This year’s issue of *Horizons* is titled “Limbo: A Collection of Liminal Spaces.” Life is one gigantic stage of transitions where we are in perpetual states of limbo, or luminality, a threshold between our previous selves and the new selves we are in the process of defining.

Who are we as we work through the different stages of our lives? We constantly toe the lines between the different stages of our life. Are we - heroes or villains? The naïve or the wise? The explorer or the homebody? Each section of *Horizons* delves into our collective experiences as we work through these different stages of our lives.

*Horizons* is thrilled to celebrate the uncertainty of these liminal spaces and encourages the continued exploration of the self.

Travel with us. Together we celebrate the transitions we experience in this year’s collection of work.

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**Announcement**

*Horizons* is in its 30th year of publication. It is time for a new name, one that continues to speak of and point to the future of its contributing writers, artists, and photographers.

*Vistas* will premiere in Spring 2016.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**
**Innocence**
1. Sarah Backus – Balloons
2. Matt Wagner – Honesty
3. Christina Ciuf - An Eight Year Old’s Arrhythmia
4. Danielle D’Onofrio – Dress-Form
5. Meredith Conroy – Growing Up
6. Danielle D’Onofrio – The Butterfly
7. Raymond Corriea - Pure Memory
8. Edward Feeley – Snow Fell in Winter
9. Elise Bean – Chika

**Lover/Explorer**
1. Carrianne Dillon – Pont des Arts, In the style of Henry James
2. Raymond Corriea – Fresh Love
3. Brent Middleton – Winters at the Beach
4. Christina Ciuf – Serpent’s Grip
5. Linda Vichiola-Coppola – Exploits of a Cemetery Tourist
6. Edward Garrity – Crossbreed Series
7. Matt Wagner – Hang
8. Mark Podesta – Green Aisles
9. Dennis Hutt – Gone to the Moon
10. Samantha King – A Fighter
11. Allie Potenza – Springtime
12. Sarah Backus – Fantasy Island
13. Christine Zangrillo – Spell Bound
15. Dennis Hutt – You have such sparkly eyes
16. Leanne Scorcia – Pintup
17. Melanie Vollono – Misadventured Piteous Overthrows
18. Willow Holschuh – Sans Regrets (French)
19. Willow Holschuh – Sans Regrets (English)
20. Elise Bean – Crescendo

**Outlaw/Hero**
1. William Sanchez – Memorial Day: A Weekend to Forget
2. John Brownell – A Take on Gambling
3. Brent Middleton – Eternal Commitment
4. Danielle D’Onofrio – Anti-Smoking
5. Kim Snyder – The Epic Heroism of Samwise Gamgee
6. Brent Middleton – Best Friends
7. Michaela Lachance – Chronic Illness and Frailty
8. Antoinette DiVisconti – Bus Accident
9. Judith Tacuri Brito – Kick out the Hooligans
10. Michaela Lachance – Something
12. Mary Awad – Deny Thy Father, Refuse Thy Name, So You May be American
13. Kaitlyn Bush – Grape Juice
14. Edward Garrity - Soo, I Was Thinking

**Ruler/Creator**
1. Elise Bean – Bliss
2. Brent Middleton – Cartoon Shadows
3. William Sanchez – Let’s Go To Yogi’s
4. Leanne Scorcia – Brooklyn
5. Taylor Walsh – Subconscious Sexism in Voting
7. Sarah Backus – Solitude
8. Taylor Magnotti – To Be Fair
9. Jane Kenney – Better Safe Than Sorry
10. William Sanchez – SHU Built It, The Weed Smokers Came
11. Linda Vichiola-Coppola – A Diaper Happens

**Sage/Philosopher**
1. Tess Pieragostini – Contextual Evidence: A Collection of Vignettes
2. Edward Garrity – Profile Picture
3. Mark Podesta – Why I No Longer Want To Be Gay
4. Chelsea Frenette - Aristotle’s Prime Mover
5. Maribel Paredes – Overload
6. Stephanie Sorbara – Gut Bacteria and Their Influence on Metabolic Disorders
7. Maribel Paredes – Study After Tim O’Brien
8. Raymond Corriea – Live These Words
9. Carrianne Dillon – Music, Literature, and Trauma
10. Sarah Backus – Adventure is Out There
11. Rachel Andriunas – Vicious Human Nature
12. Brent Middleton – My Philosophy of
13. Mikaela Marbot – I Text Therefore I Love
14. Megan Ofner – Grow Up
Honesty
Matt Wagner

I miss the confusion of youth
That delicate yet persistent realm of emotion coalesced with thought
That phantom friend who followed in my shadow and in my tears
That always arrived both a step too late and a second too soon
That spark that flickered brighter than the stars at whom I declared my dreams

I miss those friends
The grabbing of arms and clasping of hands
Those nights spent in monologues whose words mattered little
But weight mattered most
The press of the passenger seats and the symphony of taillights
The baffling bills and the laughs surrounding
The simplicity in the statements we found so complex

I miss the warmth of flowing blood
The network of love and passion beneath my skin
That burned purely and clean
And heated the air when we strove for something great
That nullified all traces of the elements
So long as we kept turning
The highest peak of the tallest tower could not compare
To the exaltation in my chest

I miss the agony that screwed my eyes
Those feelings of hurt and delusion that colored my sleep
Something magically sinister that held me in its clutches
Yet tempted me to deeper levels
The kindling of thoughts wicked and elusive
A land uncharted behind my lids
And the aspiration to know it leaked out from behind them
Onto the scape of my days

I miss the expansion of my heart
The promise of passing days in that graying haven
That made needed the space in my memory
For every new face I was destined to meet
To hold or to chase
To spurn or to save
Whether with me at every sun
Or seldom with wavering days
Those who came to know my name
Became something more

I miss whatever untrained sense
Told me that tomorrow would only come if I willed it
That the portrait would spin only the colors I chose
In my perfectly limited canvas
I had no need for anything beyond it
And my palette seemed it would never run dry
A lingering sentiment tells me it’s still fresh
But weary eyes welled with tears provide
Another source for the brush.
An Eight Year Old’s Arrhythmia

Christina Ciufo

All I remember was darkness. I was only eight when my world changed. I still can remember that day in 2001 when I could no longer participate in cheerleading, any sport, or any activity. Some days I am still haunted by the vulnerable version of my former self in her cheerleading outfit crying. I still remember the day when my perspective of the world changed forever.

It was a blustering icy October day at a vacant football field in downtown Shelton. My mom watched me practice while she sat on the steel benches with her friends. The mothers talked about the latest gossip and my friends and I stepped in line to begin our cheerleading routine. The tips of our toes met in sync to the beat as the cheerleading coach clapped her hands steadily. However, I could not keep up to the beat of her hands. My legs refused to move. They felt stiff. Then, I suddenly felt a rush coursing through my head. A roaring tremor in my head commanded my body to stop. I found myself spinning out of control, as my surroundings became a blur. Everything, even the people, had no detail. They were massive clouds without a face. Then, everything went dark.

“Christina...Christina...Please wake up!” Mrs. Brewster whispered in my ear.

“My baby girl! Please wake up! Please respond!” my mom whimpered as tears streamed down her face.

I could hear muffled voices around me. My eyes did not want to open to the world. The darkness was all I could see. Then, I felt something icy on my back. With the phantom touch of ice and steel, I had the energy to open my eyes. As I opened them, everything became clearer. My surroundings were clear, even my mother was not a blur. I saw my mother weeping with Mrs. Brewster beside her. Then, I turned slightly to my side. As I turned to the football field, I found myself on the other side of the fence: watching girls my age continuing to practice their routines without me.
What’s going on, Mommy? Why am I not playing with the other girls? Why are you crying, Mommy? Why am I crying?

Worry and fear consumed my mother’s face as she looked at me. I, an eight year old, could not comprehend the thoughts that raced through her mind. Slightly turning her head to Mrs. Brewster, she feared for the worse and she told Mrs. Brewster the situation at hand.

“Patty, you have to get Christina to a doctor. There might be something wrong with her. What if it were to happen again to her? What if she never wakes up?” Mrs. Brewster calmly said to my mother.

... 

Later that week, my parents took me to the children’s hospital in New Haven. I can still recall how I was bewildered by the events from the last week. As the doors opened wide, there were many children like me laughing and playing with their stuffed bears while the infants whimpered at the sight of people in long white robes. We sat for a while until they called my name with a teddy bear in their hand. That teddy bear with the blue bow around its neck was for me and I held onto it throughout my examination. My parents stood silently as one by one the doctors examined me. Being eight, you would think that when you go to the doctor that you would get your chicken pox shot and a cherry lollipop. No, it was different for me. I remember the doctor’s exact words to me.

“Christina, what you have with your heart is a condition called syncope arrhythmia. That is rare for an eight-year-old to have. Mostly people over sixty would have it, but it is a genetic trait in your family,” he said it calmly as he wrote on the pad.

“Will I be able to play with my friends?” I asked the doctor.

“Christina, with the condition that you have, I am afraid that you cannot participate in any sports or activities. We don’t want you to faint again. It is probably for the best,” the doctor replied to me.
I did not say anymore. I was silent throughout the visit. The doctor calmly talked to my parents and they just shook their head. They knew that I would never be like other children. Not with an irregular heart like mine. Walking out of the hospital that day, I thought that I did something wrong for God to give me a deformed heart.

*God, was it because I yelled at my parents when I shouldn’t that my heart is the way it is? Was it that I was a bad kid and wanted all toys for myself? Was it that I was mean to my baby brother even though he hit me first? Why God?*

I thought for the longest time on the way home. My parents tried not to let it get to them, but I knew that they took it hard.

“Mario, what are we to do now? She can’t participate in any sports anymore. I might have to tell the cheerleading coach that Christina can’t be on the team anymore because of her condition. Christina was having so much fun with cheerleading. It just breaks my heart to see her not being able to play with other kids without having to worry whether she is going to pass out or not,” my mother said with anger in her voice.

“Patty, I know that you are upset about this, but it is the best for Christina. We don’t want her to pass out the way she did. What would happen if we weren’t able to detect it in time? What then? Having someone opening her tiny chest with a knife on the table and dying? I know that it will be hard for her, but she will get over it as she gets older,” my father calmly told her.

... 

“Mommy, am I going to cheerleading today? Why aren’t we getting ready to go to practice? Mommy?” I said with a whimper.

“Sorry, honey. We can’t go to cheerleading today or ever. You remember what the doctor told you. You can’t participate in any sort of activity or you might faint again. I had to call the cheerleading coach and tell her the situation. She also agrees that you can’t participate
anymore. It might put too much stress on your little heart. It is for the best,” my mom calmly said to me as she drank her coffee.

_I can’t play anymore with my friends? Is it because my heart is broken and not like everyone else’s heart? Is it that no one wants to play with me because my heart is “broken”?_

All I could do was cry sorrowful tears and with my tired little legs I went into my room. Planting my face upon the soft cushion of the pillow, I cried unbearably.

Every time I sleep, I still believe I hear my eight-year-old self-crying from the news my mother gave me. I still see my mother, who stood at the doorway and cried silently as she saw her little girl breaking down for the first time. As I cried with the teddy bear in my little arms, I knew that I would never be like other kids and the arrhythmia was not going to go away like a sore throat or a simple cold.

The arrhythmia was a part of me and, for a long time, I had a difficult time accepting it. I thought that if I told people that I have this arrhythmia, then they would laugh at me and not understand the everyday struggles of an eight-year old child. They only saw a healthy, happy child on the outside and nothing more. When I told my friends of my condition, they could not understand it themselves since they did not have to deal with it. The only thing that they dealt with was who was going to get the latest toy or which kid they could make fun of on the playground. Even now, as a young woman, people my age or older still don’t understand my arrhythmia. I see the sneers, the “I really don’t care” attitude, or “it is not relevant to me” sense. I even sometimes see the clueless look and I have to explain it all over again to the point where I get exhausted.

It’s funny how people do not understand the struggles that other people go through in life. It is not just an external struggle, but also an internal struggle. They cannot be bothered to imagine the condition of my heart. It does not follow the same rhythm as everyone else’s’ heart— it goes too fast or too slow depending on my stress levels. Looking at my eight-year old self, dressed in her orange and black cheerleading outfit with tears streaming down her face, I sometimes want to cry myself. But I’ve become stronger now and have accepted what I have. People take everything, even their own health, for granted, but I know when they come across diseases, especially in the heart, that they will realize what others go through every day of their
lives. However, rather than complain about my arrhythmia, I become stone and just smile on. I smile knowing that am not broken, but rather whole and unique with my arrhythmia.
Growing Up

Meredith Conroy

I wonder if the caterpillar
Feels reluctant to change.
The world is so simple
When confined to the ground
Why should I rearrange?

Those in the sky
Are beautiful and free
It must be nice
But that’s not me
The world is just so easy here
With little legs and no place to be
Though its probably great up there
I don’t know if that’s right for me

Was it not yesterday
That I was trailing in the woods?
That I had a secret world
Filled with “I could” so “I would”s
Was it not just last week
That the dark disturbed my sleep
That Ursula was the scariest monster
And four feet was far too deep
No, it couldn’t possibly
Be time to enter my cacoon
You see, I only learned to sing
This time, the last moon

The sky is a risky place filled
And monsters greater than Ursula
Dwell in its space
Ones that look like kind-hearted men
With shy smiles and a poison pace
And the dark will not disturb my sleep
But overwhelming grief
For death does not confine itself
To the 90 minute brief
And “deep” knows no bounds
Because its not just in water that you can drown

Oh God, Oh God I cannot go
There’s so much there I’ve yet to know
Why must I change?
Why cant I stay?
Stagnant and unprogressive
The mediocre way
Pure Memory

Raymond Corriea

In the younger days of living large
Can one’s peace really be put in charge?
   Yes, because it’s all pure memory

Highlights of a certain period brought up
Glued against hyperactive cells against pup
   It’s all pure memory

What made a life can save a life
From early messages to a bitterless strife
   That’s what gives us pure memory

Past is the past
But one can only imagine how time went fast
   Just have to live with (pure) memory

Who doesn’t want to visit back there?
Pulling in secrets that one can only dare
   You know what it is; it’s all pure memory
Snow Fell in Winter

Edward Feeley

When Snow fell in Winter,
The Clouds gave it shelter,
The Land gave it structure,
The Cold gave it comfort.
But the Wind did not guide the Snow.
It did not carry the Snow.
It did not care for the Snow.
The Wind blew through the Land.
The Wind carved through the Cold.
The Wind pushed away the Clouds.
Only to reveal the fire of the Sun.
The Sun made the Land barren.
The Sun dispersed the Clouds.
The Sun heated the Cold.
Slowly, the Snow began to melt.
The Wind realized it's folly.
It cooled down the Land,
It found the Cold,
It brought back the clouds.
The Snow began to return,
And the Wind promised to welcome it.
But still the Wind did not guide it.
Still the Wind did not carry it.
Still the Wind did not care for it.
Soon the Sun returned,
And the Snow became Rain.
It flooded the Land.
It brought lightning to the Clouds.
It shattered the Cold.
And all the Wind could do was blow away.
Coming upon it in the sunlight, the bridge looks like it’s gilded. It’s not until you’re almost at the railing that it is apparent that the bridge is dripping with padlocks. Gold, sliver, copper, combination locks, Master Key’s, diary locks, padlocks, all inscribed with names and dates. It was Pont des Arts, a bridge upon which friends and lovers would clasp a personal lock and toss the key into the Siene. Capturing these happy moments were street artists, jovial and talented, unabashedly capitalizing on the joy of those who lingered in their line of sight.

In the center of the bridge sat Pierre Dumas. Assessing passers-by with an artist’s eye, Pierre deftly singled out features of distinction, faces and forms that his hands itched to capture. A lovely, slender form paused on the other side of the bridge, smiling down river towards Ile de la Cité. His fingers flew across the page before he noticed the man who casually placed his arm around the woman. Greek, he decided, noting the patrician nose and olive skin, the defined arms and dark shock of hair that crowned the head of the man’s powerfully sleek figure. “Mmm, lovers I suppose”, he muttered to himself as he sketched. “She would look better next to a shorter garçon, one whose complexion complemented her café au lait skin instead of overpowering it. A true Frenchman, for instance. Ah, well”, he said, sighing as he finished the drawing.

“Portrait, for the lovely couple!” He sang out, “Monsieur buy your lady a simple sketch! 15 Euro, just 15 Euro.”

The pair turned as he hailed them, the fellow grinning as the woman’s eyebrows furrowed. “Truly monsieur, you are a luck—” He broke off as he took in the frowning visage of the girl in front of him. Those eyes, he knew them. He could draw them in his sleep. Her lips he
knew, remembered how the thinness of the upper one was more than compensated for by the lushness of the lower, how the mouth fit perfectly above a pert chin, and nestled delicately below a sweetly crooked nose. The hair was different, natural, and the dress was simple and fitted, but there was no mistaking the face of the girl before him. No recognition flashed across her face as he catalogued these things, and he realized he’d been silent a beat too long. “Désolé, my apologies” he murmured.

The young man seemed not to have noticed his lapse, and Pierre recovered enough to say, “13 Euro monsieur, for you and your lady.”

The girl rolled her eyes as the man reached for his wallet. Impatiently she broke in, “We’re not a couple you know. We’re just hanging out.”

“Sure, baby, but you look mighty fine in this. Look, he got your ears perfect. How cool is that?”

“Whatever,” she shrugged, “It’s your money, but I don’t want it.”

“Here, pal, here’s 10 ’cause you captured her so well. I guess we’re not taking the sketch though,” the man smiled casually, handing Pierre the money. “Let’s go have some fun,” he whispered into the girl’s ear. “Oh riv-wahr” he tossed over his shoulder to Pierre.

“A bientôt” Pierre returned, his eyes on the girl who never looked back.

At home that evening, paging through two months of sketches, Pierre realized he had never stopped drawing her. Closing his eyes, he pictured that cold January night. He had been sitting at the café below his apartment, in a booth surrounded by warm wood tones and gentle but ample light, opening his second bottle of Merlot, and ruminating on the past ten years. Pierre was forty now, a widower, not that he minded so much. His cheating wife had died in Rome after running off with some Italian she had met on a work trip. He didn’t know the details, only that she wasn’t his problem anymore. Still, he missed having another person in his life, remembering how excited he had been, four years earlier, when his sister had gotten pregnant. It hadn’t mattered to him that she didn’t know who the father was, he was happy that she was happy, and excited to be a part of raising a niece or nephew. He had watched her belly grow for months, cooed at the little person kicking, and had been absolutely shattered when she had hit her head during a domestic altercation with her latest boyfriend. This train of thought had saddened him, and he had liberally refilled his glass. Pierre remembered the coating of wine on his tongue as the door was wrenched open and an angry bundle of a person stormed in.
Striding to a seat, the stranger sat facing Pierre a few tables away. The stranger ordered a bottle of wine before unwrapping, and half of it was gone by the time enough layers had been removed to reveal shoulder length hair that was an alarming shade of pink, and the smooth, trim form of the teenage girl.

He had stared at her, his thoughts centered on the desire that warmed his blood and the contradictions he observed on her person. Her hands were smooth and clean, though they had clenched around her glass of wine, and her open face had seemed at odds with the predatory aura she exuded. Draining her glass she had eyed Pierre, smirked, grabbed her bottle, and sauntered over. He had not been able to offer a greeting before she had slid into his booth next to him, her décolletage and flat stomach aimed towards him, a smile on her pleasant lips that did not quite reach her eyes. His brain had suggested he vacate her presence immediately, but the rest of him had been too intrigued to pay his brain any attention.

“Harmony”, she’d said with a hand on his arm.

“W-what?” he’d stuttered like a fool, mentally cursing that second bottle of Merlot.

“Je m'appelle Harmony”, she giggled, “I'm Harmony Bloomsbury, of New York City.”

“Pierre”, he got out. “of… here.”

“France, or Paris? Or this café?” she queried.

“Yes”, he said.

