former traits or values. Because of the type of author Austen is, writing with a strong emphasis on emotion and civility, the reader ultimately sees Darcy as a wonderful, romantic man who is in love with Elizabeth and changes his prideful ways because of her influence. Because of Hemingwayâ€™s darker, straightforward writing style, the reader sees Robert as an eventually crazy man who changed his way of life for a woman he may never have been able to attain. The truth is that neither character is extremely romantic or extremely psychotic. Both authors essentially wrote about the same topic āŒa man, who has already established his individuality, falls in love with a woman and changes himself only to obtain love and attention from her. In Darcyâ€™s case, it made him a better person. In Robertâ€™s case, it did not. Perhaps that is why the novels have their titles. Pride and Prejudice consists of Darcyâ€™s initial self-importance and prejudice against Elizabethâ€™s lack of wealth. It is the absence of Darcyâ€™s pride and prejudice that ultimately brings them together. The Sun Also Rises consists of the sun setting, so to speak, on Robertâ€™s initial shy personality and polite values. What he did not realize was that the sun can rise as well āŒ he did not have to transform into a person of poorer quality to gain loving attention from Brett; he could have attempted to do so without abandoning his positive traits. Both authors proved in their works that a man will ultimately change qualities about himself to be with the woman whom he loves.
Beneath a buried bundle of bigheaded blame, Bobby Bee began to believe that his boring being was bounded to burst. Burst all because of bubbling emotion that beguiled the bagging of whatever came before the abrupt beginning of his now baffling bond. Beforehand, Bobby became bundled and buried with his unbroken buzzing about, obliging and binding to nobody but ambiguous buddies of make-believe. But a blessing befell before Bobby had the chance to become too bitter and hard-bitten to befriend even the most bloodcurdling of his fellow bumble bees â€“ a British beauty baptized Betty Bee.

Bobby and Bettyâ€™s befuddling bond had a bit of a bizarre beginning, all because Betty and Bobby barely bantered. All but briefly they would bother with base behavior, boycotting the banal boringness in favor for brilliance; for brilliance is what the boy believed the blonde, blue-eyed, British Betty Bee to be. But there were blunders to bruise and bog-down the bond. Bobby was boneheaded and bashful, and never blatantly told Betty his bona fide feelings, always backing or blanking out when the best moment began. But to make things worse, Betty, as branded beforehand, belonged to a British birthplace, and Bobbyâ€“well Bobby was broke, and, again, bashful. Even if he managed to break out of being broke and buy a ticket to go on break to Britain, Bobby wouldnâ€™t because of his biggest fear: that he was a block of burnt wood while Betty was a beautiful, bronze bust.

But even worse than the bronze bust excuse Bobby built to believe was the biggest and best, yet bleakest and bothersome, truth of them all – Bobby…Bobby began to get butterflies being around Betty. A bee, a bee with butterflies? A bee inâ€¦no, boulder-dash! Bobby was a bee, after all, built to buzz and keep busy with a bugâ€™s usual brick-a-brack. Bees boycotted and banned this sort of belief, these sort of butterflies, as to not bother themselves with broken hearts due to other blonde bees. But the butterflies Bobby began feeling were there indeed, and by-and-by he began to sink well below-par, bringing berries instead of pollen and bonking into other bees, brooding over Betty and his butterflies. To have been a beneficial busy bee before and now to be a bee bemoaning because of a beauty beyond belief, all because of butterflies. All because of Betty.

So, beleaguered and beset with those bugging butterflies, Bobby broke down, gathered a bevy of blank notes, and beseeched Betty with another blunder to prevent further bruises from his butterflies.

Bobby wrote:

Beloved Betty,

Lest you believe me a big, barren bee, I believe these messages will be our last.

Best Wishes,

Bobby

Before you fall behind, I must boast that Bobby and Betty broke down and wrote letters biweekly, back and forth, so before you know it Betty had written back:

Bobby,

Before you burn my letters and before you break away, let me beseech you for a beneficial reason why youâ€™ve blocked and bricked me away.

Bothered,

Betty

Bobby replied abruptly:
Beautiful Betty,
Because you’re better.

Breaking,
Bobby

Betty briefly wrote back:

Bobby,
Better?

Bewildered,
Betty

Bobby barely replied:

Brilliant Betty,
Better than me, a bumbling bee.

Bursting With Love,
Bobby

Bobby breathlessly waited for Betty’s brand name bark, waited for Betty to bust Bobby for being so brainless. The butterflies subsiding, Bobby kept busy by burying himself beneath bundles of her letters, believing that Betty’s biweekly lay, too, buried beneath bundles of other bees’ letters, but born for him. Betty was bound to burn Bobby badly, bound to delay the bizarre bee with a letter begging Bobby to ban such thoughts. Betty believed in Bobby and Bobby knew that they always beat around the bush and that Betty too was burdened with butterflies like Bobby. Better for Bobby to beat her to bare his butterflies — to be a bee, and to be bound with a bond to a beautiful British beauty! Betty will write, he believed, you’re a babbling buffoon believing that for that was Betty beautiful and brilliant and most importantly, Bobby’s.

But when Betty’s bouncing message arrived before Bobby’s bumbling being, he bode never to beam over it. Instead, he brandished a box in which he buried Betty’s letters, much like how Bobby buried himself, never reading Betty’s final boastful message. Bobby didn’t believe he had to after all, why burst a bee’s belief in love?
H.R. PUFNSTUF - DAVID BREDE

H.R. Pufnstuf
David Brede

H.R. Pufnstuf,
Canâ€™t do a little
Cause you canâ€™t
   Do enough,
H.R. Pufnstuf
Everything you
Write turns to
   Day time TV
   Fluff,
H.R. Pufnstuf,
Trying to hang tough,
But your dark skinned
   Woman got you
By one handcuff,
O, H.R. Pufnstuf
Needs his stuff
   Needs his stuff
But that dark skinned
   Woman says
   Thatâ€™s enough,
   Thatâ€™s enough,
But she doesnâ€™t
   Know, does she
H.R. Pufnstuf,
   How much
   You need
   Your stuff?

Cause this make believe
   Towns
Got you down,
   With that witch
   Lingering
   Over ya
   With that
   Make-upped
   Frown,
   And your bros
   In the corner
   Juggling, dancing
   Ballooned romancing,
   Becoming a clown,
   Cause this town,
   Got him down.

O, H.R. Pufnstuf,
Canâ€™t do a little
Cause you can’t
Do enough.
That Field like My Mind, Was Immeasurable  
Bridget Steckis

The sod farm was infinite as I lay in its center and felt as if I were melting into the earth. I've lived in that same town since I was five months old. The thick, sweet smell of a familiar place is something that is invaluable. Country roads I know by heart, secret paths down dunes to sit on the beach.

My attachment to the actual natural surroundings of my hometown is something I have not contemplated until recently. However, now that I have it has given me a much greater perspective on the world in itself. I never took the time to realize how much of myself I've actually invested in the outdoors or what that truly means to me.

In contemplation, it's intriguing for me to think about my morphing concept of solitude in relation to the natural world. One should ask themselves, what is it to be alone? If it to merely be unaccompanied by another human, I come to believe that this is a severely narrow designation. I realize that I have adopted a Thoreau-esque state of mind. Transcend laws, think critically and create your own definitions.

The cohorts that I have found in wildlife, agriculture, even the sky have opened my mind to the notion of isolation. To believe that you are alone while amidst hundreds, if not thousands, of beings and concepts is simply to be unconscious. However, people grow up fearing the idea of being by oneself. There is such a negative stigma attached to seclusion that people oftentimes shut out what may seem to them like obscure possibilities. This blindness is caused only by human's bitter and perhaps cynical view on the subject. Someone can become so focused on attaining the companionship of their own species, that they take the world for granted. If nothing else reader, I beg of you, don't ever take for granted the limitless dimensions of your own mind.

Through both reminiscence and introspection, I now justly appreciate how being alone with nothing but my thoughts and the cool feeling of slick grass against my skin was a blessing.

My memories of the past and hopes for the future are what link to me to the land. Remembering the feeling of sitting in the middle of that sod farm with a notebook and pen, on an idyllic spring day, makes me wish that every single person had the ability to experience that state of mind. There's just something about the center of a field, no houses in sight, half a mile of green in every direction that will wash a surreal sense of euphoria over a person. It's strange that I could forget how much something once meant to me; sleeping in my subconscious somewhere, waiting to be rediscovered.

Through this, I hold two converse views of the environment which illustrate the complexity of the natural world as well as its ability to have an effect on us. It's false to think of nature as inanimate. It's something which lives, breathes and possesses a soul. As humans have the ability to sit down and articulate thoughts in order to express our voices, nature expresses its voice as well. However you must listen for it, stop to specifically see it. Once we are able to use these skills to help interpret nature's spiritual voice, that is what allows it to touch our species in such a profound way.

A soul is not something merely triggered by death. Many may speak about the concept of a soul during periods of mourning, like death is a fracture in the body that releases this ghostly figure which both thinks and feels. To me, nature's soul is more of an omniscient sensitivity which simply exists. It hangs in the air. It is the unexplainable feeling you get when sitting in your heaven on earth, whatever and wherever that may be.
The main point here is that the contradiction lies within this soul. One facet of nature’s persona is what we see as its merciless and unforgiving ability to cause pain and destruction. Our realization that nature is something which we cannot harness is difficult for some to come to terms with. It is inherent within our character as humans to desire control. We want to direct our lives and everything within them because we like to feel that we are the masters of our own destinies. When that is out of our control, we tend to become angered by it, and to a certain degree, understandably so. Something massive such as the infamous hurricane Katrina, for example, which killed and destroyed so many lives, is difficult to overlook. It’s not easy to sympathize with something that causes one pain, no matter what it is.

In Stephen Crane’s short story The Open Boat, Crane exemplifies both a profound understanding and respect for nature and its capabilities. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual -- nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps, plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life and have them taste wickedly in his mind and wish for another chance.

He depicts the reality of our situation in that it is not the cruelty of nature which humans cannot accept; it is its utter indifference which we do not want to allow. Nature is not a physical being which thinks, and solves and makes decisions. That is what separates us from it, our ability to contemplate and its lack thereof. Instead, it is a force all its own, whose soul does not rationalize, just feels and experiences. It does not have intention, only action. This species has spent our existence coming to terms with living on earth, a small dot in the spectrum of the universe which we do not own.

On the other hand however, there is this innate feeling of protectiveness I have for certain minute parts, little corners of this world which have impacted me. All of this is a circle, which for me, leads back to the sod farm.

My personal journey as a writer finds its beginnings on those sod farms around the time I was ten years old. I was denominated then, by my parents, as responsible enough to ride my bike alone to those fields where I could sit, or play or write. I started with a marble notebook, where I kept my secret thoughts. I don’t believe I was doing any sort of profound thinking then, but I was thinking nonetheless. In the field and in that book I recorded my new found freedom, which in a young child’s life is the first step in their spiritual development. That sod farm for me symbolized the birth of my independence and the beginning of my emancipation.

Only now in retrospect am I able to objectively look at both that location and my frame of mind at the time. That field meant everything to me. I used to lie on my stomach and look straight out over the plane of grass in front of me as I tried to inspect each individual piece. Like its own microcosmic civilization, each blade is different yet the same. I remember exactly how they felt to the touch, a harmonious mixture of both soft and sharp; and how after an hour they left a chaotic imprint of red lines on my skin.

Then the building began.

Right around my 16th birthday they started to make headway on the construction. When the brightest hues on that landscape were no longer green, but now yellow, I knew something wasn’t right. The cold metal of the bulldozers juxtaposed the soft ground that once nurtured my moldable childhood mind. My heart was then encased in an old wooden elevator and I distinctly felt the last tendrils of its pulley system snap. As it freefell from the top floor, my stomach did a vehement dance leaving me sick and bewildered. I felt as if that place in my memory was being locked away inside a glass box, which I could always see, but never again touch. Their conquest was being erected on top of my freedom. I found it ironic that to construct Meadow Crest they completely demolished one in the process. I was livid.
This was what I felt I had to protect. However, in reality it was less like something I had to do and more like an impossible wish I had come to possess. My lamentable helplessness was the difference between the two. A ‘place’ is something which should be held sacred. Place being an umbrella term for any specific location which becomes close to someone’s heart.

When people are ‘protecting’ nature, it brings one to contemplate what exactly they’re protecting it from. In our country at least, someone might say that they want to shield it from being eaten away by the capitalistic minds of our citizens. Those who have revenue on the brain don’t think about nature as a soul possessing organism. To them it’s nothing but a would-be profit. To that group, it is not what a place means to anyone else, but merely what they can siphon from it.

Unfortunately for them, those conquests will never be as rich as memories. People will have countless experiences in their lives, but the occurrences which actually succeed in reaching deep into its holder’s chest are what will come to be valued most. When it comes down to it, this has to do with our hearts and the keys which we find have the ability to unlock them.

When someone finds they are able to invest so much of their Self, the true spiritual caverns of their psyche into something, it becomes cherished. It is a location’s staying power in the mind which calls to the heart for safeguarding. Memories may become diaphanous; they are things which without the proper upkeep have the ability to dissipate from one’s conscious. This fact definitely influences the way we value the physical origins of those memories.

While recollecting the emotional reminiscences of my field, I now know that they are precious and I revere them so. I work overtime to truly bring myself back to the way I felt, in order to be able to convey it honestly. I may not have been the savior of my sod farm, but the feelings which the event evoked in me was, in its own way, nature’s means of teaching me a lesson.
Your vote or non-vote may help pigs fly. In other words your election of government officials shapes everyone’s future, both long and short term. Do we as Americans know enough about politics to make educated decisions? Well, do pigs fly?

Here is a quick test. Did you understand the single panel above? If so, pat yourself on the back. Do you think most Americans would understand the cartoon above? Probably (and by probably I mean not at all) the overall message, but not the in depth analysis as to why it is truly funny.