“Oh you're a funny one”, she breathed as she leaned in. “Peter, was it?”

“Pierre,” he whispered, his eyes flicking between her mouth and her eyes. Sacre-bleu, he could’ve gotten lost in those eyes.

“Right,” she said, pulling back as he had blinked in confusion. “Well Pearce, I've had a terrible day, and you're going to cheer me up.”

The next part of the evening had passed in a blur of wine and chatter as Pierre discovered it was best to let Harmony dominate the conversation. He listened raptly to everything she complained about, marveling at the uninhibited stream of information she made him privy to. He had learned that she was a Governor’s daughter, packed off to France to stay with an Aunt under the cover of improving her French, when really she had been caught having an affair with one of her father’s constituents. Pierre had absorbed the information that Harmony
was casual in her attachments, and angry that her Aunt was interfering by scheduling an appointment for the pill in the next week. Harmony had griped that as an 18 year-old she was perfectly adult enough to run her own life or take a gap year, and didn't see why her father was forcing her to actually have a language tutor here.

As she spoke that night, Pierre committed her features to memory, loath to forget a single one before he could draw. Pierre had smiled to himself, amused at her American brashness, pleased at the thought that he could serve as cathartic in more ways than one. Harmony's agitated babble had dwindled along with their wine, and she had been steadily closing the distance between them. Cocking her head to the side she had grinned at him and purred, “Okay, stranger, now cheer me up.”

Opening his eyes, the smile that had twitched the corners of his mouth faded, as he remembered an empty bed, and missing cab fare, and a wine stain on the few curves he had been able to commit to paper. It couldn’t have been anyone else on the bridge. He had been sketching her into almost everything he drew, or substituting her features on people who were not as comely. He knew it was she, though her sharp edges seemed to have rounded a little. Harmony may have worn different hair and clothes becoming a young lady, her Aunt’s doing, he supposed, but there was no mistaking the features he believed knew as well as his own.

The next morning, as he set up his easel on Pont des Arts, he caught himself scanning the crowd for any sign of her, but there was no one of distinction among the tourist masses. The next three weeks passed the same way, an eye constantly scanning faces, only to flick away in disappointment. Carried thus deep into April, Pierre resumed his spot on the bridge. After a few days of debilitating rain, the air was fresh, the lover’s locks sparkled in the sunlight, and at midday, there she was.

Leaning against the railing opposite Pierre, Harmony pulled a hand mirror and lip-gloss from her purse, flicking her hair over one shoulder as she applied the tint. She looked well, he thought, more womanly than he remembered. His eyes dragged over her smooth legs, noting the snugness of another sweet sundress, and smiled at the idea that French pastries may have become a weakness of hers. His eyes roamed over her shoulders and neck, appreciating the shadows of her clavicles and the shading of her hair. His gaze followed the extension of her arm only to find her eyes in the mirror locked on his. With a snap she shut her case as she whirled around and stalked towards him.

“What the hell are you looking at?” she challenged.
“My apologies, mademoiselle, but I am an artist. And we have met before”, he replied.

“You tried to sell a friend a drawing we didn’t ask for, a month ago. That does not mean we’ve met, and does not entitle you to extended staring at my ass!” she spit back.

“I apologize again, cher mademoiselle, but it is our meeting in Janvier?.... January I refer to”, he tried to say.

She stared blankly at him, and he felt his cheeks grow warm.

“We passed an evening together when you were still new here. You spoke about your reasons for coming to France, and you were angry with your Aunt…” he trailed off.

She eyed him thoughtfully, and Pierre watched as the memories were retrieved and reviewed.

“Oh! Pre, pea, pear, something.”

“Pierre?” he supplied helpfully.

“Yes, yes. Pierre, bien. How are you, then Pierre?” she asked.

“Bien, well, thank you Miss Harmony,” he said, smiling.

“Ah, you remembered my name this whole time, Pierre. I must’ve made quite the impression,” she quipped, smirking to herself.

They bantered easily for a few moments more before Harmony’s attention drifted over his shoulder. He cut himself off as he turned to follow her gaze. Her demeanor had shifted, reminding Pierre of the first time she had approached him. She turned to him briefly and excused herself, offering a banal farewell and a vague intimation of seeing each other soon. With her back straightened, her chest thrust forward, and her eyes hooded she glided towards a young man farther along the bridge. Attractive, Pierre supposed, if one liked tall, broad men, with strong jaws and distinctly Germanic features. He heard something snap, and watched as the tip of his pencil rolled down his paper. He sighed, and reached for a new one, muttering quietly to himself about youth, aesthetics, and foreigners.

Roughly one week later, she breezed up to his station and dropped into his customer chair. Recognizing the tension in her face from the night they met, Pierre suggested she stay a while, and encouraged her to share, as he reminded her that he was aware of her background. She nodded curtly, leaning back in the chair and launching into tirade. Pierre smiled at her and
started sketching, nodding along as she whined a bit about her tutor, complained about the quality of available men, groused about having no fun ever, and declared that more people needed to be as good at listening as he was. Pierre basked in her diatribe, happy to be useful, reveling in the freedom to draw her live, lovingly capturing the swells and dips of her body.

Over the following weeks, it became her habit to cross the bridge after her tutoring appointment, and when she was alone she relaxed into a careless prattle about her life. Other days she preened, eyeing passers-by with that predatory air he had seen innumerable times, cajoling him into sketching her with different young men. She would then have him offer the sketches to the young men, as she feigned surprise and embarrassment at the assumption of coupledom, until the men suggested café, or ice cream. Pierre would be rewarded with a grin and a peck on the cheek, so he bore it with quiet dignity. When it was just the two of them, he made sure to offer the pain au chocolate and pickles she claimed to crave, and listened contentedly as she spoke. Often he would find himself waxing poetical, thinking, “This lovely young flower, watch how she blooms before you, Pierre, look how she glows and how she seeks you out. Oh, couldn’t you imagine this beauty by your side? It would be no hardship to shelter her, thanks to the life insurance on your late wife… Even a family would not be a stretch to support, mon dieu. She is happy here, she could be yours.” Her French was steadily improving, and it was a pleasure to hear her speak his native tongue. He laughed when she made mistakes with tenses, and tried, with moderate success, to teach her multi-lingual jokes.

Through May and June he watched her, he drew her, and he listened to her. The sketches of her with other men he sold, or scrapped, but he carefully tucked away the jewels produced during their tête-a-tête afternoons. Pierre listened as Harmony recounted exciting evenings out on the town, and smiled knowingly as she complained about clothes.

“It’s getting too hot here, Pierre”, she sighed, “I need to wear shorts and cami’s, but all this French food has made me fat.”

“Non, mon petite chou, my little one, you are hardly fat.” he consoled.

“Oh, what do you know, Pierre” she snarked.

“Harmony, my sis-“

“Never mind, Pierre” she interjected. “I have to be off.”

He watched her leave with a small smile on his face, caressing the rounded slopes of his most recent drawing.
The next time he saw her, she was smiling, though she walked with a shorter stride than she used to, and looked slightly uncomfortable as she sat. Without preamble she opened her mouth and delivered in clear, smooth French, “J’ai juste parlé à mon père, et il a prévu une surprise pour mon anniversaire! Mon professeur dit que je suis presque fait avec mes leçons françaises, et j’ai juste acheté la nouvelle lingerie parce que j’ai augmenté une taille de soutien-gorge.”

Pierre beamed at her as he processed her news. “Your teacher is right to say you are almost done, your French is almost as good as my English. Uhhh, I—I’m sure your new l-lingerie is lovely, congratulations… umm but tell me more about your birthday,” he finished, blushing.

“As I said, my father has a surprise for me. I hope it’s a good one, I’m always bored with the stuff he usually buys me” she replied easily.

“What is the day?” Pierre asked, aiming for nonchalance.

“August 16th. What will you be getting me?” she teased.

To himself, Pierre thought, “Something truly worthy of your beauty my love, something to show you all that you mean to me. The truth, perhaps, of what has been growing between us these past eight months.”

Out loud he said only, “A surprise as well, darling girl, the best kind of gift.”

As July dwindled and Harmony’s birthday approached, Paris was hit with a massive heat wave, Pierre began to bring a travel umbrella with him to shade his customer chair, to prevent Harmony and his customers from over-exerting themselves. Though he lavished attention on her, and spent more and more of his time imagining a future that included her, Harmony grew increasingly moody, hyper sensitive to sad stories, and abruptly disgusted by the pickles she had once insisted on. Content to let her do the talking, weaving French and English together, or just to sketch her in silence, Pierre discussed with himself the best way to present her gift. He had amassed an impressive collection of drawings of her, following her from January over the course of the 32 weeks of their acquaintance. To him, she was even more beautiful than she had been when they first met. He told himself, “You are a lucky man, Pierre, to have met such a

1 I just spoke to my father, and he has a surprise for my birthday! My professor says that I am almost done with my French lessons, and I just bought the new lingerie because I went up a bra size.
promising woman. She carries the start of a new future for you and you must not lose her. She has come to see you, she has chosen you, and she does not hide herself with you. The young men who watch her cannot hope to claim her as you have. One more week, and then she will know."

The morning of the 16th dawned clear and bright, breezy and fresh, full of promise. Pierre smiled to himself as he gathered his sketches. The midday wind was playful, tickling the edges of his work. She’d be here soon, and he was anxious to reveal the loving product of months of labor. He ran his hand lovingly over the curves and swells of his drawings, pleased at the progression, proud of how beautiful his Harmony was. He would tell her today, if she couldn’t see what he had been adoringly noting for months, reveal his intentions of a new life with her, and maybe clasp their own lock on the sparkling bridge.

Glancing towards the Bibliothèque where she was finishing her lessons, he spotted her. Clutching her papers haphazardly to her chest she wove in between tourists and braced against the breeze. This was it. He steeled himself. Soon this woman would be his to cherish, and he felt his grin spread as she drew near.

“Bon anniversaire, ma Cherie,” he greeted her.

“Merci, mon ami,” she replied, brusquely brushing her windblown hair out of her eyes. “I have something to tell you.”

“Let me go first,” he begged with a smile. “I have waited long enough to share this with you.”

As he reached for his sketches the wind gusted. Having relaxed her grip on her materials, Harmony’s papers joined his on the suddenly spiteful thermal, spreading the pages over the water. The wind abated as suddenly as it had sprung, and one page remained on the bridge. Pierre watched his work drown in the Siene as he reached down for Harmony’s page. Turning, he opened his mouth to say, “Désolé, ma Chérie, but do not worry. Let me explain what my work had to say,” but the words died in his throat as his eyes focused on the paper he held.

Confirmation of Payment
And all Pierre could think was, “Ne me quitte pas. Pas de nouveau. Je t’en prie… ne me quitte pas. Do not leave me. Not again. Please, do not leave me.”

Fresh Love

*Raymond Corriea*

Can you picture your first fantasies to a real scene?
   The reflections come for a king and queen
   That one person just right in your spot
   All common interests mirror what you’ve got
   Two realizations front to front stray in mind
   The areas bring immediate connections to that kind

   Who can say the perfect time is in the air?
   When fresh love connects between the pair

   At each other’s eyes under one certain place
   Hidden secrets share into the other’s face
   With extras surrounding the two
   All feelings release special thoughts like new
Best efforts from the extended work
Personal favorites draw the perk

Who can say the perfect time is in the air?
When fresh love connects between the pair

Winters at the Beach

_Brent Middleton_

Grains of sand shriek muffled agonies as I run across the beach looking for seashells to sell by the sunset glare. Preoccupied with a scuttling wharf roach, I suddenly find myself tumbling into two oceans. I catch myself in a beautiful daze of detachment and melody; it is only then that I see the sailor washed ashore and muttering to himself…

Why must I witness
A clash of beauty and pain
Sickly soft and sweet?
On the cold night of Halloween, the icy rain met with the cold streets of Rome. While all were sound asleep and the windows were shut, a lonely woman in her twenties looked for shelter from the bitter cold. Her name was Eve and she wore exotic clothing: a silken purple Sicilian dress with golden coins wrapped around her waist. Everyone in Rome knew that people like her were gypsies who moved from one place to another to satisfy their hunger for excitement. She was a bloody gypsy. Her feet were not protected, but bare. They were getting cut from the edges of the stones every time she walked. Her blood painted a smooth trail that covered the stones to acknowledge that she was here. Her curly raven hair flowed into the air without a care as she walked the streets. She was a bloody gypsy.

Eve searched for shelter from all things supernatural on this night. Every door she knocked on nobody answered. They did not want a sinner to come to their home. She needed to get out of the rain. Eve’s weary eyes were getting heavy and it seemed that she would be sleeping in the rain. Then, Eve’s ears picked up a hymn of churchly chants that echoed in the quiet streets. As if a choir of angels were calling to her, she followed the hymn and ignored the cuts on her feet.

*The Lord is my shepherd and my savior.*

Eve’s soul was filled with a sign of peace as the mysterious hymn continued to sing to her.

*The Lord is my shepherd and my savior.*
Then suddenly, the hymn faded away. She thought that it led her out of the village and to the countryside. Then she saw the building in front of her. It was no illusion to the naked eye. It was real and Eve knew what building it was: a church. Eve had never seen a church before but had only heard of it and Christianity. Other gypsies would tell her how priests would shun them away from this holy place because of their nature. According to Christianity, it was believed that a gypsy’s wild nature and association with the dark arts would lead people to sin. The priest believed that they were the Devil’s agents sent in disguise to deceive these poor souls.

Eve’s emerald eyes marveled at the architecture and the design of this magnificent Church of God. It was a gothic church built in the 1200’s with grey stones that seemed to crack with time. In front of the church was a window with mosaic pieces of glasses that formed the image of St. Peter, the first pope of the church. He seemed to be looking straight at Eve when her eyes met his. Eve felt a sense of salvation and judgment from his eyes. Gargoyles that looked deformed and malevolent on top of the church’s columns stared at her as if they were alive. The faces of deformed human creatures and a variety of mythological creatures seemed to change in Eve’s eyes. Without any hesitation, Eve pushed the wooden doors of the church with all her might and they opened.

As the doors swung wide for her, Eve could see the skeletal inside of this gothic church that man had left untouched. With each step she took, Eve could feel the warmth of this holy place. Each pew of the chairs furnished with care showed their oak features with gospel verses edged onto them. One read Genesis 1:1, another Act 5:5. The mosque glass that she saw outside lay in multitudes on the sides of the church. Each glass depicted a scene from the Bible. One in particular caught her eye. Eve did not know the scene too well, but others who attended church knew the story of how man fell from Eden.

The figures in the glass were a man and a woman covered in leaves. Eve looked at the glass and saw more elements to it. This time the man was away from the woman and did not
noticed what she was doing. The woman’s hand reached for a fruit within the tree, but as she did something long and black wrapped itself around her hand. That was all that Eve could see of the mysterious object on the woman’s hand. Then the object suddenly began to have more detail to it. It had eyes that were golden and malevolent. The eyes were serpent-like and looked directly at Eve. Then, without warning, it hissed. Eve’s heart began to pound with terror. Then a mysterious voice called to her.

“Daughter of Man who God threw out of his paradise?” the voice said.

She did not know what to make of it. Eve was a believer of tarot cards and fortune tellers, but this was not that sort.

“Weak, imperfect creations of God!” the voice shouted.

With this proclamation from the unknown voice, all of the candles of the church suddenly lit up a pathway that ended at the statue of St. Peter. Eve walked towards the statue slowly. She was afraid. With each hesitant step she took, the flames of the candles glowed with an intense hatred that was unholy; they danced in the manner of the gypsies, wild and passionate. Eve finally reached the statue of Peter. She thought she was getting a fever from the rain, but she was not.

“You think that you are almighty and loving, but you are insignificant insects to me,” the voice said.

All of a sudden, something peered out from Peter’s shoulder and slithered all the way to his arm. The creature was long and had black scales. As it slithered towards his arm, Eve saw the golden eyes from before and with them the head of the serpent. The creature was indeed a serpent and it grinned at Eve.

“A serpent can’t come here. This is a holy place,” Eve said.
“I am not just a serpent, you ignorant human! I am he who tempted Eve to eat the fruit that my Father forbade her to eat. I am he who appeared before the Son of God in the desert to persuade him to use his divine powers, but he refused to do so,” the serpent hissed at her.

She looked at the creature with fear in her eyes for the terror that was to come.

“I have many names. Morning Star, the fallen angel, and even the Devil. Those names don’t fit me, but Lucifer does,” the serpent hissed.

Eve’s heart pounded ever more now that she was in the presence of God’s fallen angel, the Devil.

“Why do you appear before me, serpent?” Eve asked the creature.

When she asked, the serpent chuckled at her and her ignorance. He thought it was foolish of her to be brave before a being like him.

“You ask me why I am here in this holy place. For the same reason why I tempted Eve to eat the fruit. To see you fall from grace until you are nothing. You see, over the centuries, I’ve seen your kind. How they love, hate, destroy and kill each other because of your selfish nature and your pride,” the serpent replied.

“But you yourself have fallen from grace because of your pride,” Eve replied. Without warning, the serpent lunged at her as an attempt to strike her with his sharp fangs. He did it out of rage towards the gypsy for reminding him of why his Father did not love him.

“You dare talk to me of my own faults! You insignificant creature who hates all of humanity, especially your own!” the serpent hissed.

He laughed at her once more. Then when he had ceased, he looked at her with those eyes.
“I can end it all for you, my dear. I can end your existence and take away all that makes you feel. Just let me coil my body around yours and I’ll squeeze it all away,” the serpent hissed as he slithered towards her from his resting place.

As the serpent got closer to her, Eve’s adrenaline pumped through her body and she bolted towards the doors. She reached towards them, but they would not open. Try as she might, she could not escape from the serpent. She could not escape from the Devil.

The serpent slithered on her leg and began to constrict her with its powerful grip. Her hips were crushed by the serpent’s weight on top of her. Each time she tried to escape, his grip would become stronger. The creature made its way to her upper chest where it crushed her ribs. Eve could hear each of her ribs crack. While her breathing constricted and blood sprayed from her mouth, her organs were punctured from the sharp edges of her bones. Eve could no longer fight it and she choked to death on her own blood. The serpent let go of its grip on the corpse.

“All humans think that I have fallen from grace by pride and ignorance. I say that we both fell from grace because of them,” the serpent chuckled as he slithered away.

_The Lord is my shepherd and my savior._

***Exploits of a Cemetery Tourist***

Linda Vichiola-Coppola
**Taphophile**: One who practices taphophilia. Someone who is interested in funerals, gravestone art, epitaphs, cemeteries. Known to play a part in Goth subculture, although interest in one does not mean interest in both.

I do not completely fit the *Urban Dictionary*'s definition of a taphophile. However, *Wikipedia* accurately labels me as a tombstone enthusiast. I love to marvel at the craftsmanship of gravestone art, the careful wording of epitaphs, and the overall design of a cemetery. *The Taphophile’s Handbook* states that cemeteries are appealing because they offer insight to “people’s fears and hopes for their eternal rest.” Bearing this in mind, it is of little wonder that my fascination with cemeteries stems from my interest in New England history and folklore. I am drawn to some graveyards by the famous lore associated with them, while others captivate me with their landscape and unusual gravestones. Many cemeteries, in fact, were designed to resemble beautiful parks. Others are so small and remote that it’s easy to imagine how the town grew and developed around them.

Cemeteries are a common setting in every city and town. However, visiting one means that I must follow a code of conduct that is not typical of everyday life. Behavior that promotes peace and quiet is the usual norm inside a cemetery. In fact, many of graveyards have the following rules posted:

1. Please keep your speed to 10 mph unless otherwise posted.
2. Please exit the cemetery at dusk.
3. Turn off your car radio/stereo
4. Do not litter
5. Keep your vehicle on designated roadways or in parking areas

The next rules are usually posted in very old and historic burial grounds. Clearly they are rules which are intended for taphophiles:
6. Do not take photographs of mourners
7. Tombstone rubbings are prohibited on old and thin stones
8. Do not apply shaving cream to stones.
9. Leave tombstones where you find them

Some taphophiles like to incorporate gravestone rubbings into their artwork. Others use shaving cream to highlight the epitaphs so they can take better photos of the stone.