The after effects of 9-11 created a climate of fear in the United States directed against those who knew about the problems the nation faced who seemingly did nothing to stop them. One government tactic to help the nations people feel better about getting to the bottom of the problem was interviewing government officials. A 9-11 Committee was formed in an attempt to help find ways to meet the nation’s need to learn everything they could about the attacks on September 11th. Since the government was taking action, political cartoonists like John Pritchett thought they should too. Pritchett draws cartoons in an attempt to help define what constitutes legitimate government, and to remind Americans what they voted for. He does so in a way that pokes fun at the government. In doing so he helps Americans realize that we do not know enough about politics and sometimes we may need things explained.

So let’s get to it. Why is this strip funny? Based on the events that occurred, Rice blatantly called our government inadequate. According to The White House official website, Condi herself thought the 9-11 Commission was very necessary:

“...we owe it to those we lost, and to their loved ones, and to our country, to learn all we can about that tragic day, and the events that led to it. Many families of the victims are here today, and I thank them for their contributions to the Commission's work.”

The truth of the situation is that we were suddenly not threatened as a nation by terrorists on September 11th, 2001. Before the attacks terrorists declared war on America. As Rice had said in an excerpt from The White House website transcript; radical, freedom-hating terrorists had already begun attacks before September 11th,

“...the attack on the Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983, the hijacking of the Achille Lauro in 1985, the rise of al-Qaida and the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, the attacks on American installations in Saudi Arabia in 1995 and 1996, the East Africa embassy bombings of 1998, the attack on the USS Cole in 2000, these and other atrocities were part of a sustained, systematic campaign to spread devastation and chaos and to murder innocent Americans,” said Rice.

In other words, the terrorists were at war with us but we had no idea. So basically Condi is saying that for about twenty years the terrorist population of the world had ganged up on us, and our government did nothing about it. Her direct words on the official White House Website were “America’s response across several administrations of both parties was insufficient.” She certainly fell for that hook line and
sinker. There was seemingly no attempt that would even closely resemble a fight for government officials and what the administration was doing to protect us from terrorists.

Our downward spiraling government and their ability to be consistently inconsistent make political cartoonists like John Pritchett a wealthy man. For Pritchett it’s like taking candy from a baby, but it was a slow progression. According to his website Pritchett Cartoons, he is originally from Florida and moved to Honolulu. There he worked as an advertising artist until he decided to pursue cartooning. In 1988, Pritchett was a student of world-renowned cartoonist and caricaturist, Ranan Lurie, in New York. Until he took a job with Honolulu Weekly where he has published a weekly cartoon. According to the Pritchett Cartoons website, during this time Pritchett has been honored with awards from: The United Nations Correspondents Association, Hawaii Publishers Association, The Hawaii Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Common Cause Hawaii, and Small Business Hawaii just to name a few.

According to the Pritchett Cartoons website, in 1995, Pritchett began publishing a weekly cartoon on economic issues, which appeared in Pacific Business News as "Pritchett's Two Cents." On Maui, his cartoons are published weekly in Lahaina News and he draws illustrations and cartoons on environmental issues for Environment Hawaii. Pritchett has published a few books on local politics including "Drawn & Quartered" and "The Unbelievable Empire," and "Jeremy's World Comics." He provides cartoons, caricatures and illustrations to national and international newspapers, magazines and Web sites.

Pritchett is pushing the envelope to political knowledge because people are more apt to read cartoons than they are to watch the news or read newspaper articles. Although it is sad to say, most citizens know quite little about politics and policy. What irks me the most is that most Americans don't even have basic background knowledge about government structure, and political parties. Quick test: Do you know the name of your congressman? What is the difference between what conservatives believe and what liberals believe? The problem that arises is not that there is no truth in our government but that not enough citizens look for it; this is the politics of ignorance.

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â€œDr. Condoleezza Rice's Opening Remarks to Commission on Terrorist Attacksâ€


Description
David Brede

O, little college girl
In a Superman shirt,
Makes me smile,
Makes me hurt.
With 10
Pink painted fingertips
And 10 bright blue painted
Toe nails,
I take your
Beauty and crush
It into sugar cubes,
Never fails,
To get me yet.

Your long brown hair
And big blue eyes,
Make me forget,
All your lies,
O college girl
In a Superman shirt,
Always the dangerous flirt.

O, flawed college girl
In a Superman shirt,
At least
You make me so alert,
You long haired
Siren in a Superman shirt,
Turns me down,
But makes me alert,
Makes me frown,
But makes me alert.
Film noir’s detective-gangster explosion of B-rated films during the 40’s and 50’s was a time period in film history with very distinct characteristic: dark, wet, hard boiled, gruesome, downright disturbing. Many of noir’s greatest masterpieces stemmed from literary work including *The Killers* and *The Maltese Falcon*. Neo-noir or modern noir gives tribute to the film noir period and encompass most noir attributes utilizing the same adaptation techniques as its predecessor, creating contemporary literature fit for film. Films like *Fight Club* and *Sin City* not only epitomize the neo-noir genre but also are prime examples of the modern adaptation with pertinent social commentary.

Film noir is a revolutionary form of film, taking all pre-noir morals and values (production and socially) throwing them out the window. We sympathize with the murderer. We root for the gangster to get away. We thrive on the grainy, dirty, sub-par production of the film noir.

Raymond Border and Etienne Chamberton in their article “Towards a Definition of Film Noir,” saw film noir as a new genre, strictly adhering to a new and very different set of conventions (19). They saw film noir as a new brand of film aimed toward the alienation, and confusion by the moviegoer who now post-war is thrown into a world of violence ambiguity. “The aim of film noir was to create specific alienation” (25).

Film noir often deals with gangsters, the underworld, with criminals fighting each other and the world itself. It takes the form of a police drama, emphasizing from the gangsters’ point of view, their escape from the police, or a private eye’s search for twisted justice.

Paul Schrader describes the film time period of noir as a style, and more specifically a transdirectional style. As he focuses on film noir based on aesthetics, mise-en-scene, as a set of films utilizing and focusing on such elements as nighttime, lines, shadows, as well as compositional tension as opposed to direct action, obsession with water, romantic narration, and complex plot chronologies to underscore a sense of time being lost.

Look at an example of film noir film adaptation to later compare to neo-noir. Ernest Hemingway’s *The Killers* was based off of his short story. There are a two film versions of *The Killers*, but Robert Siodmak’s 1946 version with Burt Lancaster pulls from Hemingway’s story more closely than the other.

In the written story, Hemingway opens with two men entering a diner, and simply being wise guy gangsters. The reader only knows what the characters of diner know- that two men are looking to kill a fellow named Ole Anderson. We don’t know why, we don’t know how. The opening scene of the film mimics that of what Hemingway envisioned, especially the dialogue but because of his Hemingway-esque minimal physical descriptions, the film viewer must rely simply on Siodmak’s creativity on the mise-en-scene and visual appearance. Hemingway’s dialogue however shows a perfect adaptation set from story to screenplay with the remainder of the film riddled with Hemingway’s famous noir one-liners:

“You’re a pretty bright boy, aren’t you?”

“Sure,” said George.
Well, you’re not, said the other little man. Is he, Al?

He’s dumb, said Al. He turned to Nick. What’s your name?

Adams.

Another bright boy, Al said. Ain’t he a bright boy, Max?

The town’s full of bright boys, Max said.

The adaptation from short story to feature length film resembles that of what Alfred Hitchcock did to Daphne Du Maurier’s The Birds. Siodmak’s increased the story, pulling from Hemingway’s originality the same as Hitchcock expands on characters, plot, and overall mood.

But what does such film noir have to do with neo-noir, and more importantly what does it prove for modern day adaptation from literature to film? Neo-noir is the term given to the modern trend of incorporating film noir aspects into film. It is simplistic in its understanding; by taking those elements that make the film noir genre/style what it is and applies it to the films of today. Experimental angles, low key lighting, the presence of polygonal shapes in the shadows, and most importantly the narration and characters presentation, including the often morally ambiguous lead male (often a private eye) and the deceptive and sexy femme fatale.

We come to the period known as neo-noir when film noir began to die out around the late 1960s. It was the social attitude and mood, which was the cause and success of film noir, and as new codes and new expectations were upheld in the film industry it so began to lose popularity. As Todd Erickson writes in his article Kill Me Again: Movement becomes Genre, By the mid fifties, filmmakers as well as moviegoers had come to rely on these new codes that were peculiar to a particular type of crime film, which endowed the viewer with visual and psychological access.

The adaptation process from literature to a neo-noir undergoes the same creative changes that take place in a film noir adaptation, bringing something new to the audience under each change as well as the important social commentary that film noir did for its time period. An example of neo-noir literature adaptation would be Frank Miller’s graphic novel Sin City. Although slightly a different style then your typical novel to film adaptation, the 2005 Sin City film was as genuine as the novel itself.

Miller writes on his admiration for the crime genre in Sin City: The Making of the Movie:

I have always loved crime stories, since I was thirteen years old at least. I’ve loved the romance of the big city, the tough guys and beautiful women, the cars and guns, and all of that. But mostly what keeps me involved in crime stories, the reason I go back to them is that under the surface, these are all morality tales. Times of great stress are clarifying times, and the crime genre, because it is so much about good and evil, delves so deeply into evil; Hitchcock said melodrama was real life with all the boring parts taken out; also the motif of crime fiction- a la Chandler, or Spillane, or Hammet- that these characters are disguised. They look like dirty knights.

Taken as the storyboard backbone from the graphic novels, the film is based on three Sin City stories: The Hard Goodbye, The Big Fat Kill and That Yellow Bastard. What makes Sin City such a solid adaptation would be Miller’s, and primary director Robert Rodriguez’s attention to composing the shots as exactly seen in the novel, from the lighting to even the sounds as well as the attention to keeping original dialogue.
Visual effects producer, Keefe Boemer said in Babara Robertsonâ€™s article The Devilâ€™s in the Details, â€œWe wanted the film to look as much like the books as possibleâ€¦Sometimes the blood is in color, sometimes itâ€™s not. Sometimes it glows white in the shadowsâ€” (2).

Some say such fidelity from comic novel to screen leaves the audience wanting more, and as Ethan Alter writes in his article, Sin City:

â€œThe film winds up retaining many of the problems that plague the Sin City books, including the overripe narration, the adolescent depiction of women and the author’s own peculiar brand of machismo. At a certain point, you have to ask yourself whether faithfulness alone is a virtue ... or a sinâ€” (2).

The question of adaptation and how creative the director should be with what they are adapting was always an issue- too much and the film is unfaithful, too little and the film failed to tackle anything new and shouldnâ€™t have even been made. Something like Sin City proves to all fans, whether film or comic book connoisseurs that a graphic novel can come alive and prove successful.

Take for example the opening sequences of when the audience was introduced to The Hard Goodbye, the character Marv. First observe the film adaptation incorporating film noir characteristics. We simply hear a voice over starting with â€œThe night is hot as hellâ€¦â€ The black shadow of an arm and a bottle are projected on a wall. Miller then cuts to a silhouetted object drinking a bottle through a windowsill marked with horizontal window slats. These images are close to what Miller drew out, with slight camera angle differences and more detailed scenery.

With the next shot, the genre of neo-noir comes alive. The colored bed and full colored sexy female burst visually to the forefront, signaling to the audience beauty when compared to this rough and cold gray man next to her. Miller never had color throughout his novels, and such an addition helped set the mood of that single room, before any other information was relayed to the audience.

Miller eventually cuts to a close up of this beautiful womenâ€™s face, with a strong backlight giving her a halo appearance. Her eye-light makes her eyes sparkle and shine with deep shadows covering her from the neck down accompanied with slight Rembrandt style lighting on her face. Her golden hair shines and accentuates her beauty especially when compared to the dark red of her lips, matching the bed in the earlier shot. The only difference from a classic noir would have to be the soft focus on the femme fatale. How does this help tell Millerâ€™s story? Not only is this close-up of Goldy an insert from the original graphic novel, the incorporation of the lighting and shadows capture the mystery and ongoing motif of ambiguity. Such shot additions are seen through the novel, helping the audience from scene to scene.

Once again, pulling from film noir history- and for a basis of comparison in The Maltese Falcon where Samuel Spade is in the office with the Fat Man. Projected on the wall is the shadow of the window, of horizontal shadows skewed- during the sequence of Marvâ€™s intercourse with Goldy, slanted shadows are seen on the highly white/black contrasted wall. Followed up with Marv smoking a cigarette, with a simple key light on his face and back of the head- film noirâ€™s signature.

On top of visuals, the dialogue used in Sin City was that pulled directly from the graphic novel. Exchanges between characters might have been shortened or adapted, but like Hemingwayâ€™s poetic one-liners and snappy conversation, Miller created his own script from literature to film. Alter disagrees in his article Sin City once again, â€œI’ve never found Miller’s Hammett and Chandler impressions to be entirely convincing; while some of the narration captures that hardboiled style, other passages sound like entries in a teenage boy’s diaryâ€” (3). Whether such a statement is true or not, one cannot deny the similarities from old noir to new, as well as pure adaptation from one medium to another.
Film noir was known for its gruesome portrayal of violence, and giving the audience something it has never seen in cinema. Neo-noir on the other hand thrives on perpetuated violence, taking each scene to a new level, wowing audiences with each punch. To continue with the story of Marv and his opening scenes, he literally explodes out of the room—giving more than a simple SKREKKâ€□ (20) to the page. The filmâ€™s ability to adapt and transform the sounds corresponding with the action brings the story to new level.

To further the idea of neo-noirs continuation of glorified violence, take for example Chuck Palahniukâ€™s neo-noir Fight Club (1999), and film directed by David Fincher. This modern book seems to have been written with the same poise and dark creativity that Hammet wrote his novels. Fight Club is a prime example of literature being produced that is fit to be made into a film, with perfect characters, tone and script.

Fight Club, although not a film involving your typical private-eye, still fits into the neo-noir format. The dark underworld, the male based lead characters, the theme of social unrest and existentialism. The most obvious of the characteristics is the dark overtone of the film. Fight Club is mostly set at night or in shadows. Another characteristic of neo-noir is the voice over narration by the protagonist, Edwards Nortonâ€™s character known as Jack and his involvement with a mysterious man and friend, Tyler. And of course who could forget the leading lady, the femme fatale is Marla Singer.