I’ve never done rubbings of old gravestones nor have I used shaving cream to take better photos. And I’m appalled by the thought of trying to move or straighten an old headstone. I can’t understand why anyone would want to destroy an older piece of art in order to create a new one. For example, shaving cream, when smeared across the surface of a weathered gravestone allows the epitaph to become more visible. The excess foam is sponged off so that only a small amount remains to fill up the engraved words. Although this may make a stone easier to read and photograph, the emollients in the shaving cream causes the stone to become more prone to corrosion. These rules stress the importance of preservation. And as I’ve discovered, some places are best left undisturbed.

The beautifully landscaped grounds and wide array of gravestones in Litchfield’s East Cemetery make it a taphophile’s delight. When I drove by it one Sunday afternoon I couldn’t resist the urge to turn around and go back to it. Giant hemlock trees stood like silent sentinels along the entranceway, and it was through their branches that I caught a glimpse of the secret they harbored. There, shaded beneath the trees, I could see the forms of very old gravestones. I drove my car past the iron gates and rolled to a stop to get a better look. I stepped out of my car and strolled around tombstones that dated as far back as the revolutionary war. Some were so covered with lichen and moss that the
epitaphs were unreadable. Others stood at such peculiar angles that they defied any idea of symmetry. I returned to my car and followed the dirt road past the old gravestones.

I was curious about what the rest of the cemetery looked like. The course I was traveling continued straight over a small hill and then quickly merged into a series of looping roads that twisted around a huge pond, blooming bushes of hydrangeas, and green fields filled with tombstones and memorials of every shape and size. I marveled at table tombs, obelisks, and marble benches of people who had died so long ago that I doubted any of their loved ones remained to mourn them.

Unfortunately, I was so absorbed in my tour, that I soon realized I’d forgotten which way led back to the gates. Perhaps if I had been just another mourner I would have been spared the torture of losing my sense of direction. After my third circle around the pond, I noticed a turn in the roadway that I had missed before. Getting a bit frantic, I decided to take the turn. Once I took the turn, I drove along a winding dirt road that led to an empty field waiting for the dead.

From there I drove to a dead end.

I backed up, took another road, and wound up in another grouping of graves. A murder of crows squawked at me from their perch on top of a wrought iron fence. The sight of them startled me. Shadows seemed to twist over the fence and merge into the blackness of their wings. I quickly drove away without glancing back.

Sometimes my husband Dave goes with me to cemeteries. Sometimes he finds them himself. He stumbled upon one while hiking near a campground in East Haddam.
I was intrigued. He said the graveyard was nestled deep within the woods. Other than
the narrow dirt trail leading to it from the campground, there was no other accessible
way into it.

Normally I am not afraid to visit a cemetery alone. However, because this one was
remotely located in a town that I was unfamiliar with, I wasn’t about to go traversing
through the woods alone. Dave thought it would be wonderful to bring our tent and rent
a campsite at the campground near the cemetery. By the time we began our hike, the
sun was moving westward and the shadowy sphere of the autumn moon was slowly
materializing above the late afternoon horizon. I was skeptical that once we found the
cemetery we would have enough time to explore it before dusk.

At times the trail we were following would disappear beneath the overgrowth of
yellowing ferns and low growing brush. Then it disappeared completely. After it did,
Dave began to pause every few feet to study our surroundings. When he paused for
more than a few minutes I began to wonder if he was sure of where we were going.

“Are you sure you know the way?” I finally asked. “I thought you said the graveyard
wasn’t too far from the campground?”

“We’re almost there,” he said, pointing. “It’s right up this hill.”

I gaped at the hill he was pointing to. It was so steep that I thought we would need
mountain climbing gear.

“You must be joking.”

“No.”
“We can’t walk up that.”

“Yes, we can. I did it before.” He surveyed a pile of dead branches and selected one that was long and sturdy. “Here.” He handed it to me. “Use it like a walking stick and follow me.”

He started up the hill by placing his steps sideways.

I did the same.

Even with the walking stick and careful foot placement, we both slid and stumbled twice. When we neared the top, Dave was panting hard and I was irritated.

“What’s the matter?” I asked sarcastically.

“I need a minute to catch my breath.” He leaned against a tree.

“Have another cigarette while you’re at it,” I snorted at him.

“I will when we reach the top.”

“The sun will be setting by then.”

He threw his hands up in the air. “All right, let’s keep going then.”

Finally, we emerged on an embankment next to the stone foundation of an old house.

Still panting, Dave took out a cigarette and lit it. “Well, we made it here before dusk.”

I stared at the stone foundation to the house, “Where’s the graveyard?”

“Look over your shoulder.” He puffed on the cigarette.
Spreading out several yards from the ruins of the house were small rows of crooked headstones.

The stones stood at odd angles, some were pushed against each other and protruded like a row of crooked and rotten teeth from a poorly aligned jawbone. Some of the graves dated back to the late 1600’s.

There were more trees than headstones. One tree was horribly disfigured and twisted. Chokecherry vines were wrapped around the trunk and appeared to be wringing its neck.

I stumbled over a clump of twisted roots that looked like grey knobby knees protruding from the earth. Above me the branches of a dead birch tree looked like long skeleton hands shielding the sky. Every part of that tree seemed to want to hide itself from the sun.

That’s when Dave walked up behind me and yelled, “HONK!”

Startled, I spun around at him. “You dumb jerk! What’re you trying to do? Give me a heart attack?”

He laughed. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t resist.”

When I didn’t smile back he cleared his throat and looked serious. “So, what do you think of this place?”

“My guess is it was a family graveyard.”

Dave stared down at the stone foundation to the house. “You know when I first saw this I thought it was some sort of sunken garden.” He kneeled down to study it closer.
I turned my attention back to the gravestones.

Several of them were half buried beneath clumps of decaying leaves and rotten branches. I took out my camera. For once I felt as though I did not have to be so discreet about taking photos in a cemetery. I was especially intrigued by several old stones with winged faces. I kneeled down to remove a fallen branch that covered the front of one of the stones to take a better picture.

I aimed the camera, and I felt a tug on the back of my shirt. Irritated with another one of Dave’s pranks, I spun around, expecting to see him standing behind me grinning at my fright. But he wasn’t near me. He was poking around at the leaves near the old foundation. I tried to convince myself that a branch had snagged my shirt even though I found nothing caught on the fabric.

There was not one sound. No birds. No wind.

An eerie feeling swept over me.

It was as if the place were holding its breath.

I’ve been in cemeteries that people claim to be notoriously haunted. I’m not frightened by rumors of disembodied voices and spectral apparitions. If this particular graveyard had any lore attached to, it has never been publicized. I’m not frightened by death, but death is what fuels people’s fears about cemeteries. Yet, I have to admit, I have never experienced such an unsettling feeling as I did at that moment.
Then it felt as if someone was standing right in front of me when there was clearly no one there. I quickly snapped a picture and then stared at the preview screen. The picture looked like I had photographed fog. It was a perfectly clear late afternoon.

I rushed over to Dave, “Take a look at this.” I said, handing him the camera.

His face blanched as he stared at the picture on the screen. “You took this just now?”

“Yes, right over there.” I pointed at the spot I had been standing in.

“Are you sure there’s nothing wrong with the camera?”

“I’m positive. Take another picture with it if you want.”

He aimed the camera at me and snapped the photo. He looked at the screen. And then he snapped two more pictures of me.

“Well, how did they come out?” I asked impatiently.

“Good.” He handed the camera back to me so I could see.

I stared back at the gravestone and shivered. “Cemeteries don’t scare me. But this place is freaking me out.” I nudged his back. “Come on, let’s move it. I want to go back. Let’s take our tent down and go home.”

“Yeah, I think you’re right. Let’s get out of here.

I’m not sure if the general rule about traveling more than ten miles per hour through a cemetery applies to taphophiles who are exploring on foot. If it does, I know we came close to breaking it as we rushed back towards the path leading to the campground.
We packed our gear and got the hell out of there.

I confess: No cemetery has ever left me so unnerved.
Hang

Matt Wagner

Stillness
The mist clings to the land like a virus
Stagnant, obstructing
Yet benign
The mystery offered is the mystery imposed
As I search anew for purpose
Amidst the shambles of tales of revival
And memories of the sun

The luster of the dawn is lost
To some unnamed harbinger bearing the silhouette of time
The deeper I strive to peer
The greater becomes my blindness
As present and past unite under a banner of dulling air and damp mud

My every breath is heavy
My every sight is light
With the haze of nothing to behold
I ponder
Endlessly
The echo of imagined pendulums nudges that frozen mind
Enough to feel the frigid walls encasing it
And nothing more

In my immobility
I study the ground
Crafting myths of its alleged fortitude as I yearn for freedom
And ponder the peculiarity of that very thought,
Which would have me hold the earth
As I dream of flight on guided wings

In the shrapnel of my faith in time
I find a glimmer of warmth
Soon accompanied by a solitary tear
For the warmth is my own
It is my blood
And I am once again without.

Green Aisles
Mark Podesta

Recently, I’ve been listening to a lot of Real Estate. I’ve been thinking a lot lately, too. I’ve been trying to understand the difference between colors. I’m not too sure I understand shades. Sometimes I wish I were colorblind for the experience. Maybe I would learn something from the absence. What’s the difference between a white anemone and a red? Maybe it’s the impression I get, is that it? I’m not entirely sure.

I’ve been paying more attention to impressions. I’ve been trying to read it all. I’m trying to figure it all out. I’ve been falling in love with Monet. I’ve been paying more attention, I really have. I could stare at impressions for hours. The Water Lilies-The Clouds is a masterpiece. It makes me wonder. It makes me wander.

“Under dormant trees

Under bright lit skies

Mountains of maple leaves

Standing side by side.”

I’ve traveled a lot. Been around Europe. Rode the tube to Abbey Road. Seen Hemingway’s Paris. Took a bottle of prosecco across Ponte Sisto. Lit up in the bright light of Amsterdam canals. It all looks a bit different now. The world is smaller, yet wider. The expanse has grown. The garden has unfurled. I stand in the middle and take a look around. Every time I make my way home I find that I see a bit differently.

The park across the street from my house used to have dugouts and a baseball field. The roves were set on fire and they smelled of old piss. The tennis court was breaking into asphalt floes, grass growing in between them. Then it was all broken, paved, and redesigned. There’s a new playground and basketball courts. There’s a large field now with trees and mowed grass. There’s a concrete path that surrounds the park. So many people come now. I used to spend so much time looking out the window staring at the people, bitter that they never used to come. I never said goodbye to that tree I used to climb.
“I don’t want to die
Lonely and uptight
Stay with me
All will be revealed.”

Monet would color the water yellow. He would color the water orange. He would color the water red. He saw the world of impressions. I think I am starting to see it too. The longer I stay away from home, the stranger it gets. I find myself looking around. I see the cracks in the streets. I see the trailer park by the shopping plaza. I see the openness. I see the sky. I wonder where it all came from. What’s that Domino’s story? How about that Dunkin Donuts? What’s there to say about that Wal-Mart? I feel like I have lost so much over years, but I know I’ve gained some, too.

There’s something special in the fact that Monet made that bridge so lovely time after time. Different seasons, different moods, and different lights change everything. I keep coming back to Monet. I keep going back home. I keep seeing something change. Where do you go when you think you’ve been just about everywhere?

“I had to hear you just to feel near you
I know it’s not true
But it’s been so long
I know it’s wrong
I know.”

What would you think of my hometown? How would you feel driving down its lines? I keep thinking about my home. I keep wondering what it means. I come back home. I drive along the roads. Do you see the trail that winds behind the trees by the intersection? Do you see the homes for what they are? You’ve never been here before. What’s your first impression? What will you take away? I’ve thought so long about my family. I’ve thought so long about my heart. I see the world differently. I wonder if you see the cracks in the pavement. I can’t help but think: what does my town look like?
Real Estate named their most recent LP “Atlas.” I keep on trying to find out why. The songs are about their home. The songs are about their lives. The songs are about their feelings. Why do I feel like I’ve lived these stories? I have a connection. They leave an impression. I keep hearing them. They have their own sound. The notes fall and they travel like a vine, winding up my walls.

“In no solid state

You know we can’t cop to

The frequency of your inner debate

It was all out of tune.”

Sometimes I never want to step foot back home. I lost both my grandfathers last year. I lost them in the span of two months. I don’t know how it has affected me. I think about the fact that I went out and drank the night before my father’s father was buried. It all happened so fast. I cried on a train station platform, drunk that Friday. Living is always selfish, isn’t it? One of them lived with us at home, but I feel them both here. Do we carry the dead? Do we carry our homes? Do we carry ourselves?

I thought I knew the world. I thought I knew I loved my home. I thought I knew myself. I never knew a thing, and I have known everything. At night, back home, I wonder what’s mine and what’s not. I have lived here so long. When I went home for holiday last year it was the first time I never wanted to come back. I knew how much was outside. I knew how much I still had left to see. Every once in a while I see the clouds. I see them pass and I wonder where I will fall.

“Have I not been clear?

Or do I sound insincere?

I’m just trying to make sense of this

Before I lose another year.”
I've considered the impact of impressions. I've thought a lot about colors. I have thought a lot about songs. I've thought a lot about my home. I've thought a lot about myself. I think I know that change comes and change goes. I think I know the world isn't as big as we think. I think I know the world. I think Monet knew the world. I think “Atlas” means the weight we carry. I think the world is crushing. I think the sky is free. I think I know the difference between a white anemone and a red. I think I know experience.

“And all I know is it’d be easy to leave.”

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Gone to the Moon

_Dennis Hutt_

I disregarded the rumors about your tumors, as they leached away at your substance. I kept my door open for you, to keep you comfortable, in desolate fear. I watched your body grow bigger, and wrapped you up around my body, with blood on my hands. I watched you sleep that night, your dangling tongue unable to cauterize your wounds. I
thought the library was enough. The cure for you, to glue the hole from which you were losing breaths to. The unfettered struggle was in vanity, once I saw your eyes, the way they bothered my soul. Choking on Earth's air the signal I needed, to send you to the moon.
A Fighter
Samantha King

I can hear those heavy, hollow footsteps echoing down the dank hallway yet again. The keys jingling from his monstrous hands collide into one another as he quickly shuffles to find the right ones.

The first lock clicks open.

There goes the second.

And the third.

The dewy brass knob squeaks as it turns. I lift my head, but it is heavy and wobbly like an infant’s. As the door swings open, my cold body automatically jerks at the sight of him, jangling the blood crusted chains that trap my arms against the wall.

I can feel him glaring at me from under the shadows, his two eyes on the one me.

“I know you know,” he growls tiredly, “about the details of Operation 273. You really don’t want to lie to me, and I- I really don’t want to hurt you.”

“I swear,” I choke over the brimming tears in my eyes, “I d-d-don’t know any-th-th-thing. My h-h-husband never t-told me anything. Please, believe m-m-me,” I beg.

And from behind his back he draws that metal pipe. He raises his hand slowly, powerfully.

“I didn’t want to hurt you,” and then his arm drops with every fiber of muscle he has, striking my abdomen. He raises his arm again, and again, crushing my body into a straightjacket of pain.
But before he can continue, my body shudders awake. My tear-flooded eyes look up to find my husband’s. We’re laying in our bed. We are in our home. I am home.

“Melanie, you are okay, you’re safe,” he whispers into the moonlight. He tucks me into his arms so I can bury my head into the nook of his chest and just let it all out. His gentle fingers comb through my hair, and he cries with me, “I’m so sorry Mel, I’m so sorry. It’s all my fault. I love you. I’m sorry,” he pleads.

“I’m sorry, too.”

“What are you sorry for?”

“I should have protected—”

“Mel, there was absolutely nothing you could do. Look, sweetie, you have been having these nightmares again for over a week now, maybe it’s time you go back to the therapist,” he coaxes.

“I don’t need a therapist, Max. I don’t want to go back,” I quiver.

“But if it’s going to help—”

“Honey, I’m perfectly fine when I’m awake, but I just can’t control my mind when I’m asleep.”

“Alright, we can talk about this another time. Let’s go back to sleep”

I roll over so that his chin can rest just at the top of my head. His warm, soft breath penetrates my hair and gently tickles at my scalp.

“What happens... in your nightmares?” he prods carefully.

“Max, I love you, and I really don’t want you to have to know.”

“Mel, you can tell me whenever you are ready. Just remember, I am here. You are not alone.”
I lay in silence the rest of the night. He says that he’s there, and I know he means it, but I just can’t have him know what happened. I just can’t give him that guilt, that picture. But he is wrong—I had one job to do, just one. And that was to protect our baby. He trusted me with that, and I failed.

I failed my husband. I failed my baby. And I failed myself.

I lay awake in bed, desperately trying not to sleep. And though I fear the terrors that the sleep will likely bring, I cannot help slipping into its bittersweet darkness.

A blasting ring sounds off into our bedroom. My body seizes into the fetal position as I thrust the blankets over my head in one quick, violent motion. Sweat beads at my forehead. He’s back!

It’s just the alarm.

Max has already left for the base, so I’m home alone in our big house. I get up to get ready for work, and as I pass my reflection in the mirror, it startles me. My eyes, rimmed with dark circles, look like they belong to an old veteran. I need sleep, but even the thought of sleep scares me. I need help, but I don’t want to be labeled as crazy.

It would be easier just to die.

As I shuffle my way through my morning routine, I have no choice but to pass the would-be nursery. Every time I do, my heart sinks, and I hear my mother’s voice telling me, “A mother’s job is to protect her baby. No matter what, she must protect her baby.”

I’m sorry, Mom, I just couldn’t. Maybe if I fought harder, or screamed louder, then I would have succeeded. But I just couldn’t.

I come out of my trance to find that I am staring at the closed door. I know that if I open it, all I’ll find are icing blue walls and the frame of a humble white dresser in the
works. There won’t be a crib. I was on the phone ordering it when he took me. It didn’t have a chance to come. There won’t be a baby. I know. But I deeply wish that there were.

As I stare into the closed door, I can’t help but to think how defenseless he must have been. Did he hurt like I did? Why didn’t I fight harder or turn away more? Why?

I can feel a deep tug underneath the front of my skull, pulling me backwards in time. I want to stop it, but I can’t. I just can’t.

He throws the pipe right at me, crushing my collar bone. My breath tiredly deflates my lungs, making it impossible to breathe for a moment.

“Stop,” I plead, “Please.”

“Tell me the truth! Tell me!” he shrieks. He storms across the room right at me. He pulls a wrench from his back pocket and hurriedly tries to cut through the chains holding me hostage to the wall.

Is he letting me go? Has he finally understood that I can’t give him what he wants?

When he pulls my arm from the wall, I can feel that his hands are frighteningly cold, but his breath is hot. He holds me for a moment, the two of us are just sitting on the tear stained floor, and he gleans down into my eyes.

He’s not letting me go.

But I just comply. I don’t kick. I don’t scream. I don’t do anything.

As I fade out of my memory, I can’t stop shaking.

“I’m sorry!” I shout to the empty house, “I’m sorry!”
I crawl to the door of the would-be nursery and swing it open. It looks just the same as when I left it.

My hand scrambles atop the muffled white dresser and grasps a startlingly cold screw driver.

“I’m sorry,” I blubber into the empty house, “Mommy just isn’t a fighter.”

But I can’t find the courage.

Where is it?

Gone.

I gather up all my strength and stumble into the bathroom. As I splash soothing cold water on my face, a little sign jumps right out at me. My hand gently journeys its way to my abdomen. I stare for minutes, my face getting hotter and hotter with each ticking second. My salty lips part into a minute crescent.

I don’t look into the mirror. I hold the plastic stick with one hand, my abdomen in the other. I slowly trudge my way to the phone, my hollow footsteps growing weaker as I make my way down the hall. My thumb reluctantly pushes the speed dial.

The phone sounds in my ear.

It tones for a second time.

And a third.

“Hi, you’ve reached Doctor Mavrick’s office, how may I help you?”

I don’t even know where to start. But this is a good beginning.
Springtime

Allie Potenza

You wiggle your frozen toes in your beige suede ankle boots as you exit from your car. A thousand eyes focus their gaze on your rouged cheeks and cinged curls. Your shoes pound the linoleum, announcing your arrival to the other huddled bodies surrounding the infamous fold up table supporting the infamous sign-in list.

Audition season is a time of excitement and nerves. No one is safe. It's an epidemic that runs rampant through the theatre world beginning in January and ending in springtime.

Thousands of eager beltologists and power mixers battle their way through several auditions in hopes of landing a role in a summer show. Summer stock, as it's more aptly named, is any repertory theater that produces its shows during the summer.

Before we continue, let's define some terms previously mentioned.

**Beltologist:** noun [behltahlogyst] One who is especially skilled at identifying placement in voices. An expert beltologist will be able to identify the exact placement of a woman’s voice (even discerning the thin line between mixbelt and beltmix.) For example: Tiffany: I'm so nervous! I saw Chad out there [the audience] and he is such a beltologist.

You'll see a beltologist before you hear them. Look closely, they’re the ones stoically watching the frenzy ensue around them. They observe any and every note being sung in the hallway, not afraid to critique and judge.

**Power Mixer:** noun or verb [pahwermicksher] Women whose singing operates entirely in their mixed voice. Although their ranges can support singing in head or chest voice, power mixers ignore the choice and choose to mix everything. This gives the desired effect of having no break in one's voice. Beware, a power mixer can fool you into thinking that she is
belting or using her head voice; but with a trained musical theatre ear one can soon spot power mixers of all strengths and qualities. 1. Matt: I can’t wait to hear Krista Garcia power mix through the new Schwartz score.

These and many other terms have been coined for the types of people you encounter in the theater world, specifically in an audition. They are used as a guide for people like me who experience them during a few months of unabashed self-promoting.

The audition is a monstrous cocktail of emotion making you feel somewhere between an overwhelming nausea and a surging adrenaline euphoria. The room is small compared to the amount of animated theatrical faces constantly bursting in. The stage manager saunters to her post, surveying the crowd. She welcomes you with overly bleached teeth and dark maroon lipstick.

She points to her spiral notebook and invites the turn out to sign their names on the list, finalizing the exact time their fate will be determined. Cue the stampede. Character shoes crunch feet and bad perfume invades your sinuses as you and what seems like half of New York City rush to sign your name on the page of the notebook labeled “South Pacific/The Little Mermaid/Pinkalicious the Musical auditions.”

As a clarification, if theater companies choose to do several productions in one season, the audition must be all inclusive. That said, if you’re going to audition for all three, you must choose a monologue and a song that a WWII soldier, a sea witch and a butterfly would all sing convincingly.

Good luck!

Those about to audition are corralled into a hallway, separate from the group.

It is approximately 12:30 pm. It is literally inconceivable that any theatre audition would start on time. Trust me, not once performance or rehearsal ever has or ever will. The time spent waiting only quickens the beating of your heart and the saturation of the fabric under your arms. Your ears are filled with the sounds of shrill, flat, and obnoxious sounds as you watch others prepare before your overstimulated eyes.
Surrounded by the menagerie, you hear the faint sound of the audition room close by. Silence invades the room and it sucks every sound vibration echoing from the corners of the room. A voice from the sign-in table ignites a shiver down your spine as the stage manager calls out, “Alexandra Potenza?”

While simultaneously praying that you don’t trip and embarrassingly fall, you wade through the many bodies on the road blocking the way to the door. Your throat begins to close in anticipation and your hands struggle to remain steady as you traipse on to the dimly lit stage.

Your fate lies in the hands of four people dressed in black with Starbucks cups in their hands…. five if you count the accompanist. You clumsily say your name and the song you’re going to attempt to sing.

An overwhelming rush of energy floods your body as you suddenly come to life. Throughout the song, you feel at one with the people on the table; they are your captors and their approval…redemption. You don’t worry too much about the accuracy of the notes or the acting choices you make. You just go for it. This is your chance to exude not only confidence and poise, but your talents.

As soon as you’re done, you get the hell out of there. Thoughts of cheeseburgers and milkshakes frolic in your head as you exit stage left.

In the hall, your ears are assaulted with the familiar sounds of your fellow theater colleagues. They’ve moved on from listening to each other singing to watching Youtube videos of idolized Broadway performers. They cackle and swoon as they continue the spread of many now existing theater idioms.

And don’t even get me started when I hear the word, fierce.

**Fierce : adjective [feeerrrs]** An ever-present word that can be applied to any and all musical theatre situations. Upon entering a theatre this word will be thrust upon you in all directions. It has permeated all parts of theatrical life. Anything can be described as fierce: costumes, orchestras, props. *They gave me the fiercest bustier for the final scene!* Officially, the
word stands for anything that is intense and aggressive, but as of late it has come to represent anything that evokes the slightest pleasure. The overuse of this has done nothing to eliminate its usefulness although some would disagree, yours truly for one. Quite frankly some things are just fierce and they have the right to be described as such. For example, if a Power Mixer is singing a string of E flats and decides to go up a key to G, that's fierce. For example, Kristin Chenoweth is still fierce. Fuck what you heard.
Spell Bound

Christine Zangrillo

I’m trapped under your spell,
Wondering why this heaven is so close to hell.
Am I resigned to a past fate,
With nothing to show for all my wait?
But pleasure is pain,
Just as a loss can precede a gain.
Can temporary contentment
Outweigh the underlying ripple effect of future disappointment?
Questions like this can haunt the mind,
But their answers we might not want to find.
My Pain in the Boot

Caroline Leather

On a scorching August afternoon I found myself seated on a rather uncomfortable doctors table. Draped in what was not the most fashionable attire, a hospital gown, I sat with one leg hung over the side while the other laid stretched out on the table ready to face its prognosis. The wooden door swung open and Dr. Weisman entered to inform me of my fate. With one look at what he held in his hand I thought "this isn't going to be good."

He placed a big, black medical boot, about a foot and a half feet tall, on the chair adjacent from me. The bottom rounded from heel to toe aligned with black ridged rubber for traction. Three Velcro straps were stacked on top of one another along the face of the boot. A small opening was placed across the front of it leaving just enough room for the toes to be exposed. Padded cloth filled the rest of the boot to provide "support" and "comfort" according to Dr. Weisman.

I glared at the boot. Looked it up and down. Judged it the way a cruel high school girl does her enemy. I had only been in the presence of it for five minutes and I already despised its being and existence. Dr. Weisman discussed how to put on the boot and the dangers of walking without it. Then he told me what would have to change in my life for the next eight weeks. Picking up the boot he handed it to me as if he was introducing me to a new born baby. I sneered at it. And him. While Dr. Weisman saw the boot as my only opportunity for healing and the answer to all my problems of pain, I saw it as the one thing separating me from my regular life.

I huffed. I placed my right foot on the sole of the padded boot, pressed my heel against the back, and gently applied light pressure. Ever since I had taken a line drive field hockey ball to the foot, my ankle had resembled an elephant: grey and fat. The discoloration and swelling led me to Dr. Weisman, but now I regretted drawing attention to my elephant foot. I walked in a straight line back and forth within the small walls of the office. The boot had a heel of about an inch making each step become more of a gimping motion. Up on the boot, down on the flip flop, up on the boot, back down on the flip flop.
After a couple runway walks up and down the office Dr. Weisman wrote things down on his clipboard. He ripped off the yellow lined paper and handed me a short list of things I would **have** to do and another list of things I was **allowed** to do.

1. Wear boot at all times, keep elevated while rested
2. Walking small distances for short periods of time allowed

He gave me a list of things I was **not** by any means able to do. This list was much longer.

1. No swimming
2. Must not allow pressure on foot while showering
3. Must ice 5 times a day
4. No physical activity of any sort for 8 weeks

The list went on, and on, and on.

I placed the notes in my backpack, picked up my right flip flop which wouldn’t see use for at least another eight weeks, and gimped out into the lobby.

Opening the door to exit I entered the stairwell. Remembering the two flights of stairs I had climbed to get here, I looked down at the boot realizing this would not be a simple task. I considered venturing out to find an elevator, but in my natural stubborn nature I was determined to complete my first task. The rounded sole of the boot made forward walking easier; stairs however… not so much. One step down and I was already having difficulties. I almost rolled forward and tumbled down the stairs. I soon realized my only option was to face the stairwell sideways and go forward one foot at a time. “Right then left, right then left, right then left,” I thought in my head feeling like a new army candidate. Three steps down. Now only another thirty to go!

Repeatedly stepping down the long stairwell I thought to myself all that would be changing in my life for the following two months. If going down a simple stairwell posed as a problem, what else would become an issue?

Field hockey practices and games would not be spent working hard with my best friends on the field, but instead watched with the stats book in hand and the boot on my foot. My plans to go to my favorite water park the following day would be changed. The adorable heels I bought for the Fall Ball in three weeks would be replaced by one ballet
flat and one bulky black boot. Woe, I thought. My life as I knew it was over, at least for
the next two months.

I walked from the electric censored double doors to my white Ford Taurus parked
on the other side of the roasting black pavement. It was 93 degrees out and my
suffocated, injured foot was sweltering in the confines of its new accessory. I could feel
the sweat drip from my knee to my ankle. Gimping to the car, which seemed to be miles
away, I tried to remind myself that not everything would have to change for me. There
would still be some consistency in my daily activity, right?

Just as I had convinced myself that things would be okay and maintained a
positive attitude I sat down in the driver’s seat and turned on the car. I put the car in
reverse, checked my mirrors, and was about to let off the brake when I realized: the
bulky boot did not give me much room to maneuver between the brake and gas pedal.
Unable to switch from one to the other easily I paused for a moment. I reached into my
bag, pulled out my phone and dialed my mom’s number. “I'm gonna need someone to come pick me up…” I said with huffing with
frustration.

This would be the start to many, many favors the boot would force me to ask for
from those around me. The clunky, restraining medical boot would not only restrict my
foot from daily activity, but it would alter my life entirely.

Eight more weeks to go…

You have such sparkly eyes

Dennis Hutt
I heard promised truths, I un-cuffed my chains, her heartbeat that night, I checked off my plane. 
My jeans were full of dirt, her dresser full of loves, the sky was rusted bronze, the coffee was our pub. 
My scars have stories that, God now only knows, the rain locked me in, but also held me close. 
My window chipped like paint, saliva clenched my lips, the shades on my eyes, my weekly medicine. 
The hospital rang, they said there’s room for two, highways were guarded up, they will not let me through. 
And now that time has slowed down, I never wanted more, the past was innocent, was undoubtedly pure. 
Rapture did bless my neck, a day was all it took, for what is written now, you come from out a book.
Misadventured Piteous Overthrows

Melanie Vollono

When I met you, I could tell you were broken because I saw the pieces of you wafting into the air from the end of your Marlboro red cigarettes. You smoked five in a row, and I watched, taking in the incandescence of your profile: all bite and no bark. What a pair we must have made, you zoning into that contemplative state no one’s allowed to enter, and me waiting outside the door, anxiously wiping my feet on the mat and shivering in the cold.

We went for a drive, pushing 80 on windy back roads in the middle of the ghetto, passing the naked man on his front porch and the alcoholic roaming the slums. 4 am, but I was wide awake, your touch like espresso coursing through my veins, dotting my arms with goose bumps that stood out against my pale skin. Your turn signals echoes, lightly chiming as we went in circles, past the big tree with the kinked branches, and around the lake frosted on top from mid-morning dew.

The sun broke through the sky, the world a quiet dome.

I marveled at the break of day while you regarded it with nauseating disgust. The light of magnificence and wonder fading from my eyes as you muttered, “Nothing ended and nothing began. It just was.” Maybe that’s when I fell in love with you, unconsciously encompassing your words like honey gone crystal—bitter at first, and then oh so sweet. Then again, it might not have been until later, when I relished in the gentle sensation that was your mind collapsing into mine, seeking the solace you had never had before.

Our words collided, your philosophical mind exploring dark corners I had never acknowledged, and my feather-light prose fluttering against you, ebbing away the fundamental anger that burned beneath your skin.

My inhibitions rolled up my spine like toy cars on a track as you mellowed from your cocaine-induced haze, sitting side-by-side on the picnic table like mismatched salt and pepper shakers at a yard sale in the 20 degree weather. You spoke of your lost love, singing your own lament, while I doled out the details of my vapid relationship.
The kiss was a forced attempt to close the night. Rapid paced, successive crashes of teeth while your hands roamed under my shirt and I saw the lonely hollows of a little boy lost behind the fire of your supposed passion.

Your promises to keep in contact surprisingly rolled off me as I made the decision not to care about you. You were nothing more than another broken boy, smoking yourself to death and talking of the universe as if it had no effect on you. I was accustomed to your dangerous silhouette and tantalizing mystique, predicting your moves before you made them. Your choreography was engrained in my mind as I had witnessed them so many times before. Looking on like an expectant coach as you performed allowed me to cleanse you from my mind.

It wasn’t until some strange, comical twist of the universe brought us outside on that picnic table again that I even thought to engage in your chardonnay cabaret, watching as you elegantly tangled me in your ivory turns.

This time, the kiss was velvet venom, wrapped up in the other’s insanity, enveloped by your budding intensity. It was the presses and the grabbing and the desire, hot lips and desperate hands. I reveled in the whirlwind that was your mouth gripping mine, hidden under the blanket of night, careless to our surroundings, for the trees could only whisper to other trees, and they made kind companions as we chortled amongst and between them.

Your existence became a lovely little game I played with myself, and eventually you decided to join in on the fun. The school hallways were torturous, ducking into offices, pretending your six feet were invisible to me. As your silhouette slinked by, I’d emerge, giving you just a glimpse. Eventually, it turned into playful banter, witticisms firing back and forth as open as a civil war battle field. Pushing each other just to the brink of near absurdity until one of us shattered the illusion, broke the barrier, and returned to our daily lives. Our interactions became daily, smoking a cigarette in the same corner, making eyes and laughing inwardly because I was sporting the shirt you had on yesterday. We thought we were so slick, saying a big fuck you to the universe and never realizing we were just tempting it further.
I don’t know when our game turned into something more than just cards and coins. Eventually, we had to stop flipping those continuous aces and go over, resulting in a bust.

When Halloween rolled around, air thick with secrets, I had the opportunity to pretend to be anyone I wanted, and I decided to be yours. Perhaps that wasn’t the best decision to make 6 shots deep on whipped Pinnacle and Fireball, but even so, you asked if you should have sex with someone and I was too drunk and stubborn to say no. I fell asleep on a cold tile floor with the thoughts of you caressing the curve of another woman’s body and it turned my stomach so hard I thought I’d been flipped inside out.

We talked about that night a few days ago. You told me you asked me that question hoping in some way I’d read between what you were saying and say no. But we weren’t dating. We weren’t anything. I reminded you of that, and you fucked her in spite of what I said, but it’s nice to know that even all those months ago, part of you wanted me too.

Our drunken conversations furthered in the same fashion. They’d often end with one or both of us whisper-screaming to the other at 4 in the morning, because we couldn’t resist hearing the other’s voice, even if it was full of tension. There was nothing we could say that was vengeful enough to repel us from each other. Each bitter pass and every slur hurled at the other brought us slamming into the other, mind and body, until there was nowhere else to go.

You drunkenly told me you loved me on Thanksgiving morning. You tried to perform damage control by chalking it up to mindless whiskey-induced devotion, and perhaps it was; but I had never been more thankful.

When people speak of love, they often say that it ‘snuck up on them.’ One day everything hit them and they woke up and the world looked brighter and more colorful and they could breathe better because they were in love. But that wasn’t the case for you and I. We knew exactly what we were doing. We never walked into our love. We didn’t test the waters. We ran in; head first, diving into the cool river and not caring to read the ‘deep water’ sign. We thought we were beyond loving, both of us left alone one
too many times. The idea itself was laughable, and we’d hunch over with tears in our eyes, cackling over the sheer idea of it, and go on for hours about the great story of our romance we’d tell our fucked up kids. Our compliments always back-handed, “You kind of have an ass” or “Maybe I’d fuck you if you didn’t have such a big head.” And then off we’d go again, the hilarity that was each other, making fun of the world and everyone who was susceptible to the idle pleasures of being ensconced with another.

**

As I type this, you’re sitting on the couch next to me, reading a book on philosophy and biting your nails even though I’ve told you not to countless times. You read something that amuses you and you smile that stupid smile. The tangible one. The one I can reach up and rub my thumb across. The one that gives you those little lines that curl up to your eyes and the subtle bite of your lip like you have a secret you just can’t wait to share with me. You reach for my hand and give it the most gentle of kisses, as I’m convinced you still believe I’m made of glass. They’re the kind eyes that bring me a cup of coffee because they feel guilty for having kept me up all night talking about the world and how it turns. They’re the worried eyes that held me when I was sick, one hand on the wall and the other pressed to my chest, helping me steady my breaths and feeding me soup, even though you refused to make the choo choo noise. They’re the intelligent eyes that light up when you explain something to me that you’ve uncovered, letting me in on sweet, clandestine information. They’re the eyes that sparkle when I kiss you, just before they flutter closed and you pull me against you with ease. They’re the eyes of desire when we’re in bed at 7 am and you can hardly open them to the world yet, but somehow your lips still manage to find mine.

Like all great love stories, ours too has an end. Months ago, you asked why I was so fascinated with Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet.” It was a valid question, since I forced you to watch the three hour movie and sobbed at the end instead of making out with you like you’re supposed to do when you “watch a movie.” I don’t know why I told you the truth, but even so I blurted out “I read it over and over because I hope one day something’s going to change, and they’ll end up together in the end.” You scoffed like you always do when I talk about things like fate or love or God, but that didn’t stop you
from getting me a red and gold special edition copy of the play for Christmas and writing on the front cover, “Maybe it’ll end different this time.”

Now, you know as well as I do that Will was a nut, and his plays weren’t exactly the most realistic. But he was right about this one. You didn’t kill my cousin, and I never took a roofie from a priest, but we were just two dumb kids in love, running away from time when it was already ahead of us.

I’ve been through my fair share of break-ups. I’ve had my heart stomped on, Hell; I’ve crushed a few myself. I almost get this sick masochistic pleasure out of getting dumped. It’s a socially acceptable reason to scream, throw things, and shout “fuck you”. And then I rip up the pictures, drink a lot of wine, get a haircut and I’m fine in a week tops. But I’ve never been through a break-up like this before. There was no screaming. Nothing was thrown. We both knew what had to happen. We were toxic, drawn to each other like a moth to a flame, but we burned too fast and too bright. There was no hatred or name-calling. There was love-making while the snow poured from the sky. There was kissing. So much kissing. Long kisses, passionate kisses, kisses that made me weak and shivery. Your legs wrapped around mine and your head buried into my chest as you sobbed and said, “I’m sorry, I love you. I’m sorry, I love you” over and over…

We knew before we started that only tragedy could come from the dangerous combination of your fire and my air. But we encircled each other anyway. Maybe we thought we were smart enough to dart past fate, maybe we just didn’t care.

There was nothing poetic about our whirlwind love story. I’m not going to romanticize our relationship. There was love; fuck, there still is. We made that clear as you clung to me outside my apartment, whispering apologies that I didn’t even hear. Loving you exhausted me, rolled me up and wrung me out like an emotional towel. Losing you destroyed me, a kind of death without any of the relief. And now here I am, forced to keep living while part of me is hollow. And on my way home every day I can hear the universe audibly cackle as I walk past that fucking picnic table.