Take for example the scene from the film compared to the novel where Jack blackmauls and self-abuses himself in front of his boss in order to extort his company for financial funding. Jack and Tyler created a group called Project Mayhem in order to expose the societies faults and corporate exploitation and wanted funding to keep their underground activist group running.

This scene varied from book to film and is a prime example of Fight Clubâ€™s adaptation. Take for example the scene with his boss as presented by the book. Jack works for a hotel as a catering waiter.

In the office of the pressman Hotel, I asked the hotel manager if I could use his phone, and I dialed the number for the city desk at the newspaper. With the hotel manager watching, I said: Hello, I said. Iâ€™ve committed a terrible crime against humanity as part of a political protest. My protest is over the exploitation of workers to the service industryâ€¦the manager said he didnâ€™t want me to work here anymore, not the way I looked (107).

After this exchange, setting the scene, Palahniuk details the gruesome actions of Jack beating himself. â€œI roundhouse the fist at centrifugal force end of my arm and slam fresh blood out of the cracked scabs in my noseâ€□ (107). Palahniuk uses such strong imagery that the reader can feel the slam of jacks fist against his face. Words used like â€œdoofus,â€{â€œclowning around,â€{â€œgiggleâ€{ underscores Jackâ€™s jovial mood and intentions during his self-induced fight.

The exchange continues as he grips his boss, or as he calls him, the â€œmonsterâ€™s pant leg and begs for money. The blood â€œbubblesâ€ out of Jackâ€™s nose, and he simply utters â€œplease.â€ â€œPlease comes out in a bubble of bloodâ€ the bubble plops blood all over.â€ Palahniukâ€™s writing touches upon all senses; sound, sight, feel, and even taste, poetic like film noir, â€œthe blood falls out of my nose and slides down the back of my throat and into my mouth, hotâ€ (108).

Then just as Jack was clutching to the waistband of the hotel manager, the security guards decide to walk in. Such a scene shoes the gruesome, dark, sick, sadistic side of Fight Club, of the alter egos and manipulation. This scene varies from that of the movie, but such changes help consolidate the novels chapters and ideas.
The scene in the film opens with Jack walking into his boss’s offices with a very jovial lighthearted non-diagetic sound in the background, once again proving Jack’s unstable mind. The boss however is not the hotel manager, but instead his boss at the Department of Transportation, Jack’s main profession. In the film instead of picking up the phone and trying to contact a newspaper, Jack explains to his boss how he will be still be getting a consistent paycheck and doesn’t have to show up to work. For his compensation, Jack would not go to the authorities about the fraud that goes on within the department. This is where neo-noir continues its gruesome portrayal of violence, as we finally get visual added to Palahniuk’s written description of the fight. From the roundhouse fist framed at a low angle with a soft background, focusing on the aggressive hand clutch and shutter.

A more beat driven music melody is heard, increasing the tension and action. Jack uppercuts himself into a glass coffee table, and the raises himself to his feet and throws himself into a glass bookshelf—before a freeze frame mid-action stops the film, with the voice over of was a direct quote from the novel for no reason at all, I remembered the night Tyler and I had our first fight. I want you to it me as hard as you can (107).

The audience has the visual of a bloody, gruesome hand filled with glass hard clutch onto the aide of the sofa, as Jack crawls hand and knees with blood spilling out of his now to the, once again, waist band of his boss, and once again the security guards enter, right at the our most excellent moment.

What makes Fight Club stand out from other films, and make it a neo-noir film would be the presence of Chuck Palahniuk’s voice from novel to film. Palahniuk writes in repetition, with key words standing out the audience as if force-feeding a personal message from author to reader. You wake up at Meigs Field; you wake up at LAX; you wake up at Cleveland Hopkins; you wake up at Sea Tac, again (18-20). Palahniuk’s commentary on the consumer driven world and disjointed priorities of politics and power within the country become evident when reading his novels, and just as successful in the film.

Henry A. Giroux and Imre Szeman disagree that Fight Club productively generates such social critique, writing in their article, Ikea Boys Fight Back, how Fight Club offers a critique of the social and political conditions produced by contemporary capitalism in a way that confirms capitalism worst excesses and legitimates its ruling narrative (96). Later stating While appearing to address important social issues, these films end up reproducing the very problems they attempt to address (97).

By having such violence throughout Fight Club especially the political activist groups incorporating Project Mayhem, it is sending a message that the only response to the world we live in is to lash out. This violence acted out on film is not comments on the only way people know how to fight for what they believe in but the most primitive form of self-expression and protection, revolution and Fight Club shows that.

What changes in Fight Club is the context enabling men to assault each other but the outside word remains the same, unaffected by the celebration of a hyper masculinity and violence that provide the only basis for solidarity (Giroux 101). Such statements fail to recognize the history behind such films, giving tribute to the time period of film noir. For it was these movies creative standpoint to expose social injustices bringing them to public eye, asking the question why and fighting for the middle class man.

Films like Fight Club and Sin City are more than just a colored version of a great genre of the 40’s to 60’s, but instead a completely distinct and separate type of film. The adaptation process, whether neo or film noir, utilizes similar techniques and emphasis in the end products. Neo-noir makes a point to maintain a strong emphasis on shadows, but still allow for the addition of color and contrast. Neo-noir takes film noirs violence and visualizes the action in such a way that the audience cannot but help cringe in their seats. Modern novels are being produced with a distinct flare as if produced to be adapted to
the screen, and only the future can tell what literature will be converted into a successful mark in film history.

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B&W FLOWER - TALIA BIANCO
B&W Flower
Talia Bianco
Humans crave beauty. I think it calms us down. No one goes on vacation to the city; to retreat to a
grey metropolis of tar and concrete. Instead, we hire travel agents to take us to some remote corner of the
earth, somewhere beautiful, exotic, and maybe even magical. It’s the divergence from normality which
intrigues us. And we’ve all separated ourselves so far from a nature that we were intended to live in.
It’s no wonder we’re constantly feeling that need; the desperate desire to go back.

Having grown up in the city, you develop an appreciation for nature that suburban and country
children lack. Parks are not lush, grassy knolls surrounded by plenty of trees, but metal playgrounds, shiny
and hot in the afternoon sun. Outside of the Bronx zoo, the only animals I saw in my neighborhood were
scrappy stray cats and that squirrel that old Mrs. Homeyack put peanuts out for.

One morning, my father told me that we would be going on a trip to the country. Years ago, after
much hard labor, my grandparents saved up and purchased a bit of property in Connecticut, essential to
every city-dweller bogged down by noisy days and starless nights. But to a child, leaving the neighborhood
during the summer was the worst. My friends from the block watched my dad pack up the car and asked me
where I was going. When I mentioned the country, one of my friends perked up. “Well, my parents took
me to the country once. There wasn’t even any TV. And the ice cream man never comes.”

I watched through the back window as we pulled away from our small apartment at Lockwood
Avenue, my friends riding their bikes behind me, seeing me off. I cried as we got onto the highway despite
my dad’s protests that I would have a good time.

By the time we reached Connecticut, my tears had dried. I watched as more and more trees dotted
the sides of the road. Eventually the highway became a main road and then a winding pathway through the
woods. I cranked the window down and let the breeze hit my face. Breathing in deep, I recognized
the smells of fresh air carrying the scent of musky wild roses and sweet honeysuckle. The smells of the city
were much different. The air here lacked the scent of the gasoline or hot tar that usually stung my nostrils.

We pulled into the dirt driveway of a house barely visible from the road. As soon as I swung my legs
out of the old Buick and let my feet touch the soft, spongy earth, I was enthralled. Wild, orange Daylilies
grew in patches lining the dirt path towards the old house and unseen birds chirped and cawed in their
hidden perches. A bit of white near a big blueberry bush caught my eye, as a bunny leisurely hopped back
to his rabbit hole. Flowers dotted the shrubbery. Tiny dots of color within the verdant background of the
forest bordered the house and its adjacent golf course. Large, draping Pink Azaleas, tiny, bright buttercups,
and pale, purple Meadow beauties were arranged in wild, colorful bouquets that turned the wooded area into
a cornucopia of color and beauty.

I followed my father into the smaller building of the house, which he kept referring to as the Little
House. “We’ll just put our things down in our rooms and then we’ll go to the Big House and
I’ll make some lunch. We’ll pack it up and we’ll go down to the lake, you’ll love it there.”
entered the tiny house that contained only beds and a small bathroom with just a toilet and sink. I placed my bag down on an old mattress and followed my father to the Big House. The Big House, much larger than the other building, held a big kitchen and an enormous, wooden, dining room table that stretched from one side of the room to the other. It felt like the inside of a church, the kind of building that demanded respect. And it smelt like what I imagined the inside of the earth smelt like; damp, dank, but strangely addicting. Everything was alive here, even the house; built out of wood instead of concrete and drywall. I could feel the earth breathing under my feet.

After my father was done in the kitchen, we put on our suits, piled back into the old Buick, and started off towards the beach. It was much different from the beaches that we usually went to in New York. It was like a grassy park, complete with picnic tables and swings, which turned into a sandy beach close to the water. The lake, unlike the powerful ocean, held small waves which steadily clapped onto shore, like a heartbeat. I stood for a moment taking in the beauty before me. Forest lined the lake, a vibrant green dividing the dark sapphire water from the bright blue sky.

I spent the afternoon basking in its loveliness, swimming in the cool water and laying on our towels soaking up the sunshine. Its light provided a blanket of warmth as we sat and consumed the chicken salad sandwiches and Hi-C juice boxes prepared for us. For the first time, I knew serenity. I felt new, like the water had washed away every problem Iâ€™ve had, and when I got out, there was nothing in the world but me and the sun.

As the day came to a close, we returned to the country home, and my father started to build a fire. We sat in silence, roasting hot dogs on sticks, smearing them with brown mustard and eating until our bellies were full. After we finished, he lit a cigar and I wandered off, exploring the dark. The fire crackled in the distance, barely audible against the sound of the crickets. The air became chilly and I pulled my sweater tighter around me. As I squinted, my eyes adjusting to the darkness, I spotted a hammock in the distance, between two large oak trees. Once inside, I laid back, and immediately I lost my breath. The sky was luminous with tiny pinprick of lights. I had never seen so many stars.

This place had a soul, an energy I couldnâ€™t describe. It was like I followed Alice through the bunny hole. Looking up at that dazzling night sky, I felt so far from my tiny apartment in the city. Thatâ€™s what nature becomes for most people, I think, an escape from reality. Nature intoxicates. It makes you feel alive, and young. I think thatâ€™s the biggest part of it for me. Nature makes me feel like Iâ€™m eight years old again, lying in that hammock.

Maybe thatâ€™s why Iâ€™ve always been fascinated by it. Growing up for me, was like a stranger coming up and ripping my eyelids off; abrupt, painful, and harsh. Suddenly I was thrust into a world called reality. Each â€œlife lessonâ€ was like one disappointment after another, magic isnâ€™t real, beauty fades, love changes, and at the end of it, when we die, there may be nothing at all.

Getting older is like dying a little bit, I think. People become spoiled by the world weâ€™ve built around us. It comes in the form of a greedy man, who will knock down a country home, to make a monstrous house; in the form of father, lost to lust, who destroys a family. It comes in the form of envy that consumes us, making us immerse ourselves in a race to win nothing but green paper to help us demolish more earth. Reality destroys nature. I go back to that land sometimes; the hammock is still there, despite all the alterations that have been made to my childhood paradise. I go there and remember a time when things were simpler; when magic existed and love lasted and beauty just becomes more beautiful.

When Iâ€™m outside of reality, in nature, maybe I can escape the disappointing truths of life. Maybe man-made rules donâ€™t apply unless youâ€™re around men. Maybe Iâ€™ll finally find whatever Iâ€™ve been looking for. Maybe Iâ€™ve finally found some peace, like I did that night that changed me. That night staring up at the hundreds of twinkling stars. It made me want to cry and laugh and gaze up at
them forever. My lids grew heavy though, and soon I was no longer in the hammock, but in the sky, with the stars, and I never wanted to go home.
PASSION - ELIZABETH AVENI

Passion
Elizabeth Aveni

Blank paper is my pallet.
Stark white and staring.
Taunting yet inviting.

Pure challenge for the mind
Pure release for the heart.

And I wonder, can beauty come from nothing?
I believe that it can.

Looking at it lying there.

Virginal white.

Gurney white.

Whatsoever I wish it to be â€“ white.

I am free.
There is passion flying through my veins.
Unbridled emotion as these ideas come to life.
Onto my canvas.
Blooming black against pale.

I feel divine.
I can create.
I can destroy.
I am in control.

Finally.

I am validated.

Finally.

There are pains of a tortured heart dripping red on white.
Consumed by unspoken desires, unacknowledged thoughts, undreamt dreams.
There are more fortunate smiles illuminating the lines.
Laughing with the joy of existence, loving with no hesitation.

They are all me, and I am them.

And I know this is perfection.
There can be no greater feeling
Then amazing yourself
By yourself
With your own words
With your own thoughts

And I know
That at last
I am alive.
Look Down and You Can See the Universe.
Anne Tranquilli-Bausher

The first time I ducked my head under the water the colors instantly blinded me. It looked fake in the way that over saturated colors do. Not so much awe, as complete surprise. Yes, it can be seen from the boat, and sometimes quite clearly, but the quality of the colors is completely different when you are there. It is as if these particular colors, because they were created by nature for that eerie underwater world, can only be experienced when you are a foot away. The same scene when viewed from my living room couch on my hi-def TV does not transport me to the Great Barrier Reef, or Belize, it only makes me wistful.