Sans Regrets
Je tremblais dans mes chaussures de tennis poussiéreuses et regardais juste un peu plus loin que leurs orteils, dans l'eau turquoise et tumultueuse de La Fontaine de Vaucluse. Timidement, j'ai plongé mes doigts brunis par le soleil dans la rivière et j'ai senti le froid glacial. Le soleil chaud de juillet tapait sur mon gilet de sauvetage orange fluorescent et mes sourcils froncés, et les senteurs des coquelicots emplissaient l'air. J'étais à 50 kilomètres de ma famille d'accueil, la famille de Jomard et leur chalet tout simple à Avignon, et sur le point de descendre en kayak de terrifiants rapides écumants.

Ce que mon groupe de compagnons de théâtre créatifs et moi-même pensions, c'est que nous étions censés explorer des marchés d'antiquités et déguster diverses glaces (selon l'horaire de la journée en tout cas.) Au lieu de cela, nous nous sommes retrouvés sur les falaises rocheuses de la campagne, parce que notre coordinatrice d'origine française, Anne, a décidé que nous avions besoin d'un peu d'aventure et que nous étions trop enfermés dans les cinémas et les théâtres ces derniers temps.

Le trajet de bus pour arriver à notre destination durait une heure et était magnifique. La voiture climatisée a traversé des montagnes rocheuses et des massives étendues de glycines, jusqu'à ce que nous arrivions à l'ancien moulin à papier de Vallis Clausa.

Après une visite de l'usine, qui était également une parfumerie, et une explication des procédés de fabrication de papier et de distillerie, nous avons fait une randonnée dans les sentiers jusqu'à la source de La Fontaine. Mon chef de groupe, Sara Krasnow, nous a parlé du folklore local qui entoure cette eau. Souvent, en France il y a des
mythes associés aux sites naturels populaires qui expliquent leur création. (Mythopoeia: une pratique pour laquelle les gens utilisent les mythes divins pour expliquer des phénomènes naturels qu'ils n'auraient autrement pas pu comprendre) Dans ce cas, une nymphe qui est tombée sur deux voyageurs endormis et déshydratés, a créé le printemps avec ses pouvoirs magiques, pendant leur sommeil, de sorte qu'ils ne meurent pas.

Après l'histoire, nous avons marché jusqu'à un hangar d'équipements et on nous a donné des pagaies. Je n'avais aucune idée de ce qui allait se passer, jusqu'à ce qu'un homme très bronzé et musclé avec une moustache épaisse et sombre (votre français typique de la campagne), traînant un kayak vert pour 3 personnes, sorte de derrière le bâtiment. Il a fait tomber de façon spectaculaire l'appareil en face de nous, mes amis, Léa et Asher, et moi. Léa de l'Oregon et Asher de New York, m'ont regardé et s'attendaient à ce que le résident du Vermont, qui vit à côté d'un lac, soit celui qui connaisse tout sur les activités à l'extérieur. Une fois les bateaux déposés au bord de la rivière, l'homme a crié sarcastiquement "Allons-y mes adorables petits enfants!», comme il regardait notre groupe de lycéens. «Connard», ai-je murmuré dans ma barbe.

Sans aucune expérience de comment naviguer des rapides en eaux vives, mais équipé de tout le matériel de sécurité nécessaire, j'ai été poussé à l'arrière d'un kayak et envoyé sur la rivière. Je me suis dit, "Si je survis ceci, je dois absolument envoyer un courriel à mes parents" (je ne leur avais pas parlé depuis le début de mon voyage de 3 mois.) Outre les occasionnels cris de «merde» ou «putain», l'atmosphère de la rivière était sereine. L'air était épais, comme j'imagine celui de la forêt tropical amazonienne, et il y avait une faune et une flore tropicale partout. Dans l'eau, en dépit de sa température
glaciale, il y avait des poissons avec des couleurs vives comme le rouge, le bleu et le jaune. Il y avait dans l'air des hirondelles rousselines aux longues ailes minces et des papillons de toutes les formes et tailles qui se posaient sur nos épaules brûlées par le soleil et pleines de taches de rousseur. Le parfum frais du feuillage persistait se mêlant à l'arôme familier du SPF 50. Nous glissions tranquillement à travers l'eau et la végétation magnifiques, excepté le seul incident quand notre rameur, Asher, a ramé contre les instructions du barreur (moi en l'occurrence) et a fait basculer notre bateau alors que nous descendions une cascade (et j'ai perdu ma toute nouvelle paire de lunettes de soleil de Pacsun.) Finalement, l'eau verte et bleue est devenue moins profonde et la coque de notre kayak a gratté les roches grises de la rivière. Le mode de vie français est fait d'aventures spontanées et potentiellement dangereuses, tout en gardant leur charme.

C'est la vie!

Sans Regrets

Willow Holschuh
I trembled in dusty sneakers and peered just past their toes into the rushing turquoise water of *La Fontaine de Vaucluse*. Tentatively, I dipped my sun-browned fingers into the river and felt the icy cold. The hot July sun beat down on my fluorescent orange life jacket and furrowed brow, and the aroma of *les coquelicots* filled the air. I was 50 kilometers away from my host family’s, *la famille de Jomard*, cookie cutter cottage in *Avignon*, and about to kayak terrifying white rapids.

As far as my group of creative theatre companions and I were aware, we were supposed to be exploring antique markets and tasting various ice creams (according to the schedule for the day anyways). Instead, we wound up in the rocky cliffs of the country-side because our native French coordinator, Anne, decided we needed some adventure and were too cooped up in cinemas and theatres recently.

The hour long bus ride it had taken to get to our destination was beautiful. The air conditioned automobile rode through rocky mountains and masses of *Wysteria Parisienne* until we reached the old paper mill of *Vallis Clausa*.

After a tour through the mill, which also doubled as a *parfumerie*, and an explanation of the papermaking and distilling processes, we hiked the trails to the source of *La Fontaine*. My group leader, Sara Krasnow, told us of the local lore surrounding the water. Often times in France there are myths associated with popular natural landmarks that explain their creation (mythopoeism: A practice in which people use divine myths to explain natural occurrences they would otherwise not understand). In this case, a nymph, who happened upon two sleeping and dehydrated travelers, created the spring with her magic power during their slumber so that they would not die.

After the story, we walked over to an equipment shed and were handed paddles. I had no idea what was about to happen until a very tan and muscular man with a thick dark mustache (your typical country-side Frenchman) emerged from behind the building, lugging a lime green 3 person kayak. He dramatically dropped the apparatus in front of my friends, Lea and Asher, and me. Lea, from Oregon, and Asher, from New York City, looked to me and expected the resident Vermonter, who lives next to a lake, to be the one with knowledge of all things outdoorsy. After all of the boats were laid out at the river’s edge, the man sarcastically yelled “*Allons-y mes adorables et petits*”
“enfants!” as he surveyed our group of high school students. “Connard,” I muttered under my breath.

Without any prior experience handling white water rapids, but equipped with all of the necessary safety gear, I was pushed into the back of a kayak and sent off into the river. I thought to myself, “If I survive this, I definitely need to email my parents,” who I hadn’t spoken to since the beginning of my 3 month trip. Besides the occasional shout of “merde” or “putain,” the river atmosphere was serene. The air was thick, like what I’d imagine it to be in the Amazonian rainforest, and there was tropical flora and fauna everywhere. In the water, despite its frigid temperature, there were brightly colored fish of reds, blues, and yellows. In the air were Red-rumped Swallows, with long thin wings, and butterflies, of every shape and size, that landed on our sunburnt and freckled shoulders. The crisp scent of foliage lingered with the familiar aroma of SPF 50. We glided through the beautiful water and vegetation with ease, besides the one incident where our bowman, Asher, rowed against the coxswain’s (my) directions, and tipped our boat over as we navigated a waterfall (and I lost my brand new sunglasses from Pacsun). Eventually the green and blue water became shallow and the hull of our kayak scraped the grey river rocks. Spontaneous and potentially dangerous, yet beautiful adventures are the French way of life.

*C’est la vie!*
Thank you for your friends dying.

On Memorial Day, strangers and friends come up to me and offer their hand and thank me for my service. I have one immediate reaction. Why would anyone thank me because one of my friends lost his or her life in combat? This is Memorial Day, not Veterans Day. Do not thank a living veteran on Memorial Day. Thank a veteran on Veteran’s Day.

Americans have lost sight of the meaning behind Memorial Day.

Memorial Day first started out as Decoration Day. According to the website va.gov, “Decoration Day was established three years after the Civil War ended on May 5, 1868. It was a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers, both Confederate and Union.” Memorial Day officially became a national holiday by an act of Congress in 1971.

My heart breaks with the shift in taking a day to honor the men and women of our Armed Services who have paid the ultimate sacrifice. The United States of America places a higher value on barbecues and consumerism over patriotism. It’s a weekend for corporations to offer sales to pollute the morality and wallet of our society. This three-day weekend has mutated into the self-centered start of summer. A time to honor yourself with a new purse or washer and dryer. A day off school to get a tan. Time off work to get drunk. These are the greedy thoughts that flood the minds of many Americans with Memorial Day approaching.
Dave Stancliff of the Eureka, California Times-Standard states, “Traditional observance of Memorial Day has faded over the years. Many Americans have forgotten its meaning and traditions. At many cemeteries, the graves of the fallen are increasingly ignored, neglected. Most people no longer remember to fly the flag at half-staff for the day.” The sight of a flag at full-mast feels like fratricide. A homegrown lapse in flag etiquette strikes every veteran like a red, white, and blue friendly fire bullet to the heart.

America’s reputation for being the land of the free paid for by the brave, lays waste. Now we are the land of selfish paid for by people we do not care about or pay tribute to.

The American public can change that. By doing so will help our society once again look outward and no longer inward. Not much is required and it is your patriotic duty. Utilize Monday, May 25 to pay respect and remember. Make it a silent, personal holiday. Bow your heads, remember their ultimate sacrifice, and honor those who have died. Do not raise your flags to full-mast. Lower your flags to half-mast. Exclude the living Veterans from this holiday. If you want to give thanks, save it for the appropriate holiday, Veterans Day. Nevertheless, remember the real meaning behind Memorial Day and never forget.

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A Take on Gambling

John Brownell
The prohibition of sports gambling is a violation of basic civil liberties. Government interference in sports wagering is unnecessary. It is profiting underground capitalists and halting tax revenue across the country.

America has displayed a healthy appetite for gambling on professional and amateur sports, yet it is an activity that has been pushed underground since the Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act of 1992 (PASPA) prohibited states the authorization to facilitate sports gambling. PASPA was passed with the intention of protecting the integrity of professional and amateur sporting events in relation to match fixing. It also aimed to protect the public from introduction to an activity that could lead to risky consequential habits.

Nearly twenty-five years later, America is at a different place from the world of the early 90’s in which this law was passed. American sports industries and odds makers possess the technology and organizational structure to ensure a just union between sports gambling and gaming integrity.

On the protection of public interest through prohibition of sports gambling the government is overstepping its role. It is not the responsibility of Washington to create a utopian society and shield its citizens from precarious recreational habits. Gambling is an activity that an adult should be trusted to participate in using their respective judgment.

Basic economics tells us the result of prohibition is the creation of a black market. When there is demand for a product or activity, regulation does not cause that demand to disappear. People simply look for a new market to satisfy their demand. Enter bookmakers and off-shore gaming sites to facilitate account management of underground gamblers. These organizations have filled the void of sports wagering to a tune of billions of dollars annually.

Prohibition of gambling fosters an atmosphere of scare tactics and doomsday warnings surrounding the activity. It creates an environment of ignorance. Legalization of gambling brings forth the opportunity to educate people on the actual problems surrounding it. Gambling is an entertaining activity when handled responsibly and in moderation. It is an activity that Americans should be entrusted to manage.
Further, the government is fully capable of creating a tax on sports gambling and profiting. It does not blink at collecting billions on tobacco and alcohol taxes annually. However, the government chooses to take a hard line on other illicit activities. Prohibiting certain substances and profiting on others brings a grey area into government stance on public interest. There is no need for the government for its people. Free people should be granted the responsibility to decide which recreational habits are they wish to partake in.

An underground vocabulary of money-line’s, spreads, parleys, teasers, props and futures is spoken by black market business men hiding in plain sight. Americans have been harnessed by federal and state laws that prohibit sports gambling, annually leaving billions of dollars to trade hands behind closed doors. It is time America takes a look at the issue of professional and amateur sports gambling and makes a change.
Eternal Commitment

Brent Middleton

What would cause other men chills only fuels my fire. Encountering the fleshless corpses of past Koopas no longer faze me, but simply give me more leverage. Giant ridged blocks of stone tumble from the heavens, and yet I deftly dodge their cruel embrace. I only have one foe on my mind, and he stands before me cowering behind his inept henchmen: Bowser himself, in all his fire-spewing glory. I'm too fast for his fireballs, and too agile to fall into his lava pit. I'm so close to reuniting with my princess once again…but wait, is that a Tanooki tail?

Determination
Rising to the fresh challenge
Endlessly for her
MOST YOUTH DONT

Because they want a FUTURE

Anti-Smoking
Danielle D’Onofrio
The Epic Heroism of Samwise Gamgee

Kim Snyder

Throughout the history of the written word there has been a collection of works which can be classified as epic narratives. These works rely heavily on the use of prolonged quests, supernatural creatures, and most importantly, epic heroes. Since the introduction of the epic hero, there have been a handful of characters that remain significant and relevant to the study of literature. Despite diverse characterization, there remain seven distinct qualities that portray an epic hero. These characteristics presented in past epic narratives can then be applied to more modern works of epic literature to help define an epic hero within the context of the work. The three-part work of J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, depicts a number of characters that can easily be classified as an epic hero. However, through a deep analysis of both the characteristics that defines an epic hero and this epic narrative of J.R.R. Tolkien, one can conclude that the unlikely, but nevertheless viable, candidate as the epic hero from this series is not Aragorn, Frodo, or Gandalf, but instead Samwise Gamgee.

In order to attribute the classification of Samwise Gamgee as the epic hero of *The Lord of the Rings*, it is imperative to first define and comprehend the seven main qualities that shape this particular type of literary figure. First and foremost, an epic hero stems from a line of noble birth. This means that the epic hero holds an above average station in life, such as a king, prince, or someone of an upper class. Second, the epic hero must be capable in deeds of fortitude and strength. Without the potential for great deeds, there is nothing to separate the actions of the epic hero from that of a commoner. The third quality of an epic hero relies on his abilities as a great warrior or fighter. This quality does not necessarily require the hero to establish himself as great fighter before his epic journey, though it’s more common for an epic hero to do so. This leads to the fourth, and more obvious, requirement of an epic hero; he must travel throughout a vast landscape. Without a journey outside of the homeland of the hero, there is no epic at all. A quest that requires the hero to venture into unknown territory requires a characteristic of selflessness, since the journey involves both people and adventures unfamiliar and dangerous to the epic hero. The fifth requirement of an epic hero is a sense of national heroism. This can loosely be associated with any form of recognition from the citizens of the hero’s homeland as a great and heroic person. The sixth quality of an epic hero prominently stems from the fourth quality already defined, humility. The epic hero must possess some form of humility or selflessness in order to be categorized as this particular type of literary hero. This means that his actions are a result of necessary importance and not done in a vain attempt for fame and remunerations. Finally, the final quality that shapes an epic hero is his connection to supernatural elements. In this case, the epic hero must either face some type of supernatural force or figure, or he must receive supernatural reinforcement or aid when battling an enemy.

Now that the qualities of an epic hero have been clearly defined, one can look closely at the actions, words, and reputation of Samwise Gamgee and analyze if, in what ways, he can be attributed to all the qualities of an epic hero. Possibly the hardest quality to attribute to Samwise would be the first afore mentioned, his stemming from a line of noble birth. It is in this primary characteristic of noble birth that one cannot find a way in which Samwise can be categorized. Throughout the entirety of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sam Gamgee is frequently reminding readers that he is simply the caretaker that tends to Bilbo Baggins’ gardens. The lineage of Samwise Gamgee is but briefly mentioned within this epic tale, and it appears as if Tolkien deliberately
created the character of Samwise with the intention of keeping him as a lower class citizen within The Shire.

The second quality an epic hero possesses is the capability to produce actions of great deeds and valor. Throughout the epic journey the Fellowship embarks on, Sam continually proves his competence for courageous action. Perhaps this can best be seen when Samwise hinders Frodo, who decides to continue the mission of the Fellowship alone, from his solitary escape. Frodo, now knowing full well the capabilities of evil the Ring possesses, has chosen to leave behind the others in fear of their demise. Samwise, though he is repeatedly asked by Frodo to go, refuses to part from his companion. Through Sam’s simple refusal to abandon his master on a very daunting and dangerous quest, he has proven his capabilities in acts of fortitude. Not many other mortals present within Middle Earth eagerly agree to travel into the dangerous territory that is Mordor. Sam willingly and stubbornly agrees to this quest, knowing full well his lack of experience or knowledge in anything outside of The Shire. On Frodo’s admission of continuing to Mordor, Samwise simply declares, “But not alone. I’m coming too, or neither of us isn’t going. I’ll knock holes in all the boats first.” (478). It is through Sam’s staunch resolution not to abandon his friend that readers can first glimpse the capabilities towards greatness Samwise Gamgee possesses.

The third quality an epic hero possesses is the reputation as a great fighter in times of war. Frodo and Sam, at no point in the series are forced into traditional battle, yet Sam still manages to portray himself as a great warrior. Though he is small in stature and does not appear to possess a high level of physical strength compared to his enemies, Sam has enough wits to successfully evade the dangers of Cirith Ungol with Frodo. Not only does Sam wield the elven-blade Sting against the treacherous monster Shelob, he also manages to easily manipulate the orcs in a way that delivers Frodo into his company once again, and leads them back on a path towards Mount Doom. A great warrior, indeed, must acquire a certain level of skillsets in fighting to successfully vanquish a foe, but they must also recognize when words and wisdom are of more value than steel and armor. Truly, in his ability to save Frodo from the grasps of the orcs, Sam proves that his wits are of an even greater value than his fighting. It is ultimately Sam’s actions that take place in the tower of Cirith Ungol that allow the two hobbits to complete their quest to Mount Doom and rid Middle Earth of the dangerous powers of the Ring. More so than ever, Sam’s actions within The Return of the King, aptly display the various means in which Sam Gamgee becomes the most integral warrior in Middle Earth.

There is no doubt that the fourth characteristic of an epic hero can clearly be seen throughout the entirety of The Lord of the Rings. Samwise Gamgee, along with his fellow hobbits, travel throughout vast territories of unknown lands in order to fulfill the mission of the Fellowship. Truly Sam’s adventures in Moria, Emyn Muil, and throughout Cirith Ungol can be classified as an extensive and distant journey. It is Sam’s unwavering drive to fulfill the Fellowship’s mission through this quest, however, which places extreme emphasis on this particular characteristic. In this specific instance, Sam is left to choose between continuing on with the Ring towards Mount Doom or staying with Frodo, who at the time appeared to be dead. Sam’s resolution to continue in the desolate wasteland of Cirith Ungol, despite the death of his most beloved companion, is selfless and courageous. It takes a level of compassion and honesty to leave one’s friend in the wake of death in order to continue a perilous journey alone. Still, Samwise asserts to himself, “the Council gave him companions, so that the errand should not fail. And you are the last of all the Company. The errand must not fail.” (386). The
determination of what many other characters consider to be a diminutive and innocent creature is remarkable in and of itself. Sam’s determination to continue forward at all costs is what ultimately sets him apart from his companion and the Company in *The Lord of the Rings*. He is repeatedly attempting to make the world a better place, regardless of the distances he must travel or the evils he must face.