I took two trips to the Reef the year I went to Australia. The first trip was on a large boat, the Ocean Spirit, which had been set up for us by our travel agent. My mother and I were two of hundreds. It was our first time ever on the Great Barrier Reef. As a thank you for taking me to Australia, I signed Mom and myself up to scuba dive. We signed thirty page waivers agreeing that our great grandchildren would not sue in the event of a stubbed toe. It was my first time ever doing anything like scuba diving. Mom and I swam with linked arms from a sandbar all the way back to our boat, about forty-five minutes. For this amazing experience, the only instruction or education about the reef we had been given was brief. Touch any animal, except for large box jellyfish, if you dare, chances are they will not give you the opportunity. As for the coral, we were told not to touch it all. Human touch will most likely kill any coral, and some coral are poisonous, so they could damage us as well.

My first scuba diving experience gave me whiplash. I spent the first minutes after getting my bearing trying to figure out where to look. I have yet to encounter any other natural environment that when observed from so small a distance, has such diversity visible. Look straight ahead and all you can see is where you are going. Sure that's important, but look to the sides and you can see the sea life you are sharing the water with. Look down and you can see the universe.

I could hear the parrot fish munching on the green slime growing on the side of the, oh my God, is that a three and a half foot wide giant purple clam? The clam was not just purple, but the kind of purple I had previously thought was only visible under blacklight. Upon closer inspection that purple was the color of the streaks on the whitish inside of the clam. This was ringed with what seemed to be both green and orange at the same time. I wondered if I saw these colors because my brain was simply not capable of translating the quality, richness and iridescence of the truth. On the greenish-orange-ish outer ruffle were small florescent blue-green circles. No, they weren't blue-green, but a turquoise lit from the inside. If it wouldn't have meant my ceasing being able to breathe, my jaw would've dropped in the wonder of this Vegas Showgirl colored clam.

I could've spent all day there trying to comprehend the colors and just watching the clam sit there. Another diver from our trip swam up to the clam, very close. He was wearing these fancy short flippers, clearly not rentals like mine. I watched in horror as he put his foot into the clam! The clam instantly snapped shut, which diver Dan the dunce clearly had not anticipated. I'm not sure who was more pleased with his look of utter dismay me, or the clam. He wrestled his foot out, flipper barely attached and sped off towards the boat.

What compels someone to tease a wild animal? I think it is a special kind of ignorance bred from misplaced confidence in nature's willingness to keep humans safe. I have scuba dived the Great Barrier Reef twice, and snorkeled the second largest reef, off the coast ofBelize, twice. Giant clams are by far my favorite reef dweller. Their fairy tale size and outrageous color choices seem in complete contrast to their sessile, non-motile lifestyle. That another diver would see this majestic creature and choose to stick his foot
in it embodies to me the negative aspects of nature as human kind’s playground. I believe nature can be a playground, a place to explore, learn, and test one’s limits. I also believe that some people think this means that nature can be used without regard to conserving resources, manipulated without regard to other species and exploited without regard to the future.

As my initial dive continued I found myself continually punching my mother in the arm. She ignored the one rule we had been given, and kept trying to touch the coral. I felt like I could see an instant darkening of color wherever she laid a finger. As our dive continued out to the boat, which was anchored near the resort of Green Island, I did notice a darkening. The coral lost its vibrancy. Colors were dulled or simply brown. Huge, intricate fans were murky sludge colored and had large holes in them, like ancient lace. Fire coral looked as if it had reached nirvana. Biodiversity severely decreased as coral was still abundant but clams, crustaceans, cichlids, cephalopods and their companions lessened. I learned afterwards that the closer to any of the resort islands, the less healthy the reef. These reefs have to survive runoff from the islands, large boats and the pollution that accompanies them and the large number of tourists making use of this particular playground.

Two days later my mother and I returned to the reef. This time we choose to travel with a very small eco-minded boat. The boat, the "Ocean Free," was owned by Captain Tim, and staffed by two dive coaches, one cook/bartender and one snorkel instructor. Mom and I were two of fifteen passengers. On the ride out the staff talked constantly about the types of animals and plants we would see. They explained that they kept their operation small so as to be able to disseminate as much information per person as possible. We sailed, Tim driving with his bare feet, and used the motor only when leaving and returning to the dock in Cairns. We traveled for longer with the "Free" crew so as to be as far away from the big ships and resorts as possible.

The reef I experienced on this trip was full of life. A flatbacked turtle the boat tried to follow seemed to fit perfectly. She was almost three feet long and here she seemed to have enough room to really move. This portion of the reef seemed glad to have a few visitors, and showed off accordingly. Our snorkel instructor showed us a portion of the reef built on old pipe, and I learned that this may be a way to help the reef have more stability.

Why is it that the image of negative impact is more compelling than the memory of beauty? Or is it the combination of the two that stokes my memory causing me to feel a longing tinged with sadness? I often wonder if I would have the same appreciation of, and worry for the welfare of reefs, if I had not experienced these depressing incidents. I think the immediate image of dying brain coral and human stupidity brought the beauty more sharply into focus. Without swimming through the foggy Green Island reef, I may have assumed the clear water of the outer reef was the norm.

On the drive to the airport to pick Mom and me up on our return trip from Australia, Ben asked my father if it would be alright if he asked me to marry him. Eighteen months later Ben and I dove and snorkled the Belize Reef on our honeymoon. Our most memorable trip out to the reef was to the Great Blue Hole which is at the center of Lighthouse Reef, off of Ambergris Caye. The snorkeling here is amazing, as there are always more species present at an ecotone, than at one habitat. For part of the day we snorkel off the caye and the water is never more than eight feet deep. So close we see tiny squid alter the color on their bodies. Our group scares a pufferfish and we get the full defensive display.

The snorkeling off the caye is difficult, because the water is so shallow there is hardly any room to move about, that doesn’t involve hitting the coral. No one does it on purpose but coral is bumped and rubbed. Ben wrote in our travel diary that night “people really should not be here” we were just too close. I know that once or twice, in an effort to move somewhere, I bumped some coral. I saw some others do it too- not at all intentionally, but the fact that it happened makes me angry- these ecosystems are so endangered and fragile, we have to preserve them.”
We traveled to Belize to have new experiences, and specifically to view the reef. The tourism industry here exploits as it educates. The reef is Belize’s biggest tourism destination, so without it the country would suffer. But the way it is currently used will spell its end. I understand Ben’s anger, we are there to see and leave nothing but waves, but simply by being there we contribute to the destruction. This cycle of thoughts leads me to a feeling of helplessness and the futility of one person’s anger is comical when looking at a cruise ship full clumsy snorkelers.

But it is our job to bear witness and do what little we can. I am a teacher, so I teach. Upon my return from both Australia and Belize my class did units on both countries, as well as reefs. My young students wrote letters to children living there, and shared original artwork of the fish we identified in books and pictures. I don’t expect them to remember any of this as adults. I can only hope of encouraging their curiosity and engaging the part of their minds that not only asks “What is that?” but “How do I live with that?”

I enjoy swimming a great deal and that led me snorkeling and scuba diving. Reefs are the first habitats I think of when I contemplate conservationism. I lived in the woods for a long time, and I adore the woods. I have visited the rainforest, and its possibilities for existing harmoniously with people awe me. So why is the reef my choice to worry about? I cannot sound my own depths and discover the reasons hidden in the darkness underneath the atoll of my mind.

I do believe that I am a giant clam. I feel unwieldy in most surroundings, but not the water. I am covered with the slime of preconceived identity trappings. I am more sessile than I should be; teaching is the only stalk I sometimes feel I have to extend into uncertain fog. Am I motile? It is not often that I feel I have the freedom to move in the way I wish, to where I wish. I am attached to an ocean floor because I have yet to evolve legs to change my position. If you happen to see my inner workings, the colors will not make sense and seem contradictory. I am contradictory and that is how I was created. My strongest defense is to close up and hide anything of interest. Mess with me, and I may make you lose your balance.

It is this oddly personal connection with the water and its inhabitants that draws me to think of, and plan visits to reefs. I am planning on having children in the next few years and I plan for and await anxiously taking them to see my favorite destination. The thought that the Great Barrier Reef will most likely not exist by 2030, when I will be a scant half century old, makes me angry. I understand that progress in the form of fuel, grazing land, and suburbia has been more important to people than preserving biodiversity and the way the earth was meant to be. I do not know how to change this. The problem appears insurmountable, but I will continue to teach and choose my activities on the thought that I will be able to say to my grandchildren, I did what I could.
The Year of the Tyger

We are prophets you and I
Amongst the sand we draw
Scattering our thoughts
Stone, broken down
With our names once carved deep
We can reach the end of the earth with our names
They will bow before us
Before this is over
They will be in our palms
Sinking through each of our fingers
Crushed into this desert
With our names
We will surprise them
THE THEME OF IDENTITY THAT APPEARS THROUGHOUT MIDDLESEX - TANIA SCACCIA

The Theme of Identity That Appears Throughout Middlesex

Tania Scaccia

In the novel Middlesex by Jeffrey Eugenides the theme of identity is evident. This novel depicts the tale of a hermaphrodite struggling throughout the years to find his/her true identity. The main character in this novel is first introduced as Calliope Helen Stephanides and within time is âœbornâ yet again as Cal at the age of fourteen. Eugenides uses certain characters and situations throughout the novel in order to understand Calâ€™s situation. The characters that Eugenides uses are Calâ€™s grandparents Lefty and Desdemona and also Calâ€™s parents Tessie and Milton. In this novel Eugenides tells the story of not only Calâ€™s life but the life of his grandparents and his parents. These characters play an essential part in the life of Cal. Each member of Calâ€™s family is a carrier of the âœrecessive mutation of the fifth chromosomeâ which ultimately affects the path in which he travels. The transition that Cal undergoes from girl to boy is a struggle for identity and with the decision of what sex to choose. Cal encounters a physical and emotional struggle with identity that stems from the fabricated tale of his families identity.

In this work of literature Eugenides describes the story of his grandparentsâ€™ and his parentsâ€™ relationship and how it came about. Calâ€™s grandparentsâ€™ were originally brother and sister but with fleeing from Greece to America they were able to admit to the love that existed between the two. After escaping Greece and on the journey aboard the boat to America Lefty and Desdemona put on a show of courtship. Lefty and Desdemona pretended to have no notion of each other âœThey passed the voyage playing out this imaginary flirtation and, little by little they began to believe it. They fabricated memories, improvised fateâ€ (Eugenides 77). Leaving behind Greece and the true relationship that exists between them they pursue to fabricate cover stories and wed on board the boat to America. This is an important part of the novel because it discusses how the relationship forms and how Calâ€™s grandparents struggle to hide their true identity from the world. After they wed Lefty and Desdemona produce a son, Milton. Miltonâ€™s birth calls attention to the fact that families intermarrying could cause deformities within a child, stated by Dr. Philobosian âœWe know now that most deformities result from the consanguinity of the parentsâ€. From families intermarrying âœ(132). After hearing this information Desdemona feared that an abnormality would eventually occur to a child in the family.

The marriage between Desdemona and Lefty is not the only intermarrying one that occurs. Milton grows up and marries his second cousin Theodora also known as Tessie. This marriage results in the conception of Callie. The relationship of his grandparents and parents are essential because it explains how scientifically the âœmutated gene on the fifth chromosomeâ€. Every so often a hermaphrodite was born, a seeming girl who, in growing up, proved otherwiseâœ (81). Cal grows up not knowing the truth that lies within the relationships in her family. This important information is what seems to be the missing piece in the puzzle. In order for Cal to understand who he truly is he needs to first understand where he came from.

Eugenides begins the novel by stating âœI was born twice: first, as a baby girlâ€¦ and then again as a teenage boyâ€¦. I was first one thing and then the otherâ€ (3). Opening the novel in this format allows the reader to understand that Cal has undergone two births. This is critical because it explains how Cal encounters a struggle to face his true identity that is not only physical but also emotional. When Cal is first born in the physical sense he is a girl with female genitalia. From the point of his birth till around the age of twelve which is the beginning of maturation Cal is viewed as a girl. During the time of puberty physical aspects of a girlâ€™s body are supposed to develop. In Calâ€™s case these natural physical developments never took place âœthe flat chest, the nothing hipsâ€¦. Gradually, as most of the other girls in my grade began to undergo their own transformations, I began to worryâœabout being left behind, left outâœ (322). This was a beginning realization that Cal was not like the other girls in society. The first friend that Cal has a relationship with is Clementine Stark. The relationship between the girls is odd because for Cal there is an underlying attraction. Cal does not understand at the age of seven what this
attraction could possibly mean. Then again at the age of fourteen Cal befriends a girl Obscure Object and has this same attraction, but now older she realizes that it may not be normal. Cal at this point is still not physically maturing as a girl but begins to fake getting her period. Eventually, Cal learns of her situation that she is both male and female.

Although, Cal was raised as a female in the beginning of his life he has always had a male brain. Since the age of fourteen Cal has accepted his sex as a male and has lived the life of a nomad. As an adult Cal works in the Foreign Service and does not stay in one place for a long period of time. He is continually moving from place to place in order to keep relationships to a minimum. He also conceals himself behind his physical appearance by wearing double breasted suits which make him feel more secure as a male. On a deeper emotional level Cal struggles emotionally with his true identity. He has become physically a man but emotionally he is battling within himself over which identity he most relates to. Cal is never secure within himself as a male Calliope surfaces….It's like being possessed. On the sidewalk I'll feel a girlish walk take over, and the movement brings back a kind of emotion. At times Cal seems confident in being a male but we see through his relationship with Julie that he is insecure. He never opens up to her emotionally or physically instead he retreats. Eventually, the relationship fails due to Cal’s inability to connect with Julie. Cal is not open about his gender situation, sometimes he tells all at other times he tells no one depending on his emotional state. Cal does not view himself as a normal human being because of his condition. Cal compares himself to the Greek creature Asterius who was a born a monster not by choice but by fate. The monster was produced by fruit of betrayal and hid himself away from the world. This Greek creature could correlate with Cal because he was conceived through the tale of lies and deceit. Cal like Asterius goes through life hiding away from the world and avoiding confrontations. Cal avoids personal contact in an emotional way because he is ashamed of what he is. The fact that his conditions renders him sterile he feels as though he is in a position to never marry. Cal is in emotional turbulence over the state of his conditions and is filled with shame. Cal is continually struggling for unification within himself both physically and emotionally. A part of the reason Cal is divided about his identity is because he does not know where he truly originates from. Since Cal was born he was told the fabricated lies about the family’s relationships. Keeping the reality that his grandparents were originally brother and sister from Cal has complicated his life. If Cal was presented with the truth that his grandparents and parents relationships had to do with his deformity he may have understood it better. The struggle that Cal experiences with his identity is partially because he feels as though it was somehow his fault when in actuality it was the fault of his family.