The fifth characteristic of an epic hero, the recognition of greatness from those of his own kind, can most easily be seen between the friendship of Frodo and Sam. Though Sam continuously disregards his significant role within the quest, Frodo attempts multiple times to assure his friend of the greatness he possesses. Though this type of national heroism does not mold to the typical notions of an epic hero, the background and social status of Samwise make Frodo’s admissions that much more significant. As a simple gardener, it would be unlikely that many in The Shire would be able to recognize the greatness and courage Sam possesses. It must then be assumed that the only manner in which his peers can recognize Samwise as a hero is through his closest and dearest friendships. Frodo, when discussing the future tales of their adventure, admits that Sam is “one of the chief characters: Samwise the stouthearted. ‘I want to hear more about Sam…Frodo wouldn’t have got far without Sam, would he?’” (363). It is through admissions like this readers are able to note just how highly Sam’s character is appreciated in valued within the epic narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*. Truly, if his closest friend realizes the asset that he has become in the journey, then that, in itself, is a sufficient enough form of national heroism to suffice the humble Samwise Gamgee.

This leads to the sixth quality of an epic hero, which has already been proven as an innate characteristic of Samwise Gamgee; his humility. Sam considers his role within this quest a duty rather than a preference. He does not depart with Frodo in hopes of becoming famous or collecting valuable rewards; he simply wants to make sure the mission of the Fellowship is carried out and that his dearest friend remains unharmed. In this way, it is impossible to argue that Samwise does not possess the humility necessary of an epic hero. Moreover, Sam’s selflessness proves to be one of his greatest assets when he, for a brief time, becomes the possessor of the Ring. Though he too feels the compelling and toxic powers of the Ring, “he knew in the core of his heart that he was not large enough to bear such a burden…the one small garden of a free gardener was all his need and due, not a garden swollen to a realm; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command.” (186). Indeed it is the modesty of Sam that leads to the destruction of the Ring. Without the steadfast mindset of Samwise Gamgee, Frodo would have easily met his end and the fate of Middle Earth would have crumbled to the powers of Sauron. The humility Sam possesses allows for the hobbits’ quest to continue and ultimately succeed.

The final attribute an epic hero must retain on his epic journey involves elements of supernatural forces. Clearly, the Ring worn by both Frodo and Sam throughout *The Lord of the Rings* is sufficient enough to be attributed to this particular characteristic. Yet a countless number of instances appear in which Sam faces the supernatural foes of Middle Earth. The most significant can be seen when Sam battles the great creature Shelob in order to save Frodo from his imminent demise. In this particular episode of their quest, Sam is forced to wield the supernatural, elven-blade Sting in order to defend Frodo from the mystical and ancient creature Shelob. No creature before Samwise has ever accomplished this feat. Tolkien describes his action of slaying the monster when saying, “with both hands he held the elven-blade point upwards…and so Shelob, with the driving force of her own cruel will…thrust herself upon a
bitter spike...no such anguish had Shelob ever known, or dreamed of knowing, in all her long world of wickedness. (382). Truly the bravery and courage of Samwise saved not only his life from the treacherous creatures of Middle Earth, but also the life of Frodo Baggins. Without Sam's fortitude to successfully defeat a handful of supernatural forces, the fate of Middle Earth would have been forced into darkness and despair.

Though originally an unlikely candidate to be considered an epic hero, Samwise Gamgee, through J.R.R. Tolkien's epic narrative *The Lord of the Rings*, proves himself to possess all seven major qualities required of an epic hero. Through his actions and words, as well as the opinions of Frodo Baggins, readers can ultimately conclude that the true epic hero within *The Lord of the Rings* is not the mighty Aragorn or sagacious Gandalf, but rather the humble, canny character of Samwise Gamgee.
“Yo man, what do you think makes a true friend?”

“A true friend? …Well, you know, someone that has your back no matter what, I guess. Why?”

“I don’t know; I was just thinking it over, and I realized that I don’t think I’ve ever had a real best friend.”

“Really? Well, a best friend is different, right? A best friend is like, the closest of the close, you know? A true friend can just be a normal close friend—if a close friend is even normal anyway, haha.”

“Hah, yeah, I guess that’s true. It’s just like, I’ve always—well, almost always—had friends that had my back…well, maybe not really…I’m not really sure about anything anymore Mac. I don’t know man.”

“Hmm. Well, I think you’d pretty much know if you had a best friend. But the thing is, not everyone has ‘em, and it seems like only the people who really need one don’t have one.”

“And what’s up with people saying they have like five and six and seven best friends? It’s called a *best* friend, you know? It’s like, *the best.*”

“Hah, yeah, that’s kinda stupid. I think it’s really just so people don’t have to choose and make the rest of their friends feel bad.”

“That’s what I’m thinking. But anyway, what were you saying?”

“Well—and I’m just thinking this, it isn’t anything real, like…anyway—I think the people that have best friends are kinda the spoiled ones. It takes—at least, I think so—*years* to
build up a friendship to the point where you have a real best friend. By that time, you’ve already had this friend for so long that you’re already starting to take them for granted. I know with my boy Jack, we grew up together, so we’ve been around for a lot of each other’s stuff. Because we think we know each other so well (and we pretty much do) I just stop caring if some things get on his nerves sometimes because I know we’ll bounce right back from it. It gets pretty bad sometimes, and he does it too. In the end though, we’ve been friends since kindergarten, so I think it just works out that way.”

“That’s cool.”

“Yeah. But the people who don’t have one and really need one are kinda stuck, because it happens over time and kinda randomly. Like, you can’t just go up to someone and automatically be best friends, you know? You might hit it off or whatever, but it wouldn’t be on the same level as a real best friend. So those people who need a best friend now—whether they’re depressed, lonely or anything else—are kind of just stuck like that.”

“That’s exactly what I’m talking about Mac…It’s like the worst thing possible to be like that.”

“Yeah…I don’t even know.”

“What you were saying before, though…about what you were saying about bouncing back, I think sometimes you can cross the line when you get too used to each other. I think that’s what happened with my old best friend.”

“What? Wait, so you did have a best friend?”

“Well, yeah, I guess…but my mind kinda blocks him out most of the time, so I usually forget he’s even around anymore.”
“Wait, what do you mean ‘your mind blocks him out?’ What happened?”

“Eh, it’s basically what you were saying; we were best friends since legit third grade man. I almost never went over to his house, but we chilled so much we started sounding alike.”

“Like, your actual voices sounded the same?”

“Nah, like our speech patterns and stuff. Like, we’d say a sentence the exact same way. And we made the same weird sound effects, and laughed at most of the same stuff.”

“Wow. You guys were tight, huh?”

“Yeah man, exactly. And the same thing you were sayin’ started happening: I stopped caring so much about what I said and how I acted around him ‘cause I knew we’d always be tight. I’d just get really comfortable and say some stupid stuff, and I could see that he got annoyed sometimes and I’d always apologize, but not really seriously, because it was all kinda like a joke to me…”

“So what happened man?”

“Just one day there was this huge fight—not a real fight, but like an emotional fight—between me and another one of our friends. It was nasty, like real bad. And when I looked around to see where my bro was, I saw him on the other side, and he wouldn’t even look at me.”

“…That’s terrible, man. I don’t even really know what to say.”

“Yeah…I didn’t either. I haven’t talked to him since, and I don’t really ever plan on it.”

“…I mean, it’s not good to harbor any grudges or anything like that, but…”

“Yeah, I know…it’s just one of those times when you actually realize what it’s like to really hate someone man, and to be really depressed. Mad depressed.”
“Yeah... I mean...”

“That’s why I think it’s kinda a double-edged sword, man... people with best friends don’t usually know how well they got it, and then they mess it up, and it’s almost like it was never worth it in the first place...”
The day after Thanksgiving, the village of Cooperstown gathers at the corner of Pioneer and Main, bundled up against the cold. Christmas carols fill the air as children laugh and adults huddle over their free hot chocolate, marveling at the young’s resilience against the cold. The anticipation fills the air, almost tangible, as the Cooperstown High School Marching Band, all 15 members, march down Main Street in their old woolen uniforms. An old fire truck and several adults playing brass instruments follow them. Then, “Santa Claus is Comin’ to Town” rises above the excited cries of children, as the man they had all been waiting for arrives in the back of an open-bed truck. He stands, waves at the crowd, and exclaims “Merry Christmas!”

That man is Mr. Paul Kuhn, a well-known and loved figure in this sleepy, upstate New York town. In the summers, he sits in the corner park and helps tourists find their way. In the winter, in that very same park, he sits in Santa’s cottage, holding children on his knee and listening as they tell him what they want for Christmas. He is never without a smile or a kind word, always opening his arms when he sees me so he can give me a hug. It is hard to remember a time when I did not know Mr. Paul. And it is hard to imagine anyone else as Santa Claus.

For the last 16 years, half of the tradition’s history, Cooperstown has not had to imagine another Santa Claus. Every year, Mr. Paul puts on his red woolen suit and grows his beard for the months proceeding. In the old cottage heated by a space heater, he sits for hours and kindly welcomes each person— young, old and animal— until Christmas Eve. It is something he takes great pride and joy in and allows nothing to prevent him from participating, not even the osteoarthritis that has caused him to replace both of his hips in the last 12 years.

When his hip first started bothering him in the summer of 2003, he decided to wait until October to see a doctor, thinking it would get better when instead it got much worse. By that time, the doctor advised surgery as soon as possible. But, he refused until after Christmas. He did not want to disappoint the children.

When his other hip started to hurt a year and a half ago, he got a surgery date for late August, cutting it close, but he thought it could work. “However, I failed to take into account that
I was 10 years older,” Mr. Paul said with a laugh. “Santa was tough that year.” To handle the pain, he would take the prescribed pain medication, do his rehab, and after Santa season was done, he went to the Clark Sports Center to take my mom’s Aquacize class. “She got me in shape,” he remembers with a smile. He did the exercises the physical therapist gave him to the point that he needed hernia surgery this past year.

But he refuses to let pain or diseases keep him down. Also, plagued with a chronic cough due to fibrosis at the bottom of his lungs, Mr. Paul adamantly refused the idea that being in pain affected his mood while being Santa. “It can’t. It just can’t.” While he admits that moving has been hard and his boots bothered him, he refused to allow it to overshadow the Christmas season. You only need to look at him to know how much he loves being Santa for the people of Cooperstown. He remembered a wedding proposal that happened a few years ago at the event. “I was so choked up myself that I never asked them who they were or how I could get in touch with them. I guess they got married and lived happily ever after. I have no idea who they are.” People all over the world have had the opportunity to appreciate what a gift he has been for the town. During the winter months, people from places as far away as Japan come to visit the Baseball Hall of Fame, just down at the end of Main Street. They see the cottage and love stopping in to see him.

When asked what he would do over to try to change his current health status, he replied, “I’ve been pretty healthy all my life. I’m 77, almost 77, and I haven’t had any really serious health problems ever. Problems with my heart or anything like that.” He is extremely grateful for his life and the many blessings in it. When asked further, he joked about being a runner earlier in life and running on crested roads. He is not sure if this caused the arthritis in his hips but when asked if he regrets running, he laughed: “I’d walk instead of run.” He also was not certain of what could have caused the fibrosis. He assured me that it was under control; with annual x-rays to make sure that it has not gotten any worse. He referred to it as “just a little nuisance”. A ten-day stay in a hospital due to pneumonia while he was in the army in the 1960s could have been the culprit. But then he revealed he had been a smoker for about 15 years. “Don’t ever do it. It is the worst thing. Don’t ever do it,” he kept telling me. The first thing he did when he got out of the hospital was to light up a cigarette. It was everywhere, in movies and on live TV. Today, he urges the young people in our community to stay away from it.

When asked if he had any final thoughts about how he lives with chronic diseases, Mr. Paul smiled and replied; “I just live with it. That’s what you have to do, you know? It’s the same thing with all of your physical ailments, you know, the arthritis and so on. You reach a certain
point in life where you’re stuck with what you have, right? It isn’t going to get better. It could get worse. If you can just maintain the status quo then you are way ahead of the game. So you have a good attitude and you accept whatever hand life has dealt you and you be happy.”

And he puts his words into action every day, refusing to let diseases slow him down, and always making every child’s Christmas wish to meet Santa Claus come true.

Mr. Paul, my older sister Joelle, and I in Santa’s Cottage, Farkle Park, Cooperstown December 2014.

Bus Accident

Antoinette DiVisconti
I am the textbook commuter. I regularly travel roundtrip to work via public transportation. My 26 mile, one and half hour daily commute from San Mateo to San Francisco via the California coast is beautiful. It is a scenic commute that captures the natural beauty of the San Francisco Bay. Each morning I board the bus at the beginning of the route and depart the bus at the end of the route. One November morning in 1989, my scenic commute transformed into a journey that defined human kindness.

During one morning's rush hour my express bus was involved in a construction accident in downtown San Francisco. A crane toppled over hitting two office buildings and dropped debris onto the city. The debris killed a pedestrian and the driver of a mini-school bus along with three construction workers. The driver of my express bus was severely injured.

Typically, the relationship of commuting passengers does not go beyond face recognition. The repetition of the daily commute allows passengers to have their association with specific bus stops. Passengers may be aware of a constant familiar face at the wheel but the relationship usually ends there. On that November morning, this practical means of travel became personal.

The accident occurred near the end of the route in downtown San Francisco. Falling debris caused the bus to rock side to side. My bus driver was hit by debris and a fire started in my bus.

I sat frozen in my seat. Noise from falling debris and emergency sirens surrounded me. A fellow passenger was kind enough to tap me on my shoulder and usher me down the bus aisle, her act of kindness may have saved my life. The passenger door could not be opened electronically so another passenger kicked it open. He made certain all the passengers exited the bus safely.

Another act of human kindness.

I exited the bus and called my office to explain I wasn't coming to work. My office manager sent my co-worker to meet me at the accident site to make sure that I was safe and that I made it home. I did not expect this level of kindness from my office manager because I was a new employee.
Today, I continue to travel by public transportation I often think of the safety of my fellow commuters. Today, I look at my driver’s name badge. And today, on the bus, I remember how the bus accident in 1989 taught me that human kindness is found in strangers rooted in courage.

Point: Human kindness is limitless and will prevail in times of hardship.
Kick Out the Hooligans

Judith Tacuri

Fans have done outrageous things for the love of their sport.

Soccer fans show their loyalty by wearing the team's colors, singing chants, playing enormous drums, and waving flags at stadiums. Everything seems magnificent when watching the game on television. Sadly, soccer games aren't as perfect as in person. People watching a soccer game at a stadium have a motivation to celebrate, get drunk and then fight with each other. The violence at soccer matches has been around for a long time, scaring away people who want to enjoy the game in peace. To solve the problem at the games, the leagues in charge must crack down with more arrests and restraining orders. Restraining the violence at the stadiums will bring back the real fans who watch and support their teams in a free-violence environment.

Soccer is the world's sport, yet it is dangerous for the people and the players. What is causing these problems during and after the games? Hooligans. Gangs that regularly go to football matches, start fights with the opposing supporters, and make chants scaring the opposite teams and their supporters. Sean Ingle in the guardian.com writes that "Football hooliganism, once the English disease is more like a cold sore now." He states that violence at soccer games has diminished in England. Soccer in England was once believed to be a cancer, but now is more like a cold sore; the irritation comes back every so often and is still treatable.

England's soccer league authorities added more security laws and made more arrests that has helped reduce the violence inside and outside of the stadiums. This year's tournament authorities of Copa America in Chile created a law to prevent the violence during the matches. The authorities made the decision to ban the sales and access of beer inside the stadiums and the use of banners and drums to keep the "Barras bravas" hooligans away. Small and large European and Latin-American leagues should follow the same path and in that way people who attend the games will feel secure.
Creating violence free environments at soccer games will attract more fans who in the past stayed at home to watch the games on their televisions. It will also create a friendly environment for the fans and the players. And it will allow the fans to enjoy the games in peace.
Expulsar a los hooligans (rufianes)

Fanáticos han hecho cosas escandalosas por el amor a su deporte.

Los fanáticos del fútbol muestran su lealtad vistiéndose de los colores de sus equipos, cantando cants, golpeado enormes tambores o agitando banderas en los estadios. Todo parece ser magnifico cuando se mira un partido por la televisión. Tristemente los partidos de fútbol no son tan perfectos en persona. La gente que mira un partido de fútbol en un estadio tiene un motivo para celebrar, emborracharse y luego pelearse entre sí. La violencia en los partidos de fútbol ha existido por mucho tiempo, asustando a la gente que quieren disfrutar en paz de un partido. Para resolver el problema en los partidos, las ligas encargadas deben tomar medidas severas con más detenciones y ordenes de restricciones. Restringiendo la violencia en los estadios traerá de regreso a los verdaderos fanáticos quienes miran y apoyan a sus equipos en un ambiente libre de violencia.

El fútbol es el deporte del mundo, sin embargo, es peligroso para las personas y los jugadores. ¿Que está causando estos problemas durante y después de los partidos? Hooligans. Pandillas que van regularmente a los partidos de fútbol, empiezan peleas con los hinchas opositores, y hacen cantos asustando a los equipos opuestos y sus hinchas. Sean Ingle en theguardian.com escribe que “La violencia en el fútbol, una vez se consideraba la enfermedad inglesa es ahora más como un herpes labial.” (Football hooligansm, once the English disease is more like a cold sore now) Él afirma que la violencia en los partidos de futbol ha disminuido en Inglaterra. El fútbol en Inglaterra una vez se creía ser un cáncer, pero ahora es más como un herpes labial; la irritación que regresa cada cierto tiempo y todavía es tratable.

Las autoridades de las ligas de fútbol de Inglaterra añadieron más leyes de seguridad, ejecutaron e hicieron más arrestos que han ayudado a reducir la violencia dentro y fuera de los estadios. Las autoridades del torneo de este año de Copa América en Chile crearon una ley para prevenir la violencia durante los partidos. Las autoridades tomaron la decisión de prohibir la venta y acceso de cerveza dentro de los estadios y el uso de pancartas y tambores para alejar a los rufianes de las “barras
bravas.” Ligas europeas y latinoamericanas pequeñas y grandes deben seguir el mismo camino, de esa manera, la gente que asisten a los partidos se sentirán seguros.

Creando un ambiente libre de violencia en los partidos de futbol atraerá más fanáticos que en el pasado se quedaban en sus hogares para mirar los partidos en sus televisiones. También creara un ambiente amigable para los fanáticos y jugadores. Y permitirá que los fanáticos disfruten de los partidos en paz.
Something

Michaela Lachance

A flipped leaf
A fresh slate
So difficult to come by
So easily missed
But I don’t want to start over
No, I’m sick of looking in the mirror
And fighting what I see
Because you keep telling me who I’m supposed to be
I’ve been struggling with who I’ve been
But I think I’m finally becoming who I am
You may not like my clothes
You may hate my hair
But you have to admit
At least I keep trying
Because I think that there must be more to this life
Than the stereotypes of older minds
I am more than the shoes I wear,
The brands I buy,
The way my hair falls in my eyes
There is more beneath the surface
A chance is all I ask for
I’m smarter than I look
I care more than I let the world know

You ask for my feelings
But we just end up on opposite sides
I don’t want to fight you anymore
I acknowledge my defeat
And I give you my rage--boiling, stinging,
Howling at the world to change
My fear--biting, chilling,
Paralyzing my lungs from crying out in pain
My tears--choking, drowning,
Weighing me down like concrete shoes
Because I don’t know who to choose
Me or you.

It is all rising within me,
An itch I can’t scratch
Til I just want to roll in the dirt like a dog
Or to flee on the wings of the wind
To escape the feelings
But I'm not running anymore
And I'm not going to turn to the comfort of the glass bottles filled with lost hopes,
suppressed dreams, and forgotten nights.
No, I'm not going to become one who injects themselves with borrowed hope and pride
that bring them so high that they don't realize how far down they truly are
No, instead I turn to the pen,
The sharpest sword ever forged
And the blank page,
The last frontier **never** to be conquered,
And I plunge head first into the well of words
In my secluded mind
To bring to light
My heart

Hidden away
Locked up in a tower
To protect it from thieves
And misleading princes
Who may have good intentions
That simply aren't right for me
Here, brought to light for you
So that you may begin to understand
That I may not have much to my name
But my past is making me who I am
And my future may not be that yellow brick road of old
But it is in front of my feet and I am walking forward
If you want to join me
It is your choice
But know that I have to go
With or without you
I am no longer that little girl who needed you to tie her shoes
But that doesn't mean I still don't need you
Just stand by my side
Hold my hand in hard times
And love me unconditionally
Through thick and thin
Light and dark
Anger and joy
Death and life.
All you have to do is take my outstretched hand
And step onto my path
Wherever it may lead.