The struggle for identity in the novel Middlesex is a physical and emotional struggle for the character of Cal. The identity that Cal eventually assumes is false just like his family history. Genetics plays a major role in creating the deformity that Cal lives with but is not the reason why his life is in turmoil. The true reason that Cal can not fully adopt one sex is because until the end he is unaware of the true relationships in his family. The truth behind the relationships of his grandparents and parents gives him a better understanding as to why he was born the way he was. Cal struggled with his identity because he was ashamed of the person that he was and as a male used materialistic things to overcompensate for it.

Work Cited

What’s up? My name is New Jersey. That’s right; the third state in the Union is actually writing this to you, the reader. There seems to be some kind of talk amongst the other states that New Jersey is a dirty, disgusting place to live.

Well first of all, FUCK YOU!

Second of all, FUCK YOU!

And third of all, I’m gonna tell you why you should go fuck yourself because New Jersey is a phenomenal state to live in.

New Jersey is split in three areas. We’ve got Northern Jersey, Central Jersey, and Southern Jersey. Let’s discuss why each of them adds to make New Jersey the best state in the nation.

Northern Jersey is home to such stars as P. Diddy, Mary J. Blige, James Gandolfini, and Hope Davis just to name a few. Where do you think those city slicking New Yorkers go for a Sunday drive in the country? Northern fucking Jersey, that’s where. The country for you city boys is Northern fucking Jersey.

Northern Jersey is the classy part of the state. Lots of money and lots of secrets. I can guarantee you that Northern Jersey suburbs are more gossipy, fun, and slutty than your suburbs. Ever hear of “Desperate Housewives”? Yeah, based on New Jersey suburban housewives. But they can’t show you the good stuff on TV. We know how to fuck your sister, get a blow job from your mother, and if we’re feeling it, get a handy from your dad all without saying a word.

And we do it with class.

Don’t be jealous.

Big hair, a bigger laugh, and an even bigger sex drive, Central Jersey girls are special girls that God spent a little extra time on. Nobody messes with a girl from Central Jersey. They are born with daggers in their eyes and machine guns in their hair. They may not have the class of a Northern Jersey girl, but then again they could kick your ass and then feed it to the Rottweiler her daddy bought her in the backyard.

Central Jersey is the industrial part where Newark Airport and Elizabeth are located. It’s the part you’ve driven by on the Garden State Parkway. If you’re going to judge a state by its highway, then you can shove that fucking highway up your ass.

Then there is always the reliable Southern Jersey, where, regardless of the Philadelphian smutty accent, still resides the beauty of the Atlantic Ocean and the gorgeous beaches of the Jersey Shore. No other state in the nation has the killer boardwalks like we do, and if you think you do, you fucking don’t. The beaches from Atlantic City to Cape May to Long Beach Island all stretch for endless miles and the sunrises are like nothing you’ve ever seen before. We originated salt water taffy and our arcades and casinos can eat the shit out of yours. If you even have any, losers.
Sure I may curse like a mother-fucking sailor, and sure, my fucking citizens may do it too, but New Jersey is the Garden fucking State. We gave you Jon Bon Jovi, Bruce Springsteen, The Sopranos, Michael Douglas, Jay and Silent Bob, Meryl fucking Streep, the first gay governor in the nation, and unfortunately Tom Cruise. (We regret that one.)

But to all you nay-sayers, you can go FUCK OFF! Because Jersey is the SHIT. So take a big whiff of that New Jersey air and have a nice day.
Funeral Hues
Tommy Sands

Wind the watches, turn the light
Feed the starving minds tonight
Let music play and symbol crash
And guide human nature’s path.

Let free minds speed the earth
To tell the tale of worth
Put ribbons on the wrists of trees
And let the Human be.

There is a life and there is death
The sleeping night and wedding dress.
A sun, the light, a simple way.
I dreamed that life would be today

Shelling stars of time to ply,
Shut up folks and kiss the sky
Soak the moment and the fire
That blessed this life of lyre.
I saw you standing there in the rain. It was pouring but you didn’t seem to care. It made me wonder if the habit really is that consuming. Why else would any ordinary person intentionally stand in the pouring rain? I consider the fact that maybe you weren’t ordinary, maybe you were different than the rest of them; maybe you were more like me.

Each stride I took brought me closer to you. You were intriguing, and I wondered if you would even want to bother with a girl like me? Still, what’s the harm in trying? If I just say hello and start a conversation who knows what’ll happen.

So, I continued walking, contemplating the first words I would utter to you. Step by step I glided toward you holding in the words until the perfect moment. But to my disbelief my legs continued to carry me passed you. The words were on the tip of my tongue, but as our eyes met my prompted words slipped away and I silently nodded hello. With cigarette in hand you waved. I walked on unable to do anything more.
ELIZABETH BENNET AND LADY BRETT ASHLEY - JOANNA HOLLAND

In Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* and Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* two drastically different female characters living in dissimilar societies are presented. Austen’s heroine, Elizabeth Bennet, is a strong, traditional eighteenth-century woman who has been shaped by the submissiveness and stability of society, while Hemingway’s Lady Brett Ashely is an indestructible woman who has been influenced by the fragmentation and disillusionment of the society in which she lives. Elizabeth and Brett differ in their views of love, sex and intimacy, and marriage.

Elizabeth Bennet is a strong, stable, and independent woman. Her views and ideas pertaining to love, sex and intimacy, and marriage are traditional. The time period in which Elizabeth lives does not allow for any behavior which is not traditional. In Elizabeth’s world, one may fall in love rather quickly and many times one must choose a companion on first impression alone. Even though marriage is synonymous with submission to one’s husband, Elizabeth believes marriage and an intimate relationship with a man are sacred. At this time, the world is relatively stable; Elizabeth stands strong, and never compromises her morals or ideals. According to Anke Werker, Elizabeth and the other women of this age, â€œwere real, they knew life and the world surrounding themâ€”(Werker 24). Although women like Elizabeth are strong and stable, they still must be married or risk being shunned or ridiculed by society.

For Elizabeth Bennet, love is a sacred and serious entity. She loves traditionally and when first meeting a possible suitor, remains reserved and observant. Elizabeth’s traditional views of love cause her to never engage in premarital sex, to never take the first step in a courtship, and to remain in a secondary and submissive role in a relationship. Elizabeth’s courtship with Fitzwilliam Darcy is a prime example of how Elizabeth’s views of love are traditional. According to John Hardy:

> â€¦ no two characters would, on the face of it, seem less likely to marry than Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy. Because of his manner of slighting her at the ball, she has from the start â€œno very cordial feelings towards him.â€”(Werker 24) Yet they do almost immediately notice each other (36).

Hardy’s discussion explains Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s initial feelings for one another. From the beginning, the idea that Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy will fall in love is unfathomable. Although the two â€œimmediately notice each other;â€”Elizabeth remains reserved because Mr. Darcy’s prideful personality causes Elizabeth to have a natural prejudice towards him. Elizabeth is intelligent and understands that love takes time to unfold. As a traditional woman, Elizabeth is aware that a man makes the first move in a courtship. Elizabeth takes love seriously and understands that when she does fall in love with a man, the relationship she has will be one that will be sacred and last a lifetime.

When Elizabeth does begin to recognize that she may love Mr. Darcy, Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth. Unfortunately for Mr. Collins, Elizabeth does not love him. For Elizabeth, love is for one man only and she has begun to fall in love with Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth declines Mr. Collins by saying, â€œAccept my thanks for the compliment you are paying me. I am very sensible of the honour of your proposals, but it is impossible for me to do otherwise than decline themâ€”(93). Elizabeth’s speech indicates her strength and stability. Elizabeth’s ideas about love allow her to decline Mr. Collins’s proposal. She is able to recognize that she is not comfortable with accepting a proposal of marriage from a man with whom she is not in love. Being the traditional woman she is, Elizabeth will not marry any man who comes her way. She will only marry the man she truly loves.
Elizabeth’s traditional and stable ways are referred to again when her sister, Lydia Bennet, elopes with George Wickham. Earlier in the novel, Elizabeth learns the truth about Wickham’s past and she does not resume contact with him; however, she also does not tell her sister about Wickham’s true personality. Lydia is a young woman who loves prematurely and does not understand the true sacredness of love; therefore, Lydia dives into a marriage with the unstable and unworthy George Wickham. Interestingly, Elizabeth turns to Mr. Darcy when she hears the news of her sister’s elopement. Elizabeth explains:

“I have just had a letter from Jane, with such dreadful news. It cannot be concealed from anyone. My youngest sister has left all her friends has thrown herself into the power of Mr. Wickham. They are gone off together; she is lost forever” (235).

Elizabeth’s emotional reaction exemplifies how strongly she feels about tradition. Unlike Lydia, Elizabeth would never sacrifice her values and marry a man whom she does not know well and does not truly love. According to Elizabeth’s response, Lydia has made a grave mistake. Austen writes, “the humiliation, the misery she was bringing on them” (236). Austen describes the embarrassment Lydia has caused for not only Elizabeth, but the entire Bennet family. Elizabeth’s traditional views of love cause her to remain steadfast in her beliefs about love and, therefore, Elizabeth would never risk her family’s reputation like her sister has. Love is a sacred, strong, and stable entity for Elizabeth. She knows love and how love and a relationship with a man are viewed by the world.

For Elizabeth, not only is love sacred, but intimacy is sacred as well. In Elizabeth’s world, an intimate relationship is not synonymous with a sexual one; rather, intimacy is expressed in the form of teasing. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy have a very unique relationship because of their constant teasing. John Hardy explains, “her constant challenging of him fosters and holds his interest” (40). Hardy’s words clearly describe the relationship between Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy. Elizabeth constantly teases and challenges Mr. Darcy’s character and this teasing serves as the couples more traditional and reserved form of intimacy. Hardy then discusses one of many scenes in which Elizabeth mercilessly teases Mr. Darcy:

“But it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule.”

“Such as vanity and pride.”

“Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride where there is real superiority of mind, pride will always be under good regulation.”

Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile.

“I am perfectly convinced by it that Mr. Darcy has no defect. He owns it himself without disguise” (qtd. in Hardy 42).

Hardy’s example portrays one way in which Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are intimate. Elizabeth’s constant teasing of Mr. Darcy does not anger Mr. Darcy; rather, he finds the teasing both unusual and stimulating (42). Elizabeth’s teasing is not harsh or derogatory; rather, her teasing is playful. Hardy writes that Elizabeth’s teasing merely excites his interest, but has the potential for establishing something more like intimacy between them (43). Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy’s intimacy is not sexual; rather, it depends on their ability to be playful with one another.
Another way in which Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are intimate with one another is through their conversations. The way the couple converses is just as unique and intimate as the way in which they tease each other. Hardy writes, “their conversations together have what only they can share” (43). From the beginning of their courtship, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy are able to communicate unlike any other couple in Austen’s novel. As the novel progresses, the couple’s conversations draw them even closer and strengthen their bond. When Elizabeth’s sister, Lydia elopes with George Wickham, Elizabeth is devastated and turns to Mr. Darcy:

Darcy, in wretched suspense, could only say something indistinctly of his concern, and observe her in compassionate silence…

Elizabeth’s vulnerability and ability to converse with Mr. Darcy about such a serious matter clearly exemplifies the intimacy of their relationship. Elizabeth is able to openly express her feelings of sadness and guilt, while Mr. Darcy shows concern for not only Elizabeth, but for Elizabeth’s sister as well. Although Mr. Darcy does not say much, the two are experiencing true intimacy. According to Austen, this conversation with Mr. Darcy causes Elizabeth to reevaluate her feelings. Austen writes, “never had she so honestly felt that she could have loved him as now” (236). Conversations such as this one allow Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy to be intimate, which, in turn, allows them to fall more deeply in love with one another.

Elizabeth Bennet is a traditional young woman with traditional views regarding love and intimacy; however, she is even more traditional when it comes to her views and ideas about marriage. In Elizabeth’s society, a woman’s goal is to find a suitable husband and marry at an early age, which often means being submissive to one’s husband. Alison G. Sulloway explains, “But there was a worse fate than marriage and life-long subordination to a man who treated a woman with reasonable affection and respect, and that was finding no man at all and living at home with scornful parents” (147). Elizabeth is aware that this belief rules the way of the world in which she lives; however, unlike her sister Lydia and her friend Charlotte Lucas, Elizabeth will not marry any man who comes her way; rather, Elizabeth is careful and reserved while in search of a husband. Elizabeth understands that she must marry or risk being ridiculed by society and her family, but she will not risk her morals and ideals just to satisfy those around her. Elizabeth remains patient in her search for love and denies proposals from suitable men, such as Mr. Collins, because she knows herself and understands that she can have a marriage founded on love and not submission, which is what Elizabeth comes to find with Mr. Darcy.

Unlike Elizabeth Bennet’s traditional, stable, and understandable society, the modern society in which Lady Brett Ashley lives is drastically different. Brett is a woman lost, broken, and fragmented by a culture plagued by war, injury, and death. Incidentally, her views about love, sex, and marriage are fragmented and disillusioned as well. Brett’s behavior is not traditional; rather, it is defiant of her society’s stereotypes. As a result of the fragmented and disillusioned world in which she lives, Brett is an indestructible woman. Mimi Reisel Gladstein describes Brett by explaining, “She is a complex woman who has suffered and endured” (61). Brett’s ideas and views of love, sex, and marriage are fragmented, unlike Elizabeth’s stable views. Love, sex, and marriage are not sacred because nothing in the world is sacred. Brett deviates from the stereotypes of her day because society has caused her to become disillusioned and unsure of the true meaning and sacredness of love, sex, and marriage.

According to Harold Bloom, “One of the most persistent themes of the twentieth century was the death of love in World War I” (107). Individuals, including Lady Brett Ashely, are all incapable of
love (Bloom 108). Brett is a poor, lost soul living in a world that lacks love and affection. Unlike Elizabeth, Brett does not believe that true love exists and she does not understand the true meaning of love because true love cannot survive in such a fragmented world.

When Hemingway introduces the reader to the relationship between Brett and Jake, it is clear that the two must have experienced love sometime in their past. Now; however, the love they once shared has vanished. While Jake and Brett converse, Brett’s true feelings about love are revealed:

â€”And it’s a lot of fun, too, to be in love.â€”
â€”Do you think so?â€” her eyes looked flat again.
â€”I don’t mean fun that way. In a way it’s an enjoyable feeling.â€”
â€”No,â€” she said. â€”I think it’s hell on earthâ€” (35).

Brett’s dull and lifeless expression demonstrates the lifelessness of the world. Jake’s response to the â€œflatâ€ look in her eyes clearly demonstrates that he is attempting to salvage whatever is left of true love. Brett’s feelings about love are clear; love is â€œhell on earth.â€ Her ideas about love are just as dull and flat as the look in her eyes. For Brett, true love has been lost forever.

Unlike Elizabeth’s traditional and reserved views about sex and intimacy, Brett’s ideas about sex are quite different. Sex is meaningless for Brett because the idea of sex as something sacred has been lost. In Brett’s world, intimacy does not exist; rather, intimacy is replaced by promiscuous relationships with many men. Incidentally, her life is a never-ending circle of sexual promiscuity. She defies society’s stereotypes of women and gives her body to countless men. According to Harold Bloom, society has turned Brett “into the freewheeling equal of any man” (110) and the events of the world have released â€œher from her womanly nature and expose[d] her to the male prerogatives of promiscuity” (110). This turn from feminine submission to stereotypes to masculine defiance and promiscuity clearly explains why Brett is referred to as the indestructible woman. Brett is not affected by emotions or commitments; rather, she is able to engage in sexual relationships without putting her feelings on the line. She has replaced her â€œnatural warmth with masculine freedom and mobility” (111), which is clear when Hemingway writes about Brett casually sleeping with Robert Cohn. Sex is simply a recreational act for Brett. There is nothing sacred or important about her sexual relationships with men like Robert Cohn and Pedro Romero.

Mimi Reisel Gladstein describes the men in Brett’s life as â€œprostitutes.â€ The men, including Jake and Robert Cohn, â€œFirstâ€¦ worship at her shrine, then they prostitute themselvesâ€ (60). A prime example is when Robert Cohn and Brett spend a weekend in Sebastian together. Throughout their time together, Cohn serves as Brett’s prostitute. Gladstein explains, â€œOnce their weekend in Sebastian is over, she rejects his attempts to give their relationship any special significance. His slavish devotion to her and doglike worship destroy his prideâ€¦and leave him nothingâ€ (60). Brett’s defiance of her stereotypical feminine roles cause her to be promiscuous in her relationships, to have sexual relations with no emotional attachment with men like Cohn, and then to simply walk away. Sex is so meaningless for Brett that she is able to cheat on her husband, Mike, have a sexual relationship with Cohn, and not feel any sense of sorrow or guilt. The state of the world has left Brett numb and unable to feel, which is why she is an indestructible, promiscuous woman.

Although Hemingway alludes to a romantic connection between Brett and Jake, there can be no relationship between the two because the war has injured Jake and left him incapable of sexually satisfying a woman. Because of Jake’s injury, Brett has decided that they cannot act on their feelings for one
another. For Brett, there can be no true relationship without sex. At the end of the novel, Hemingway writes:

“OH JAKE,” Brett said, “WE COULD HAVE HAD SUCH A DAMNED GOOD TIME TOGETHER.”

Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

“Yes,” I said. “ISN’T IT PRETTY TO THINK SO?” (251).

In this final moment, Brett and Jake come as close as they will ever come to having sex. Brett presses against Jake, but there can be no real sexual relationship because the war has robbed Jake of his manhood. Brett sadly laments about the life that they could have had together if only Jake had not lost his masculinity in the war. The presence of the mounted policeman is a key image in this final conversation between Brett and Jake. The policeman’s baton is clearly a phallic symbol, which is ironic considering that Brett and Jake cannot engage in a sexual relationship. The policeman stands for all of the things that Jake is not because of the impact of the war. Bloom describes the importance of the policeman by stating, “WITH HIS KHAKI CLOTHES AND HIS PREVENTIVE BATON, HE STANDS FOR THE WAR AND THE SOCIETY WHICH MADE IT, FOR THE FORCE WHICH STOPS THE LOVERS’ CAR, AND ROBS THEM OF THEIR NORMAL SEXUAL ROLES” (117). The war has robbed Jake of his manliness, as well as his ability to be in control and in charge of the situation with Brett. The war has also robbed Brett of her lover, which is something she will never be able to fully live with.

Considering Brett’s promiscuous tendencies, it is of no surprise that marriage is not a sacred element in her life, unlike how marriage is a valued part of Elizabeth’s life. Brett is in fact married to a man named Mike Campbell; however, her commitment does not deter her from being unfaithful. Brett’s unfaithfulness is a direct result of her ideas about love. Brett does not believe that true love exists. Therefore, how can a marriage based on love and trust exist? In Brett’s world, it is impossible for a strong, stable marriage to survive. Incidentally, Brett’s ideas about marriage lead her to be an unfaithful and promiscuous wife.

Brett’s actions cause her husband, Mike to suffer. Brett does not have a care in the world for Mike and after she has slept with Cohn, she moves on to the young bull-fighter, Pedro Romero. A conversation between Brett and Mike reveals exactly how Brett views marriage and how Brett’s actions are affecting her husband. Hemingway writes:

“How’s your boy friend?” Mike asked. He had not listened to anything that Brett had said.

“She had a Jew named Cohn, but he turned out badly.”

Brett stood up.

“I am not going to listen to that sort of rot from you, Michael.”

“How’s your boy friend?”

“Damned well,” Brett said. “Watch him this afternoon.”

“Brett’s got a bull-fighter,” Mike said. “A beautiful, bloody bull-fighter” (210-211).
Mike’s words are an indication of the hurt that Brett’s infidelity has caused him. He is painfully aware of her relationship with Pedro Romero and Brett’s past relationship with Cohn. The state of his marriage causes Mike much heartache, while Brett has no feeling of guilt about what she has done. She coldly tells Mike to “watch her boyfriend this afternoon in his bull-fight. There is nothing Mike can say or do to change his wife’s actions because their marriage is not sacred to Brett. Brett will never be satisfied or content with her marriage to Mike because the state of the world has caused her to be completely disillusioned and she is no longer certain of what truly matters in her life. The idea of a sacred marriage based on love and fidelity is no longer a stable element in Brett’s life. According to Bloom, Brett and her inability to love and remain faithful serve “to show us that romantic love is dead, that one of the great guiding codes of the past no longer operates” (109). The true nature of marriage is meaningless and dead.

Elizabeth Bennet and Lady Brett Ashley are two strong women living in drastically different societies. Elizabeth’s society is relatively stable and traditional, while Brett’s society is disillusioned, fragmented, and lost. Elizabeth’s society causes her views of love, intimacy, and marriage to be traditional. Love and marriage are sacred entities and intimacy is not synonymous with a sexual relationship. On the other hand, Brett’s society causes her to become an indestructible woman who defies her society’s stereotypes by having multiple sexual relationships. Brett’s views of love and marriage are quite different from Elizabeth’s. Love is not sacred; rather, true love does not exist. Sexual relationships and intimacy are meaningless to Brett. In turn, sexual intimacy and love are replaced by Brett’s promiscuity. The dissimilarity of Elizabeth and Brett’s societies cause the two characters to have completely different outlooks on their lives, relationships, and marriages.

Works Cited


*SELF PORTRAIT - CHRISTINE PALUMBO*
Self Portrait
Christine Palumbo
Lady in the Water: Of Cynical Critics
Shaun Mitchell

I just came back from seeing M. Night Shayamalan’s *Lady in the Water*. This is not a movie review, however. I am writing because that is how I express myself and hopefully someone will read this one day and know what I am talking about.

I loved this movie. To be perfectly blunt, it gave me the kind of goose-bumps that make you feel warm inside, like a kid gets when seeing fireworks for the first time. That is saying something because, honestly, I never get goose-bumps. Now to the reason why I am writing this little essay: to try and understand why critics and audiences hated this movie.

As of today, July 30, 2006, *Lady in the Water* has a 22% approval rating of all major and minor critics, according to Rottentomatoes.com. It would probably be even less if audience polls were taken. Whether that number is going to change or not, I don’t know. But to be honest, this is one of the cases where a critic’s word may not be golden.

As I watched the movie, (on the beach, no less) two middle-aged women and one middle-aged couple got up and left about a quarter into the movie; pretty much just as the plot was starting to thicken like a succulent stew. Then, as I was walking off of the beach with my parents, (yes, I saw the movie with my parents) I overheard multiple conversations bashing the movie. All of this got me deeply disturbed. I was disturbed mainly because the greatest fault of this movie, according to critics and hateful audiences, is the whole basis of the movie â€” the fantasy element.

People said that what happens in the movie could never happen in real life and that the plot was full of holes. Well let me tell you something â€” so is Swiss cheese, but people still eat it. Of course these things couldn’t happen in real life, it is a fantasy-filled story. If you want to be that cynical and believe that sea-nymphs called “narfsâ€” can’t exist, even in movies, then you are better off not coming to the movies at all. If you can believe that Patrick Swayze is a ghost chasing after Demi Moore, or that Harry Potter can go through platform nine-and-three-quarters, then you can damn well believe that Bryce Dallas Howard is the friggen *Lady in the Water*. And if you can’t, then I feel bad for you. I really do. It means your imagination is clogged by thoughts of too much reality.

Maybe Iâm just a dreamer. Maybe Iâm too imaginative. But when has that become a bad thing? I believe that movies, films, motion pictures, whatever you choose to call them, were created for a certain entertainment value that folks in reality do not get on a daily basis. Where else can we see the magical land of Narnia? Where else can we see a man made of machines and still have scissors for hands? Since when have we, as a people, become so blinded by ourselves to not see the beauty of a motion picture that tried to do something only the lucky ones have been doing for years â€” dream. M. Night Shayamalan is a dreamer like me. Maybe thatâ€™s why I liked the movie so much. Maybe thatâ€™s why Tim Burton movies appeal to me so much.

I like a deep movie as much as the next person. A solid drama with nothing but tight dialogue, great acting performances, and a gripping plot will keep me entertained without the special effects and the fantasy. But when does a fantastic view of the world make a movie dull or silly? Maybe *Lady in the Water* failed at being too deep, but what happened to the entertainment quality of a movie? Where has that gone and what does it count for, if anything?

I believe in movies. I do, I really do. Movies are always able to evoke emotions and images and feelings and visions that nothing else besides books come close to. When movies like *Lady in the Water* get
a bad rep for trying to be unique, different, engaging, everything a movie should be, it makes me worried about the future of cinema. This movie has a thought provoking story, frightening images, funny dialogue, and a masterful performance by Paul Giammatti. If critics and audiences cannot see past a creative bedtime story involving a creature from another world, then we have got some serious issues people. I encourage going to movies with an open mind. Believe the unbelievable. See the invisible. Imagine the unimaginable.

That’s what movies are for.
DILEMMA - CHRISTOPHER KARDOS

Dilemma

Christopher Kardos

Of near and of far
Could even land you on a star
Can’t even talk to kin
As remorse soon sets in

The sun is no longer shining
To show beauty in the sky
Oh the possibilities of a passerby
One that could make you fly
Causing emotions to go so high

Wayward on a another path
On that might lead to wrath
One day hoping the two paths cross
So as to not toss fates message away.

Gathering up a sense of wonder
Bushwhacking through tough emotions
Leading to the plunder
Gone weary on such a path
Upon arrival to the destination
No longer was there a definite reason
For such treason
Forgotten is the truth
Of what was sought
For the object could not be bought

Falling in and out
Of this round about of life
Oh such strife
Now not knowing a true direction
Is it because of an imperfection?

Going to be bold
Oh it will be told
On the path of a story
Don’t you worry
Moves will be made
Hoping it be swayed
To the Corner and Back: The Place I Call Home

Ashley Winseck

My corner of the world is a stretch of two roads that intersect sharply as Kellogg Road and Boardman Street collide at the base of an unnamed mountain. The roads have cut the land at the base into geometric shapes which have been cultivated into fields of grass and long rows of corn that I used to get lost in for hours. These fields that surround the two roads are cut off by woods, which meet a river, which borders the main road from which traffic can be heard but not seen. On the other side of the main road, more open fields and winding roads eventually lead to the base of Mt. Everett and the line of small mountains that neighbor it. The view on the other side is of New York, or Connecticut, or more of Massachusetts, depending on which direction you face. But you can not see all that from my corner at Boardman and Kellogg. All you can see is the mountain behind you, the fields in front of you, the tree line where they end, and the solid, blue mountains that rise in the distance to meet the sky.

The roads are owned by the town, the fields on both sides, by a farmer down the road and out of sight. But these fields at this corner are part of a view that touches a place in my heart. The farmers may own the land, but the landscape itself, well; I like to think it belongs to me. It has been the only constant in many years of change. I have passed those fields riding a bike, driving my first cars, with different friends. As I grew up learning life’s lessons, the only thing that stayed the same, was the corner, their fields, and my love for all of it. Every spring the grassy stretch before the corn rows would turn green again, growing ever taller as the earth warmed up. Every summer the corn grew steadily; first appearing as tiny green spouts that I could have overtaken in a moment; eventually reaching to the height of my knees, letting me know that summer was in full swing. By summer’s end the corn was always taller than I was; a sign that the first day of school was right around the corner.