The Wall

*Joseph A. Heenan*
Character List

Inspector Valentin Volkov:

Inspector Volkov is the head Stasi inspector in East Berlin. If you were ever lucky to see his man and still be alive afterwards, you would find him to be overly friendly. He treats everyone he mets like an old friend he has known since his childhood. Despite this very friendly demeanor, he is only loyal to uphold the power and safety of the state by any means necessary. He has killed many people in order to keep the state “secure” and has done so without second guessing any of his actions. As long as the state is secure, it does not matter what actions he must to keep it so.

Eric Stein:

If you were to ask Mr. Eric Stein the kind of man he is, he would say that he is a good one. Mr. Stein works in one of the many local bakeries in East Berlin, where he spends almost most of his time. He is an honest man just trying to live his life in the strange place that is East Berlin, without getting into trouble, even though trouble will find him.

Julia Meyer:

Julia Meyer is a strong person and the wife of Dominik Meyer. Her whole life she has grown up in Soviet’s overwhelming control of East Berlin. Although she is a tough and determined person who is willing to work hard, she was not given a job by the state and spends most of her days at home as a housewife. She does like the life that she has been given though and wishes for something better. She wishes to make her own way in life, without having to be told by the state what to do. She knows her wish can be granted though, if her and her husband can only get over the newly constructed Berlin Wall. She has had thoughts of trying to escape before the construction of the wall, but as her husband reminds her, the risk of death is a large deterrent.

Dominik Meyer:

Mr. Dominik Meyer has always been a content man. As long as he has a job, a house, and food, he considers his life well. For this reason his marriage to Julia might seem unusually, but he is in love with not only her, but her drive to achieve anything she desires, even her willingness to escape East Berlin which he believes to be a doomed cause. Dominik works in the automobile factory where he met and has becomes friends with Mr. Martin Schroder. The
two mostly discuss the daily events either from work or from the newspaper, but Dominik always talks to Martin since he “always knows what is going on.”

**Martin Schroder:**

Mr. Martin Schroder has been friends with the Meyers since his job working at the automobile factory with Dominik. He has been very loyal to them and has treated them like his own family, who he has been separated from. He would go to the ends of the world for them and to make sure that they are safe. Although Mr. Schroder seems to be the most loyal friend anyone can have, he is a torn man. In order to keep himself safe in the dangerous place that is East Berlin, he has become an informant/spy for the Stasi Secret Police. His work has put many people either behind bars or dead. Because of his service to the state, Mr. Schroder has connections to almost every community in East Berlin and able to ward off the suspicion by the head inspector of the Stasi, for now.

**Stasi Guards:**

(Ensemble) Are loyal to Inspector Volkov and the State.
Act I

Scene I: On the Street.

(Lights go up on the Street. On one half of the stage there is a house. On the other half is a street corner where the Berlin Wall can be seen in the background.)

(Eric Stein enters carrying a bag. He takes a few steps as he inspects the house in front to him.)

**Eric Stein:** Is this the house? I thought- No, no this must be it.

(Eric Stein takes a few cautions steps towards the house. Inspector Volkov enters behind Eric.)

**Inspector Volkov:** Eric? (pause) Eric is that you?

**Eric Stein:** (startled, to Inspector) Oh, Inspector, I- I didn’t expect to run into you at this time of the night.

**Inspector Volkov:** My friend, you know me. (giggles) I’m just taking my- leisure walk. (pause) I’m surprised to see you though. What has you out on a night like this?

**Eric Stein:** Well, you see. (making it up) One-one of my customers really wanted some of the bread I made this morning. You know, it gets thrown out otherwise. (shakes the bag so it makes noise) I was just headed to deliver it to his house.

**Inspector Volkov:** Ah, well that is very considerate of you to do that. For as long as I’ve known you Eric, you’ve always been so caring.

**Eric Stein:** (playing along) Yes- yes, I try to be haha. Since you’re here, I actually wanted to know if you could help me find his house. Do you know where-

**Inspector Volkov:** Eric, it’s past curfew.

(ERIC Stein doesn’t respond and they sit in silence. Eric begins to laugh anxiously.)

**Eric Stein:** (anxious) Curfew? What curfew?
Inspector Volkov: The State issued curfew. The one that has always been mandated. Everyone else already is home, and if I remember correctly, your house is on the south end of the city.

Eric Stein: (scared) Oh... Inspector I-

(Inspector Volkov walks closer to Eric Stein.)

Inspector Volkov: Enough. I will as you again. What are you doing out so late?

Eric Stein: (in terror) I-I, I am delivering bread inspector.

Inspector Volkov: (laughs) Of course you are!

Eric Stein: Inspector, I can explain-

Inspector Volkov: Eric, there is no need too. In fact, I’ve actually wanted to talk to you (pause) and this seems like the perfect opportunity.

(Inspector Volkov knocks the bag out of Eric’s hands, grabs him, and throws him down onto the street.)

Eric Stein: (terrified) Inspector, I-I don’t know what I did wrong?

Inspector Volkov: (chuckles) Oh, my friend, you don’t? Should I remind you then?

(Pulls out a letter from his coat pocket and begins reading it.)

Inspector Volkov: “Orders for Inspector Valentin Volkov from Stasi Headquarters in East Berlin: Mr. Eric Stein,” this is you, “has been found guilty of assisting in the escape of citizens from a tunnel underneath his bakery. He has put the State at risk. Due to this crime he is to be captured and removed immediately.” (Shows the letter to Eric Stein then puts it away.)

Eric Stein: I never did such things! I’m an honest man to my State. I would never try to endanger it. I-

(Eric Stein tries to stand up, but gets pushed back down by the Inspector.)

Inspector Volkov: The state will judge what you did and did not do!
Eric Stein: The State has judged wrong then!

Inspector Volkov: (Laughs) Oh Eric, how naïve of you. To think the State would mistake you, a criminal, for an honest citizen. The State never judges wrongly.

Eric Stein: There must be! That letter, it has to be for another man named Eric Stein. How can you be certain that it is me? It is just a name that they gave you, no photo. There must be hundreds of people across East Berlin with that name who own bakeries. I have done nothing-

Inspector Volkov: Enough of this!

(Inspector Volkov pulls out his pistol from its holster and aims it at Eric Stein)

Inspector Volkov: According to these orders, you are to be dealt with. Now, Mr. Eric Stein-

Eric Stein: (pleading) Listen to me! I would never harm the State! You know this. I have even helped the Stasi capture criminals, people who were trying to endanger the State. I am just a baker. Why can't you see that there has been a mistake?

Inspector Volkov: My friend, I am only the will of the State.

Eric Stein: I am no enemy Inspector!

(Eric Stein tries to stand again but is kicked back down by Inspector Volkov.)

Eric Stein: I-I would never- (sudden moment of realization) Oh dear God, help me.

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Scene II: In Meyer's House.

(Lights cut out from the street. Lights then fade onto the house. Julia Meyer is pacing anxiously. Dominick Meyer enters, just returning from work.)

Julia Meyer: Dom!

(Julia runs over to Dominick and embraces him)
**Julia Meyer:** I thought that- I thought that something happened. You’re back so late past curfew.

**Dominick Meyer:** Julia, I’m fine. Everything is fine.

(They stop embracing)

**Julia Meyer:** What happened?

**Dominick Meyer:** We were working on the line when Stasi officers entered the factory. They lined us all up and demanded to see our paper.

**Julia Meyer:** You mean like what happened yesterday and last week.

**Dominick Meyer:** (calm) Yes. Except this time, they also interrogated us, asking why we were there, what are jobs were, and who we had talked to recently. (pause) Then they took away some of the workers. They didn’t tell the rest of us why, but they just took them… Then ordered us to head to our homes immediately.

**Julia Meyer:** Well, I’m glad that they let you back home.

(Both of them sit at the table in the middle of the house.)

**Dominick Meyer:** How are you?

**Julia Meyer:** (unhappy) The State denied my request again. They sent a letter back telling me that, “my services were not needed at this inopportune time,” And “that another request would be necessary for reconsideration.”

**Dominick Meyer:** Julia-

**Julia Meyer:** I don’t get it. That’s the sixth letter I’ve sent this month and every time they tell me no. I just want to be able to leave this house and do something with my life, but no, the State will not let me. I don’t understand why-

(A booming gunshot goes off. Both Julia and Dominick stop their conversation suddenly out of terror. Then slowly, both turn back to face each other.)

**Julia Meyer:** (breaking though silence) I can’t do this. (to Dominik) Dom, we need to get out of here.
Dominik Meyer: *(sighs)* We’ve gone over this.

*(Julia stands up.)*

Julia Meyer: I know we have, but, we can’t continue living our lives like this. Our lives seem so pointless.

Dominik Meyer: Julia listen-

Julia Meyer: Dom, we can’t lie about this anymore. You’ve even tried to get a promotion at the factory, but every time they tell you no.

Dominik Meyer: My last request is still in processing though. It still has a chance.

Julia Meyer: You sent that five months ago.

Dominik Meyer: *(realization)* Oh.

Julia Meyer: You understanding what I’m saying now? Our best chance for better lives is to get past that wall and get into West Berlin, where we can make our own choices and create our own lives.

Dominik Meyer: *(questioning)* And, how would we do that? By climbing over it? Julia, you know what happens to people who talk about trying to escape, they go missing, just like the workers at my factory. They are never are never seen again. One day they exist, and the next, they’re gone, without any trace. *(pauses then calmly)* Look, I am all in favor for trying to have a better life, but the risk is not worth it. I don’t want you to disappear like the others.

Julia Meyer: So, are we supposed to just continue living like this?

Dominik Meyer: Afraid so. Better this than the risk of removal.

Julia Meyer: Dominick, this is not a life. We are- Our lives are being controlled by someone, something else… And there’s nothing we can do about it. *(sits down and becomes depressed)*

Dominik Meyer: Julia. *(sits next to Julia to console her)* Look, if there was a way to get out that didn’t involve alerting anyone, especially the Stasi, then I’d say we should go for
it. But right now that option doesn’t seem to exist. So I suggest that we try to make due with what we have, ok? We are still here, together, Alright?

**Julia Meyer:** (nods her head) Alright.

*(Dominick gets up and starts to move towards the window, moving on from the conversation.)*

**Julia Meyer:** (collects herself) ...What if we ask Martin?

**Dominik Meyer:** (to Julia) Martin?

**Julia Meyer:** Yes, Martin. (stands up) Do you think your friend can help?

**Dominik Meyer:** I-I don’t think that he’d be able to.

**Julia Meyer:** He’s told you about all of those hiding spots where he goes to read his books. Some of these place you and I didn’t even know existed. He knows more about this place than anyone else we know of. If there’s anybody who could, it’d be him.

**Dominik Meyer:** This is different. We are trying to escape. I don’t think that he-

**Julia Meyer:** Do you think there is anyone else we can even ask?

*(Dominick paces around has he is thinking. Both sit in silence.)*

**Dominik Meyer:** I don’t know, maybe. I can ask him at work when I see him tomorrow.

**Julia Meyer:** Bring him here. *(walks over to Dominik and stands very close to him)* Don’t give him any details. And make sure nobody sees you two when you walk into the house. Alright?

**Dominik Meyer:** (nods his head) Alright.

*(Julia kisses Dominik on the cheek and both exit. Lights go down.)*

Scene III: Inside the Meyer’s House.

*(Lights go up on the Meyer’s House. Dominik and Martin walk in quietly. Dominik checks outside before closing the door behind them. Julia enters from inside the house.)*
Dominik Meyer: Ah Julia. (goes to her, kisses her on the check, then turns towards Martin) This is Mr. Martin Schroder.

Julia Meyer: It’s good to finally meet you. Dominik has told me a lot about you.

Martin Schroder: Likewise Mrs. Meyer.

(The Julia and Martin shake hands. All three sit down at the table in the middle of the house.)

Dominik Meyer: (to Julia) So, Martin and I were discussing work on our way over here.

Julia Meyer: (to Dominik) Did they take more workers away?

Dominik Meyer: (unhappy) Yes. I don’t know why it happened again.

Julia Meyer: (to Martin) Do you know why?

Martin Schroder: Ever since the State finished building their wall, there have been more cases of people trying to escape or, at least, have been more people talking about escaping the city. The State feels threatened by this, so they have been (thinking of word) dealing with those people. (pause) But that’s just my best guess.

Julia Meyer: (stunned) Oh.

Dominik Meyer: You–you didn’t tell me this before. How did you come to that conclusion?

Martin Schroder: (thinking of explanation) I asked some of the other workers at the factory, the ones that knew the people who were being taken away. I figured that they might of known something. So, I asked and put it together from there.

(The room falls into silence.)

Martin Schroder: (breaking silence) So, Dominick told me that you two have a problem?

Julia Meyer: (anxious) Yes, we do. But, before I tell you, I want to ask you a question.

Martin Schroder: (suspicious) Ok.
Julia Meyer: Can you, um- (turns to Dominick)

Dominick Meyer: Can you keep what we are going to ask you a secret?

(Martin sits mulling over question until he realizes the meaning.)

Martin Schroder: (shocked) Wait. No. No, no, no. Don’t tell me you two are-

Julia Meyer: Yes. We want to escape.

Martin Schroder: (stands up) Are you two crazy!? If the Stasi- If they even hear about this conversation, we’ll all be removed. No questions, they will just come over and drag us out of our homes.

Julia Meyer: Yes, we know. That’s why we are asking you to help.

Dominick Meyer: I figured that you’d be able to help us. Martin, you know more about East Berlin than anyone else I have met. You’ve told me about your little hiding spots, and honestly, I didn’t know that those places you go to even existed. You know so much more about this place than me and Julia combined.

Julia Meyer: You must know of some way to get past the wall. Some way that the Stasi do not know about, a way that will be safe. Martin, we are asking for your help. Can you?

(The room sits in silence.)

Martin Schroder: (calming down) I just want to make sure about something. If I was able to, you two both realizes what we’d all be getting ourselves into?

Julia Meyer: Yes, we understand.

Martin Schroder: (goes to table and sits down) Are you sure? Anything we say here cannot leave this room. If any word about this plan gets out, even if the tiniest mention gets out, the Stasi will show up to your door, my door, and will take us away, like they have been taking away the workers at the factory. We will never been seen again. Nothing can leave this room. Do you understand?

(Julia and Dominik Meyer nod their heads.)
**Martin Schroder:** Alright. Give me some time to look into some places. I’ve heard about routes to get past the wall. I cannot guarantee anything until I find out more information. (pause) Don’t worry, I will not mention anything about you two to them.

**Julia Meyer:** When will you find this information out?

**Martin Schroder:** Tomorrow. I’ll contact them tonight and find out.

**Dominick Meyer:** (nervous) Should—we meet you somewhere else then? I mean, won’t the Stasi catch on to something if you come back over here again?

**Martin Schroder:** No, it is safer for us to continue meeting here than to go anywhere else in East Berlin. The Stasi have spies all over the city. They’d notice the suspicious activity if we all met in another location. It’s best to say here.

**Julia Meyer:** Alright. So Dominik will bring you-

**Martin Schroder:** No. I’ll meet both of you here tomorrow. If I were to walk over with Dominik again, the Stasi might suspect something as well. Wait for my knock, I’ll get back to both of you.

(Martin gets up and walks to the door. Both Julia and Dominick Meyer stand up. Martin gives two knocks on the door, pauses, then gives one last knock.)

**Julia Meyer:** Thank you.

(Martin nods, then exits. Lights go down.)

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**Scene IV:** Inside the Meyer’s House.

(Lights go up. Both Julia and Dominick are sitting at the table in silence, waiting for Martin to arrive.)

**Dominick Meyer:** (anxious) What if they found out already?

**Julia Meyer:** Dominick-
Dominick Meyer: Julia, please listen to me. How many days has it been since Martin was last here?

Julia Meyer: Three.

Dominick Meyer: Three days. He said to us that he was going to find out the information he needed in a day, but now, he’s late. (pause) I haven’t seen him at the factory either. I do not like this.

Julia Meyer: Maybe-maybe he’s still finding out. Maybe his contacts haven’t gotten back to him. Maybe he went to go find them.

Dominick Meyer: Julia. Why are we even doing this? This idea, this plan of ours, it’s insane. It’s not going to work, we are going to get ourselves killed. For all we know, the Stasi are standing outside of our door right now.

(Silence falls over the room. Martin’s knock is heard. Both Julia and Dominik stand up. Julia goes to open the door. Door opens and Martin cautiously walks in, checks behind him, and then closes the door.)

Dominick Meyer: Martin!

Martin Schroder: (quietly) I have a plan.

(Martin, Dominick, and Julia all sit at the table. Martin reaches down to his shoe and takes it off. He pulls out a small map and unfolds it. He places it on the table.)

Martin Schroder: (pointing to it) There is a tunnel here. It’s located farther south in the city. It goes under the wall, directly into West Berlin.

(Julia and Dominick look at the map.)

Julia Meyer: The Stasi don’t know about this?

Martin Schroder: No. It’s inside a rundown bakery. The owner closed it a few months ago to stop them from investigating the place. It has not been opened since. No reason for the Stasi to check an abandoned building that, as far as they know, nobody has been inside of for months.
Dominik Meyer: *(suspicious)* How did you find this out?

Martin Schroder: What do you mean?

Dominik Meyer: Who told you about this tunnel under the bakery?

Martin Schroder: My contact.

Dominik Meyer: Who is that?

Julia Meyer: Dominik-

Dominik Meyer: *(angry)* I want to know who this contact is! *(pause)* Sorry. Look, you went missing the past few days and you told us that it would only take you a day to find this information out. I am just nervous and want to know how you found out about this tunnel.

Martin Schroder: Very well then. *(leans in closer)* The contact was the baker, the owner of the building. I was suspecting that this route was still in use, but I had no confirmation that it indeed was. So, after our meeting, I went to check. When he didn’t respond to our usual method of communication, I went to go find him myself to make sure he didn’t go missing. I’m sorry that it took longer than expected, but I had to find out for certain before I told you two anything.

Dominik Meyer: Alright. Sorry. I just thought that-

Martin Schroder: That the Stasi found out. Trust me, if they did, we wouldn’t be talking right now.

*(Silence falls over the room.)*

Julia Meyer: So, when can we go there?

Martin Schroder: I still have to find that out. I’m meeting with the contact again tomorrow. I want to make sure that the trip to the tunnel will be safe, without any of us drawing attention.

Julia Meyer: What should we do until then?
Martin Schroder: We can’t do anything right now, so it is best that we just all keep playing our parts until we find the right opportunity.

(Martin takes the map off the table and puts it in his shoe. He put his shoe on and stands up to leave.)

Martin Schroder: (to Dominik) I will keep my word this time Dominik. I will be back here tomorrow.

(Martin goes towards the door and walks out. Lights go down on the Meyer’s house. Lights go up on the Street. Martin begins walking off stage as Inspector Volkov appears.)

Inspector Volkov: (acting gladly surprised) Ah! Martin.

(Inspector Volkov walks over to Martin and pats him on the shoulder.)

Martin Schroder: (startled) Inspector, how odd to see you at this time of night.

Inspector Volkov: (chuckles) Ah, you’re always so welcoming to old friends. You know, if you weren’t working for us, we probably would have killed you already (laughs).

(Both of them sit in silence.)

Inspector Volkov: (realizing his last statement) Oh, how rude. Where are my manners? (chuckles) How have you been Martin?

Martin Schroder: Fine- I have been fine Inspector.