After summer, when the leaves changed, the trees around the field turned bright orange, and red and gold and when I walked to the corner it seemed as if the world was glowing. Winter blessed the fields with snow and when I had used up every square inch of snow in my own yard to sled and build snow men and snow forts, I would go down to the field, as if it were my backyard, as if the snow was there for me alone to enjoy. When the snow melted I would endure the few long months of New England’s mud season, that time before spring when the snow ceases to fall and the earth can’t seem to produce anything green. Eventually, spring would come. Spring always came, the grass always turned green, and I began to tell time by the height of the corn. And always in the distance, the mountains watching over me and my life on Boardman and Kellogg.

A round trip to the corner and back is roughly half a mile, part of which is open road running along the first field of tall, itchy grassy nothingness. Standing on this part of Boardman Street lends a view of so many different worlds all meshed into one, and I am a part of it. If I turn my back on this view and walk north toward my driveway, the view is obscured slightly by trees and a few other homes. On both sides of the street the trees rise up meeting tree top to tree top over head, blocking out the sky, creating a leafy tunnel that filters sunlight down to my skin. And I am home.

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I am nine years old, my sister, seven. We are lost, but we are not scared. We are not worried, we are laughing. Beneath our feet the dirt is soft and damp and our foot prints follow us as we walk. Above us, the corn stalks block the sun, the blue sky peeks through, and from somewhere down the road, my mother’s whistle signals that it is time to go home. For what seems like hours, maybe even days, we walk the length of a single row knowing that we will eventually meet the road. The leaves of corn stalks scratch at our bare legs, and we stop constantly to itch. When we finally reach the road, we follow it to the
corner and hear the whistle again; a third whistle means we’re in trouble, so we begin to run. My mother does a thorough tick check, lecturing us about deer ticks, lyme disease, the usual. But we don’t care because our minds are still lost in the corn field.

As children though we appreciate nature for what it is, naturally. We do not cloud our minds with worries of ticks or rabies, spider bites, sun damage. We are in it for the adventure, the pure thrill of the unknown, taking advantage of the open fields and the open sky and everything it has to offer the imagination. Only as we grow older do forces of nature become clear. Back roads that lazily wind along a river, skirting around trees and over hills suddenly become our enemies when a car traveling just a little too fast meets an unforgiving tree with devastating consequences. Something about growing up brings reality so quickly and unexpectedly into our lives, it seems as if our imaginations are thrown abruptly out that car window as it smashes into the tree called reality and we open our eyes to realize that this is called life. When you look at it that way I think we’d all rather be children again, lost in the corn, where the only thing to be sure of is the sky above us. Maybe that’s why the corner always meant so much to me, no matter how fast reality came at me, I could still always go to the corner and be a child again. That was my personal savior; the view of the world from the corner was how I survived, and still survive growing up.

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I am thirteen years old. My mother drives the mini van out of the tree line on Kellogg Road and into the open fields, following it to the corner. I sit in the back seat with my sister, arguing over nothing. My aunt sits in the front seat, gazing in awe at the view. As the mountain in front of us looms higher as we move closer she signs and says, “Just seeing these mountains makes me feel good.” My sister and I laughed a little; it seemed like such an absurd statement. How can the mountains make you feel good? A lifetime of suburban sidewalks and views of a city skyline in Houston have left my aunt deprived of places like my corner. While I spent most of my years thinking this corner was mine, my home, my view, I couldn’t have been more wrong. Countless people must have appreciated this place, this little valley between two mountain ranges, this corner of the world.

But how many eyes could possibly take in this view? How many people would find themselves at an intersection so remote the town opted to use a yield sign rather than a stop sign? Stopping is, for the most part unnecessary, for two reasons: one, because only on occasion are there two cars approaching the intersection at the same time, and two, because the roads run along with fields, with unobstructed views, so that any approaching vehicle can be spotted long before collision. And so, most days, I can make the 90 degree left hand turn without so much as slowing down.

So how many people have been to this intersection? The answer is hundreds, thousands maybe. Running parallel to Kellogg Road for almost its entire length is the Appalachian Trail. A few posts and a single tree bare the white rectangular blazes that keep hikers on their course. Who can say exactly how many feet have walked that part of the trail? No doubt locals tired of hiking to the peaks of Mt. Everett and Monument and Greylock have tried out the Trail. Their cars are often seen lining the field under the large, lonely tree, as if its branches could offer some protection that the open fields could not. Of course, the serious hikers have crossed the intersection passing through on their journey south to north or north to south, depending on the time of year. They have sat in the shade of the tree near the corner, taking in the mountains from a distance, perhaps glad to finally be on a paved road, or taking one last moment to stand on flat ground before traversing the steep hill which Boardman Street borders.

It is a strange feeling, to realize that your secret corner of the world is really not secret at all. That it is, to some extent, a tourist attraction; or maybe a place so common it really isn’t special at all. But I refuse to believe that. Maybe I would be forced to share this place with others, after all it was something beyond my control, by no one could feel about this corner the way I felt, no one could be a part of that world they way I could.
I am eighteen years old. My father is shaking me awake sometime after midnight. There’s a meteor shower said to begin around 3 a.m. and my parents and I plan to see it. So we climb into the cab of the truck, and my father drives down to the corner. He pauses at the turn, as if he can’t decide from which field we should view the sky. After pulling over, my mother and I lay out blankets over the tall grass. The moon is astonishingly bright enough to see through the dark, as if our eyes never had to adjust, as if we were made to live in the dark. It is eerily quiet. Long after the crickets and frogs have ended their nightly conversations, long after the coyotes nighttime howls and cries have stopped, it seemed like a time when the world was not really alive.

Occasionally, I find myself jumping at the sound of rustling grass as some creature runs past us, a reminder that the field we lay in is just as alive as we are. My father tells me not to worry, just be still, be quiet. And that’s what we do. We lay for hours on our makeshift beds, with pillows under our heads and the tall grass surrounding us, walling us in on all sides. The only sign of civilization aside from ourselves is my father’s truck parked on the corner, proof that we came from somewhere.

That night it was as if we had driven a hundred miles to a corner we didn’t know. This wasn’t the same corner I had visited all my life. I couldn’t see the mountains anymore. Their color blended in to the color of night, as if they were never there to begin with, and I had imagined them all these years. The longer we stayed in the middle of that field the more out of place I felt, and I knew then that I had never really experienced this corner. I had grown up loving it for what I could see. I could walk through it at leisure, take in the view, I could feel moved by it, but until that night I had never lived in it. We were only a few yards from the field’s edge, from paved road, from home, and yet there we were in the middle of a different world, at 3 a.m., waiting for the stars to fall.
America, the Beautiful
Tommy Sands

America,
Poor sad, grayed fool.
Your petty sales and stacks of souls,
Loose everything in a smile.

America
Brittle, old-timer
Your fords and products
Have expired in contempt.

America,
Eastern thought of Christianity
Demigods and dualities
Plummet to promiscuity

America,
How your heart bleeds
And your children weep with depression
Swallowed by the green-eyed money maker.

America,
Fake-smiling deceit
Poeticizing every anxiety
With a placebo of pills.

America,
Who are you
A greyer fool,
Mythical independent plush of life

America
Green fields and rays of light
Protrude the dark clouds
Of economic essence.

America
The living and the dead
Embodied in one
Through patriotism.

America
Who runs your pride
Your smiles, tears, joy
Can what was be?

America
Taxes and sexes
Combined
Into bitter individual fools
Who pity experience.

America, Do the celestial heavens cause wonder anymore?
America can you breathe through your own
Stand on you own two feet without a crutch.

America,
The American dream
The disco, techno, heavy metal scene
The fried couch potato.

America,
The rich, the poor, the fools,
The beggars, the suffering
Elements of humanity

America,
As my pen bleeds black
I wonder what happened
To red, white, and blue.

America,
Cry tears for life
Stop such non-sensical nihilism
From rooting seeds
In our generations.

America,
Breathe,
Step out of the quicksand
Of corrupt capitalism before it swallows you whole.

America
Are you listening
Or are you bickering
Channel on a late night info-mercial.

America,
Stocks, blocks, full of potential
To build a home for individuals
Who know themselves.

America
Recognize your rights
Stand up and fight
Respond to yourself.

America
What happened to the stead fast pulse.
The beating pulp of our forefathers
That made this plot of wilderness land, America.
A LIGHTLY EDITED LETTER TO SENATOR BARACK OBAMA - CHRISTOPHER LOUREIRO

A Lightly Edited Letter to Senator Barack Obama,
Written November 27th, 2006
Christopher Loureiro

Senator Obama,

Iâ€™m a healthy, thin 22 year old college senior from Connecticut. Iâ€™ve never voted and am not even registered (although I lean to the left in more ways than one). I know nothing of politics besides the punchlines pulled from The Daily Show and The Colbert Report, of which I seldom watch. However, I feel it fitting that we have a little talk, heart to heart man to man.

I love really like you. Iâ€™ve caught you do Q & Aâ€™s on BookTv. Iâ€™ve seen you speak on several news channels. Iâ€™ve read about you in Time, U.S. News World Report, and various newspaper publications. You seem so honest and sincere and handsome in a world filled with lies and corruption and ugly people. Youâ€™re the only Democrat that has stood out from the pack, tall and shining like a beacon of hope for the entire country. People look up to you. I look up to you, and itâ€™s hard for me to look up to anyone. Senator Obama, you just may be the perfect man political person weâ€™ve seen since JFK.

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD DONâ€™T YOU FUCKING THINK ABOUT RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY. Please donâ€™t run for president.

Donâ€™t even think about it Barack. Iâ€™m serious. Iâ€™ve seen what happens when someone asks you about the P-word. You sorta half smile, your cocoa colored cheeks turning rosy while your big, dark eyes suddenly shimmer with a great twinkle. I know that fucking twinkle. Donâ€™t you think I donâ€™t know what youâ€™re up to. Donâ€™t you dare twinkle again, or so help you God Iâ€™ll stab your eyes so they never ever twinkle and only cry your sweet red blood.

This is for your own good Barry. Everyone and their mother knows that youâ€™re going to do it. You pussyfoot around the issue time and time again because youâ€™re going to do it. You just want to come off as coy, shy, as if perhaps being the leader of the free world is just a bit much for the Big O you. Stop doing that â€” itâ€™s way too charming. You are charming enough. When you do that itâ€™s like a puppy suddenly finding his tail, and begins to happily chase it around and around. Youâ€™re a fucking puppy already! You donâ€™t have to do anything else other than be a Goddamn puppy. Itâ€™s not good for you politically.

B-Unit Senator, if you run, you will win. Itâ€™ll be a huge landslide victory, and historians around the world will busily be scrawling the endings to their new yearly textbooks. The Republican regime will finally end with a cheer. People will rejoice, and dance in the streets singing that Ding Dong song from The Wizard of Oz. Newspapers around the world would declare a new Renaissance. The war in Iraq will come to a screeching halt and everyone there will settle their differences through grueling rounds of Bridge, while the North Koreans put all their nuclear power into producing consumer friendly jetpacks. The Beatles will reunite in a special Heaven and Earth concert in Central Park. Lost will finally start producing some answers. Things will be very good.

Itâ€™d be paradise - a sweet utopian moment when every single state on the map except for Alabama goes blue. They go blue for you. Iâ€™d definitely go blue for you. Oh God Iâ€™d go flaming blue for you. But you canâ€™t do it. You canâ€™t do it. You canâ€™t do it. I know you want to do it. But you canâ€™t do it. Youâ€™re dying to do it, because if you do it, all those things will happen. I know this for a fact. For about a day things will be pure bliss. And itâ€™ll all seem worth it.
And then Michael Richards some white supremacist person will come leaping out of nowhere and lynch you.

He has it in for you Senator. The man is ape-shit and bat-shit insane. That’s two mammals and their insane shit! The man is crazy. We’ve seen him snap once already, and that was just at a comedy club. Imagine what would happen when he finds out a black man has been elected president! He would literally start to convulse, speak in tongues, and shake his way around to wherever you were in order to pound your handsome face into nothingness.

Normally I wouldn’t be worried, but Kramer is bigger than you, Bobo. And you just don’t fuck with someone bigger than you, especially if they’re as wacked out, coked up, fucking zany as Mike is. I don’t care how many secret service guys you got on you – he will find you, pop out of some door all quick-like, and punch you in the head like Billy Budd. And then it’ll all be over. The country will fall into shambles, all because you couldn’t fucking listen to me. But these people mean business.

So listen to me OBIGEBUSINESS. DON’T RUN. DON’T even like, jog. Ever. Because if you do, that man will get you. He will get you and my heart will be broken forever, and it’ll be bad. Instead, just come move in with me. We will go on adventures, and I’ll never hurt you. I promise. Stay a Senator. You can do much more good that way. I promise.

Love Always, Sincerely, Christopher Loureiro
Eternal Dreamer
Amanda MacDonald

If I let myself fall asleep in your arms
Will you hold me while I dream a dream
Of perpetual fantasy and imagined love
With the perfect amount of give and take
Where nothing falls to diminished hopes
Of fairytale endings and sappy in betweens
Forever entwining to form melodic choruses
That sing only for us when we are together
Under a clear sky full of stars that smile
At the sight of your lips on my forehead
And casual laughter at insignificant entities
That dance to the sound of your voice
Telling me again why Iâ€™m beautiful
Even when I awake in the morning, still then
Will you have held me through the night
So that when I open my eyes I see you
With your body pressed against mine
And when you awake on my perfect morning
After my perfect night, with me in your arms
Will you still long for me to call you mine
Until the stars no longer smile upon us
And this fantasy, however constant, ceases
The Bardo State: Somewhere Between Dreaming and Waking

Annie Bellettiere

I once read somewhere that dreams occurring just prior to waking can be hazardous to your health.

I frequently have trouble distinguishing between dreams and waking life.

My dreams are a series of images that repeat themselves night after night.

My waking life is a series of images that repeat themselves day after day.

I used to have a recurring dream that I was a contestant on The Price is Right. However, the setting was always the humble home of a suburban black family. The game was always Plinko, but Bob Barker was always absent and there was never a live audience.

I was curious to find out what this dream meant. To my dismay, Game shows wasn’t listed in the index of my Decoding Your Dreams book. I figured the next best information source was the Dalai Lama but it seems His Holiness is out of commission during the spring and summer months. My problem was soon solved when one evening while shopping for groceries, I ran smack into a Buddhist monk. Only it was my Jewish neighbor Hiram dressed in a Buddhist temple robe. Anyway, he looked straight into my eyes and said this: To dream that you are on a game show, suggests that you need to change some aspect of your life around. You may be experiencing feelings of uncertainty of what the future may hold.

This is Bardo. In Tibetan the word means literally "intermediate state." It can also be translated as "transitional state" or "in-between state." I’m very fond of the Bardo state.

I always woke up starving.

Sometimes I would wake up in a trance unsure of whether or not I was still dreaming.

When that happened, I would go into the kitchen with the intention of preparing a feast for myself.

Instead, I would pick up a small paring knife, slit my finger, and taste the blood to be sure I was really awake.

Usually I woke up when the knife sliced my finger.

I never felt hungry after that.

Occasionally there was no blood. No salty metallic taste in my mouth. That’s when I knew that I was still dreaming.

I would try to will myself back into consciousness, fighting tenaciously. Often I would hear rain on the windowpanes. I would imagine the rain drops were Plinko chips and helplessly surrender to another dream.
The dreaming and waking states have many similarities. I think it can be said that humans spend a good portion of their lives in Bardo, trying to forget the past, fighting against the future.

I love that Bardo state.
ODE TO BEING DRUNK - SHAUN MITCHELL

Ode to Being Drunk

Shaun Mitchell

I have enough sense in me to know I am drunk,
Yet I feel compelled to write a verse about this state of mind.
Please forgive the free verse, in which I write,
It is much like Walt Whitman, a homo in his own right.

I am a college student.
I am an English major.
I am a little drunk right now and I want to express the feelings one gets from
being inebriated. (I can’t believe I spelled that right.)

Dizziness takes over the body,
A state of resurrection takes hold of my two decades.
Will I change my ways tomorrow?
Will I be the same?

Fate remains a friend of mine while I write this ditty.
Although modern it may sound, historical it has in heart.
I will teach the greatness of writers long past.
I will teach the world to sing in perfect harmony.

My roommate sleeps with a loud noise in his mouth, a
And I feel tempted to put a sock in it.
He remains the worst part of life,
And for that I remain content in thinking about the future with Brian.

Housing sucks as much as a newborn sucks a nipple,
Because I already lost much over it, and lose more still, I shall.
It is sad, but still a reality of life.
Life is a series of hello’s and goodbye’s

I don’t want to sleep because I fear I will never wake,
And for that reason I do not drink very often.
In college, though, drinking becomes a pastime,
Like baseball in America.

We do it to escape.
We do it to be free.
America is the land of the free.
And free is what we shall be.

Maybe I should write more when I feel this way.
Maybe I should be the man of the hour.
Maybe I should stop this junk.
Maybe I should hold the power.

This may be the longest poem I write,
And my life will agree.
For I am no poet,
Just a college student living the college life.

Inspiration comes in many ways,
In which I cannot always see.
Be open to the world,
And the world will come to thee.

You may ask why I type so perfectly,
If I am to be drunk.
It's all a state of mind, I say,
As is all life, accordingly.

A state of mind for you and me,
It's what life remains to be.
Take it as you may,
But take it you will.

I take life with a sense of humor to douse the pain,
And I remain a believer in true love, true blue, and hard rain.
I try to rhyme and make sense,
But my life remains something to climb, much like a fence.

I study all day and night until my eyes go crossed,
I study what I can for my professors great and bad.
I learn what I can, and I take all I need,
In the end, though, it is what remains in your heart that stays and breeds.

These four lines can't prove a thing,
Just that I am a college student finding a way to escape.
I chose movies over the clichéd alcohol usually,
But tonight, well, tonight, my perspective changed a tad.

It is a rite of passage to swig down some beer,
Every college kid does it just for the fear.
The fear of being a prude.
The fear of being wrong.

Take away the fear and be the human you are inside.
Be the best that you can be,
And if drinking remains that person,
Then that person you shall be.

I remain a good citizen,
Whom obeys the laws of this sweet campus.
Was I really drunk,
Or really an observer?

That you shall never know unless you are five,
The five that remain in my heart,
As the people who believed in me.
Someone should always have somebody to believe in them.
And if you don’t, then I will,
Because that is the American way.
American I am,
American I will stay.

So on those nights that you feel compelled to drink,
Think about me dear friend,
The one who always thinks,
For I will show you the way until the bitter end.

Maybe one day I will write to you again,
About my woes and my heartache.
Perhaps about being American,
And about our American way.

Being drunk is not for everyone,
And although curiosity gets the best of us,
Remain the individual you are,
Because in the end, the individual is all you have.
Each of us sits, undisturbed within our chambers.

Waiting,

Praying for release,

Begging the hammer of bad luck to press down against our backs and set us free.

A Pull,

A Click

Strike!

Nothing.

Silence in its complete, nerve-destroying intensity. I revolve around, clockwise, waiting to fester in some foreign, grey matter, no longer filled like a sponge with intellect and life. I wait, to dig through layers and layers and lodge myself into and through the path of an ear canal. I make a clear pathway of destruction through years of cancer and tumors building up. In reality, I am putting my victim out of misery.

Enough guessing,

What am I.

Iâ€™m not Russian, but they call me a liar.
The repugnant odor of raw sewage is sweeping through the atmosphere. There's a roaring monstrosity racing through the eerily silent suburban town. Everyone is standing still on the street waiting. Each person shares the expression of terror as they patiently await their doom. My eyes widen and my heart sinks into my chest. The deafening clamor grows thunderous and trembles the earth. As the smell of death comes closer, people begin to panic. Families quickly scatter in all different directions attempting to outrun their fate. The shrilling screams of my neighbors puncture my ears. I feel as if the cement has swallowed my feet and my body is left stiff and powerless. All I can do is watch. My bleeding heart begins to pump faster and faster until it finally stops for just a moment.

It's here. The beast has arrived to viciously sweep away all of God's creation. It stands 200 feet high and is growing at a rapid speed. It towers over me like a predator ready to pounce on its prey. Slowly the monster keels over creating a colossal shadow blocking out all the rays of the sun. Our heads look up in fright to catch a final glimpse of the merciless wave that is about to obliterate life as we know it. Families clutch onto their loved ones and I remain glued to the ground. We all take one final breath and within seconds, the massive tsunami crashes down. It slams into the quaint suburban town; first taking out the gas stations and drug stores, and then continuing on the destructive path of washing away my neighborhood street by street. I hear the rumbling of the mom and pop stores crashing against eighteenth century colonial houses, the glass shattering, power lines bursting and people wailing.

The unforgiving tidal wave sweeps me off of my feet, as if a rug has been pulled out from under me. I hurl into the air and fall through what used to be the Emerson family's garage. I lose consciousness. My eyes open and all I can see are fuzzy outlines of people attempting to swim to the surface. I inadvertently take a breath. Water begins to fill my lungs and I can feel my body being carried away. I try to swim upwards but I am losing my strength. My body now feels numb and my brain feels frozen. My lifeless shell floats among the sea of the dead. My essence transcends and perches over me as I watch my dead body swoop away with the tide.
STORMY BEACH - ERIC BLUM
Stormy Beach
Eric Blum
Can I ever live off the fruits of land?
Take the warm touch of nature’s hand.

Must I be technology, chips, and steel?
Things of economy that, burn, churn, and steal.

Do the designers that sell my clothes,
Make me. Who am I?

Demons of being, seeing, and believing
Market enterprise has been oft deceiving

But mere words are the simplicity which we preach
Our beings are so dumbed, we can never reach.

The essence of ã€œTo beâ€, ã€œto seeâ€ to feel.
Such murky waters slosh the human mind.

For to think, is to be, which was to be.
But moments pass like tides of sea.

History is but an idol that we praise,
Under an ortho-western’s gruesome glaze.

Deal with this, with what, with this false hue.
The voice that has replaced me, through and through.

Techno-gizmos suck the spirit of soul
While wanted goods harbor my control.

Cold as ice, but fate is nice, until it cant be stopped.
Like a nuclear missile, in denial of where it has been dropped.

The things you own, own you,
One by one, two by two.

I see my parents, my cousins, my hope,
Sucking on the teat of TechNet’s dope.

Money is profit, without a soul.
Breaking and Breaking until we are too old.

But winter has come along with frost
That will not be analysis cost.

Everyday is a mission to sell, sell, and sell.
Until such sales soothe hell, hell, hell!
While I hope to inspire but just one mind,
Human sight has become blind.
PRESSURE COOKER - STEPHANIE LAWLESS
Pressure Cooker
Stephanie Lawless

Too much,
too soon,
just-stop-just-leave
The thoughts you bring will make me heave

And I can’t stop this acid march
As it crawls up the wrong way
And I can’t drink, my thirst to parch
With all the things you’ll say

All I can do is look at you,
And hope that it is clear
That if you stay, all you will say
Will bring on painful fear

I cannot stand another band
Slipping o’er my throat
Each cuts deeper than the last
And I don’t get a vote

Your words, backed by emotion
Control me through my guilt
I’m drowning in their ocean
Cause that’s just how I’m built

And I can’t tell anymore
If it’s somebody’s fault
But I can’t drink these water-words;
I’m choking on the salt.
Life isn’t like a game of chess. There are no winners in the game of life I thought as I deliberated my next move.

I considered these two men. They were my past but only one would be my future.

One was Vanilla, sweet and warm, uncomplicated, predictable. He made me feel beautiful, made me the center of his world, and was willing to devote himself completely to me. A mathematical engineer, he evaluated the risk and reward of the stock market and he was most definitely a safe investment.

However, safe was staying in on Friday night to watch Jeopardy and play Scrabble. Safe was attending black tie affairs and holding my tongue during cocktail party banter with his stuffy, uptight colleges. Safe meant never having to worry about paying bills, perfectly creased pants and overly starched button-downs, gated communities and expensive prep schools. Safe was boring.

The other was Chocolate--dangerous, reckless, with a temper that came out when he drank too much. It was with him that I learned that extremes are all relative. He was intoxicating and knew how to get me so high that I often wondered if I would ever come down.

Everyone said he was â€œbadâ€ for me. Just because you had a past didn’t mean you need to have a future they told me. He had hurt me so many times and I had forgiven him every time. Still, he knew me better than I knew myself, because he looked at me and saw everything. He saw what I didn’t want to see. He loved what I didn’t want to see. He loved without restraint.

I looked down at the ring on my finger and thought about what it represented. Love, fidelity, commitment. I took it off and slipped it into my pocket. I was sitting in his driveway. My headlights were turned off because if he knew I was there, he would come downstairs and let me in and that would be the end of things.
They say that sometimes the hardest thing and the right thing are the same. Well, how about when both things are hard? Then which one is the right one? In saying hello to my future I was saying goodbye to my past. Is the future sometimes more important than the past? Or is the past what defines us? When do you hold on and when do you let go?

I saw a light flicker in his bedroom and his silhouette in the window.

I slipped the ring back on her finger. I had made my decision.
Too Distant Moon
Alessandra Sillo

Dedicated to my mother

Yellow "soars deeper and deeper,
into mulberry-scorched depths.

But can He ever touch the Moon?
Without being swept up
and Taken in,
by Wind's black fingertips?

It's voice --
a low, subtle murmur,
scratchy, coarse, familiar
Stops the sweet-honey cadences,
of friendly, leafless Oaks nearby.

Caught amid Night's sharp, crusted labyrinth,
Yellow longs for golden streams
of autumn sunlight,
but only sees a glistening, white smile.

He looks into His hard, pointed face,
and asks, "Will I ever be free?"
But, Night only stares and blinks.

Yellow flees,
and continues to fall further into
Fog's hollow, pitiless abyss.
Just above peaks of trees,
yet bereft of satiety.

All which remains of His voice,
is a mere dry, empty screech;
not hearable to the ears of those
who pass stony-eyed below.

Too distant Moon "
Yellow takes Wind's velvet hand,
and settles midair.
For the white world
is too far, far away.
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Housed in the College of Arts & Sciences and rooted in liberal arts tradition, the creative and performing arts at Sacred Heart University strive to provide each student with an awareness of and an appreciation for the beauty and order of artistic endeavor. The creative and performing arts inculcates an aesthetic approach to the physical worlds of sight, sound, and space, emphasizing not only the achievement of creativity, but the very processes that foster those achievements. They afford students multiple opportunities to develop their imaginations, employ their unique creative activities, discover themselves as aesthetic beings, acquire knowledge about the world of art, and ultimately become makers of the beauty and order they have been taught, by their study of the creative performing arts.

Additionally, the creative and performing arts serve to enrich the university at large. By summoning from within all of us a response, to our spiritual and aesthetic needs, by fulfilling the desire for order felt by all, by allowing us to indulge our mysterious sense of the beautiful, by connecting us to the historic treasury of art, music, drama, literature, photography, and film, in short, by teaching and delighting, the creative and performing arts play an integral and critical role in helping us realize fully our essential humanity.

Dedicated to interdisciplinary and multifaceted nature of the creative and performing arts, Horizons is a student edited journal the showcases the talent of Sacred Heart University in writing, art, and photography. These works by students strive to awaken sensibilities, to challenge assumptions, and to extend and encourage lively debate.

As a student edited journal, student editors are needed in poetry, fiction, drama, art and photography. Independent study hours are possible. For information about becoming a student editor or submitting work to Horizons, please contact Dr. Sandra Young, faculty editor, English and Modern Foreign Languages.

For more information about the creative and performing arts at Sacred Heart University, please contact Art and Design, English, Media Studies, and Music.