Inspector Volkov: Ah, that’s always good to hear. I am glad that things have been going fine for you. (pause) You know, we haven’t talked in the past few days. I was starting to wonder where you disappeared to again.

Martin Schroder: What do you want?

Inspector Volkov: I want to know if you have found anything. I want to know if you have any new information for the State, if you have discovered any more criminal activity.

(Silence falls over the conversation again. Martin stands still thinking.)
**Martin Schroder:** *(lying)* No, I haven’t found anything.

**Inspector Volkov:** Ha, is that so then? *(points at the Meyer’s house)* If you haven’t found any new information for us, then why have you been exiting and entering that house? You’ve been in there the past two times this week.

**Martin Schroder:** *(surprised)* How do you know that?

**Inspector Volkov:** *(walks close to Martin)* Oh Martin, have you forgotten? The State keeps track of all these worthless people. Even you, with your pathetic attempts to escape our gaze, we still have able to keep track of you. Don’t think yourself too clever. *(chuckles)* The State was very grateful though for your assistance in catching all of those criminals at that factory we stationed you at, but don’t think we would turn our attention away from you because of that.

**Martin Schroder:** *(sarcastically)* Well, I’m glad the State at least recognizes me as a valuable asset.

**Inspector Volkov:** *(laughs)* Oh Martin, you can be very funny sometimes- But enough of this pointless conversation. Why have you been going to that house?

*(Martin takes a long pause before responding.)*

**Martin Schroder:** *(lying)* At that factory, I befriended one of the workers there. This past week he has been inviting me over, just for some post-work conversations. This is his house. I am just being friendly is all.

*(Inspector Volkov looks at Martin knowing what he said was a lie.)*

**Inspector Volkov:** *(chuckles)* Fine... You always did like to befriend your prey before they faced their inevitable demise.

*(Inspector Volkov begins to walk away then turns back towards Martin)*

**Inspector Volkov:** Martin, you will have to tell us what is being said inside that house. Your job as an informant is to inform us, I hope you remember that. *(beings walking away)* Until next time old friend!
(Inspector Volkov walks off stage. Martin looks past the audience with a blank stare then continues off stage. Lights go down.)

Scene V: Inside the Meyer’s House.

(Lights go up. Martin, Julia, and Dominick are all sitting around the table discussing the plan for the Meyer’s to escape. Martin’s map is already placed on the table.)

**Martin Schroder**: The plan is for both of you to leave tomorrow.

**Dominik Meyer**: *(surprised)* Wait, what?

**Julia Meyer**: *(surprised)* You—you mean that.

**Martin Schroder**: Yes, we are getting you out. The tunnel will be available then and I was able to find a route around the Stasi’s patrols. I know it’s sudden, but-

**Julia Meyer**: No, no it’s fine. Martin, thank you.

**Martin Schroder**: Do not thank me yet Mrs. Meyer. We still have to get you both through the tunnel, but we are very close.

*(Martin takes the map off the table and hides it in his shoe. Martin, Julia, and Dominik then stands up.)*

**Martin Schroder**: Now, I must be going. We have to prepare for tomorrow.

**Dominik Meyer**: What should we do?

**Martin Schroder**: Be prepared for my arrival, we have to leave as soon as I get here. Only pack one small bag for the both of you, we have to travel light.

*(Martin beings walking towards the door.)*

**Julia Meyer**: Martin.

*(Martin turns back to Julia.)*

**Julia Meyer**: You have been a loyal friend to us. Thank you.
(Martin nods in response.)

**Martin Schroder**: Wait for my knock.

(Martin exits the Meyer’s House. Julia and Dominik hug each other. Lights go down on the house. Lights then go up on the Street. Martin begins to walk off stage.)

**Inspector Volkov**: (as he is walking on stage) Grab him!

(Two Officers appear behind Martin. One officer grabs Martin and the other punches him. Martin is then thrown to the ground and kicked in the stomach. The officers stand over Martin. Inspector Volkov walks over.)

**Inspector Volkov**: (standing over him) Ah Martin, I told you that I’d see you again.

**Martin Schroder**: (in pain) Well, I wish I could say this meeting was as pleasant as the last time.

**Inspector Volkov**: Ha, there you go again with your poorly timed humor. (pause) Now, last time we talked, I had this feeling inside me that you were lying to me. You wouldn’t lie to me, would you Martin?

**Martin Schroder**: I mean, it’s only fair. You have lied to me before.

(Inspector Volkov kicks Martin in the stomach.)

**Inspector Volkov**: I am not here to play games! (motions to one of the officers) Pick him up!

(One of the officers picks up Martin, holding his arms behind his back.)

**Inspector Volkov**: This is the last time I’ll ask you, what have you been doing inside that house?

**Martin Schroder**: I am just being friendly inspector.

**Inspector Volkov**: Very well old friend. (looks at the other guard) Search him.

(The other officer searchers Martin. He gets to Martin’s shoes and takes them off. His pulls out the map hidden in one of them and gives it to the Inspector.)
Inspector Volkov: (looking at the map) What is this? (continues looking at it) Wait, it's a map... To where? From this house to a bakery. (becomes surprised and laughs) It's a map to Eric Stein's bakery, to the tunnel that goes West Berlin is under. Oh Martin, you disgust me.

(Martin is thrown to the ground by the guard holding him.)

Martin Schroder: (shocked) Inspector, listen to me, this time it’s different.

Inspector Volkov: Oh! Is it now? Is it different because you knew them? Is it different because there were no orders involved? Or is it different for some emotional reason?

Martin Schroder: They are people Inspector! They are scared and desperate, they feel lost being here, being controlled by the State. I was trying to help people.

Inspector Volkov: (angry) By betraying your State!? A state you have been so loyal to before. You even informed about Mr. Stein. Martin, we knew about his tunnel, we found it when we captured him. You don’t you remember that? Do you even remember how glorious your actions were that day?

Martin Schroder: I was naïve to my actions, I didn’t know what I was doing-

Inspector Volkov: Oh, because “things changed.” Men like you disgust me. One moment you are helping your State, making this city and your country a better place. But then, oh, you become loyal to these people, with their selfish little needs and desires, how pathetic. To think Martin, men like you exist.

(The inspector looks up at the two officers.)

Inspector Volkov: Leave us!

(The officers exit off stage.)

(The inspector takes his pistol out from its holster.)

Martin Schroder: You don’t understand, you and the State do not understand how you are treating these people. You want to know why they’re constantly trying to escape? Why you need people like me to spy for the State? You order them around, you control
every second of their lives. They have no say in anything and are not given any sense of self-worth because of it. And they are willing to do anything to find it.

(Inspector Volkov aims his pistol at Martin.)

Inspector Volkov: Mr. Martin Schroder, you have been found guilty of assisting in the escape of citizens from East Berlin by the evidence I have found. You have put the safety of the State in jeopardy. You have also betrayed its trust. Due to this crime, your punishment is death.

Martin Schroder: I already was dead.

(Lights fade out and a gunshot goes off.)

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Scene VI: At Night. Inside the Meyer’s House.

(Lights go up on the Meyer’s house. Julia and Dominik are waiting in the room for Martin’s knock. One suitcase lies near the door.)

Julia Meyer: (joyful) I still can’t believe it… I can’t believe he actually found a way out!

Dominik Meyer: (anxious) Yeah.

Julia Meyer: Dominik?

Dominik Meyer: I am just nervous. I’ll be better once we make it to the tunnel.

Julia Meyer: He has gotten this far. He’s been able to plan everything out. It’s all going to work out. Soon, we’ll be in West Berlin, where we can make our own lives. You can get a better job and I can, I can actually do something with my life. We can finally be free.

Dominik Meyer: (anxiously glad) Yeah, it will be great. I just wish he would arrive.

Julia Meyer: Dom, he said that he would.

(Martin’s knock is heard. Both Julia and Dominik suddenly turn towards the door.)

Julia Meyer: (smiling) He’s here, let’s go.
(Julia goes to the door and opens it. She freeze still out of fear and moves away. Inspector Volkov enters the Meyer’s House. He looks around.)

Inspector Volkov: What a dismal little place. (turning to Julia happily) Ah, you must be Julia! How lovely to see you. (turning to Dominik happily) And you must be Dominik. (tries to shake hands)

(Inspector Volkov begins walking through the Meyer’s House, as if it was his own.)

Inspector Volkov: (friendly) I’m sorry I came so unannounced. I would have sent a letter, but you know how the State operates, (chuckles) we just show up sometimes, just to see how everything is going.

Julia Meyer: (in terror) Wha-what are you-

Inspector Volkov: Oh! What am I doing here? Sorry, I got so caught up in looking around your house that I forgot to mention that. This place is very dismal don’t you think? (waits for a response then continues) Anyway, the reason that I am here is because I heard you two were leaving. You two are planning on leaving, correct?

(Both Julia and Dominik nod their heads.)

Inspector Volkov: Oh good! Anyway, since you two are leaving, I figured that I just had to see both of you before you left. I’d be horribly sad if I didn’t get to say goodbye.

Dominik Meyer: (in terror) H-h-how-

Julia Meyer: H-how did you-

Inspector Volkov: Oh! How did I find out? You two and I, we have a mutual friend, Martin Schroder. He told me everything.

Julia Meyer: (shocked) He-

Dominik Meyer: (angry) He told you?

Inspector Volkov: Yes, he did. Well, not willingly though, he was spying for us the whole time. Oh well, at least he still proved himself useful.
Inspector Volkov: Ah well, down to business then?

Julia Meyer: Dom we have to go!

Inspector Volkov: (to the officers) Grab them!

(Julia and Dominik try to run away. The officers grab them.)

Inspector Volkov: (to the officers) Bring them outside!

(Julia and Dominik are dragged outside. Lights go down on the Meyer’s House.)

(Lights go up on the street. Julia and Dominik seen being dragged by the officers.)

Dominik Meyer: (begging) No! No! Let us go! Let us go!-

Julia Meyer: (begging) Let us go! Let us go damn it!-

(Julia and Dominik are thrown to the ground. Julia stops begging, but Dominik continues. Inspector Volkov kicks Dominik in the stomach. Dominik groans in pain. The Inspector motions for the officers to leave. The officers walk off stage.)

Inspector Volkov: (to Dominik) May we continue then? (to Julia and Dominik) Now, I hate to do this to friends, but what must be done has to be done.

(Inspector Volkov pulls his pistol from its holster and aims it at Dominik.)

Inspector Volkov: Mr. Dominik Meyer, you have been found guilty of trying to escape from East Berlin. Because of such actions, you have put the safety of the State in jeopardy. Due to this crime, your punishment-

Dominik Meyer: Julia run!

(Dominik runs off stage. Inspector Volkov raises his pistol at Dominik and fires. The lights flash on and off as Dominik is shot.)

Julia Meyer: (screaming) Dominik!

(Julia begins crying. Inspector stands puzzled at Dominik’s action.)
Inspector Volkov: (to himself) Ah, nobody has ever done that before. That’s odd. I mean, they usually just sit there. Well, that’s one way to accept your crimes.

(Inspector Volkov puts his pistol away and beings walking off stage.)

Julia Meyer: (sobbing) How- How can you treat- How can you treat people this way?

(Inspector Volkov turns back towards Julia. He walks over to her and bends down.)

Inspector Volkov: My dear Julia, you really have no idea do you? You must have been so upset being in that house, so mad at the State for not letting you get a job, even after so many attempts to. You must of forgotten because of your anger. Well, I’ll remind you then. Because you do not matter. You, Martin, (pointing towards Dominik) him, we all don’t matter. All of those dreams, desires, ambitions, hopes, they’re all pointless. The only thing that matters is the State and its protection.

(Inspector Volkov stands up. He takes his pistol from its holster and aims it at Julia.)

Inspector Volkov: Mrs. Julia Meyer, you have been found guilty of trying to escape from East Berlin. Because of such actions, you have put the safety of the State in jeopardy. Due to this crime, your punishment is death. (pauses and lowers his gun) Do you have anything to say?

Julia Meyer: (softly) Damn the State.

(Inspector Volkov stares at Julia then tosses his pistol on the ground near her.)

Inspector Volkov: (laughs) You know, I believe my job here is done. Good day to you, Mrs. Meyer.


THE END
Deny Thy Father, Refuse Thy Name, So You May be American

Mary Awad

I am not a terrorist.

My name is Mary Elizabeth Helen, quite possibly the blandest name ever penned. My hometown is East Norwich, New York, an exemplar of Suburbia, USA. Raised devoutly Catholic, I am a true product of the Catholic school system and see myself as a person of good character. But there is one thing that sets me apart from everyone else: my last name is Awad.

Awad is a common Middle Eastern surname that reflects my father’s Lebanese heritage. He is of dark complexion, which contrasts with my Irish mother’s pale skin, but I have never seen my father as anything but white. Very tan, but white. Still, the name is used in many Middle Eastern countries, including Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. In fact, Osama bin Laden’s full name is Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden; “Awad” is somewhat equivalent to the American “Smith” in its commonality. The combination of my names makes me a Lebanese-Irish-American.

Everything changed on September 11th, 2001 when my Irish mother brought her children together in the kitchen: “When people ask you what you are, you say American. You can’t say Lebanese anymore even though it’s a fun word to say. When they ask, you have to say American.” I was seven years old.

Then, in 2006, I was detained by airport security. I was 11 years-old. My family was going to the Grand Canyon and everyone was allowed to print their boarding passes but me. My mother asked what the problem was and a man at the counter said I was not allowed to fly. Fearfully, with my mother’s hand in mine, I was taken to a separate room where I answered a series of questions and was given a special security screening. When my mother asked what was happening, the reply was “She’s on the no-fly list.” My mother, predictably, was enraged: “Are you saying my daughter’s name is on the terrorist watch list?” It was. I share the same name as someone who is not allowed into the United States. I was so nervous I told them the wrong date for my birthday. In response, they made me take off my shoes and socks to be put in a scanner. Eventually the process ended and I was allowed on the plane. We had a wonderful time at the Grand Canyon and my parents tell this story at parties for something to laugh at but that morning in 2006 left a mark on my 11 year-old mind that continues to follow me. It is the mark of being seen as a terrorist.

This sort of labeling is happening to Arabs and people of Arabic blood all around the world since the 9/11 attacks and I fully understand why: people are afraid. Some Arabic men are terrorists. Many more people of Arab decent are innocent victims of social stigma. According to a survey conducted by the Arab American Institute Foundation in 2014: “A significant number of Americans (42%) support the use of profiling by law enforcement against Arab Americans and American Muslims.” Arab Americans are also viewed as distrusted in government positions: “A growing percentage of Americans say that they lack confidence in the ability of individuals from [Arab] communities to perform their duties as Americans should they be appointed to an
important government position.” Arab Americans have lived with this social stigma because we, like all Americans, were afraid. But it has gone on long enough.

Even now, thirteen years later as a 20 year-old, I am fearful that my last name triggers negative responses. Some do not even recognize my name as Arabic but when some do, they ask about it, and though they say nothing with their words, it is in their eyes: I am other, different, and maybe a terrorist.

I am afraid of the label of “terrorist.” I am afraid that because of my fear of being labeled a “terrorist” I am shaming my good-willed, beautiful father with the remembrance of that day in 2006. William Shakespeare once penned, “tis but thy name that is my enemy.” But what should I do, deny my father, refuse my name, and silently wait until I marry so this mar on my character can be erased? Why do I feel that I should change, and not the society that labels my family and me?

In 2006, five years after the attacks, I understand why the profiling ensued. The wounds were still fresh; the fear was alive and present. But, in 2014, my father and I were stopped and “randomly selected” for a special check at the airport before going to my brother’s track meet in Florida. That is entirely different. It proves that nothing really has changed. This profiling is no longer justifiable.

My mother is right, I am absolutely an American. I’ve lived here my whole life just as my father has. I am an American. I want to be treated like one.

I still carry a fear with me when entering airport security, when the eyes start speaking and I sit waiting for a replay of 2006. I am young, lively and adventurous, excited to see what the world has waiting for me. But how can I go into the world and live fully when I feel I am stuck with a label? When my parents veto my plans to teach English in Belgium after graduation because of terrorist activity there?

I am not a part of ISIS or the Taliban. I am not a threat. I am not a terrorist.

I am not ashamed of my father’s name. The only thing I want to do is live my life, be happy, discover amazing things and see the world for all it has to offer.

But the world is still the same and possibly getting worse. As the chaos increases, so does the negative perception of my name and my opportunities to live freely in the world begin to shrink.

The world needs to change, especially for people like me.
A middle aged man walks onto the stage, holding a single paper bag of groceries. He takes out a few items, including a clear bag of purple grapes. He sets them on a table.

JACK: You know, my mother loves grapes. I didn’t mean to buy them, I was just shopping and I saw them sitting there. (He takes out 3 grapes and rolls them around thoughtlessly in his hand.) It’s funny really, I don’t even like them myself, but they remind me of her, so I just-

(He drops the grapes back into the bag.) She’s in the hospital right now, my mother. As I speak she’s laying there, small and helpless, in her hospital bed. Nurses filing in and out, the toilet flushing across the hall, surrounded by death and disease. She’s in pain, she’s probably confused, and she’s alone. It breaks my heart, thinking about it.

She’s in her eighties. I realize that this is bound to happen. Maybe it’s even normal, to an extent. This is what old people do. They get hurt, they just…

Car accidents happen, you know? They’re terrible but they’re a part of life.

I’m almost 50 years old now myself. I’ve got a nice wife and two great sons, both in their early twenties. I’ve got a good, stable job in an office, your standard nine to five. I own my own house, I do some investing, and my wife and I still go out on dates every weekend. I am what society would define as a well-established, self-reliant man.
But I'm still a mama's boy at heart.

My mother is everything to me. She’s the best mother this world has ever seen and you can’t tell me otherwise. *(He takes out a bunch of grapes from the bag, ripping the stems apart.)*

She single handedly raised my brother and me, doing whatever she needed to support us. When I was a kid, I thought our situation was normal. But only now, as a father myself, do I realize just how tough she was. She worked two jobs throughout most of my adolescence. We lived paycheck to paycheck, barely scraping by. And when I say she was alone, I mean she was *alone*. My father died when I was young, and she never remarried. Her own parents died before I was born, and she didn’t have any siblings either. She didn’t even have friends. She couldn’t have really, she had no extra time. She was either taking care of us or rushing off to work. I realize now, all she had were her kids.

We were definitely a handful, my brother and I. We fought a lot. And I don’t just mean we would yell at each other over dinner, I mean we would physically fight. I remember this one time when I was 14 and he was 12 and I punched him, square in the face. Broke his nose, too. He was complaining about having to wear my old tee-shirts. It made my blood boil, listening to that. All the sacrifices my mother had to make, and he was complaining about *tee-shirts*? He bled a lot when I punched him. It was satisfying to hear the sound of my first against his nose and to see the blood pour out.

My mother drove him to the hospital and took care of everything in time to have dinner on the table by 6:00. My brother got to eat two bowls of ice cream that night, and she was extra nice to him for a while after it happened. I was stuck washing the dishes for
the next two weeks, and I was pissed. I was trying to stick up for her and I was the one who got punished?

We didn’t have extra money for things. We never went on a vacation. Hell, we couldn’t even afford to go to the movies, really. Like I said, my brother had to wear my old clothes because she couldn’t afford new clothes for him. But she still made sure to put money aside to get us a nice birthday present every year. I remember when I was 13, she got me a signed Tom Seaver baseball card. Thinking about it now, she must have spent a small fortune on that thing. But I loved it. I still have it actually, I keep it framed on my desk at work. She had written me a little note to go with it, it said, “To my son. I am so proud of you and I love you so very much.” I still have it and I keep it with me in my wallet. It’s a nice reminder of her, you know?

It’s hard, thinking about the past. It’s hard to reconcile the image that I have of her when I was a child and the image I have of her now. She was a pretty, young woman, always rushing home from work to get to my brother and I. Now she’s just… old. Wrinkled. Hunched over.

Sometimes she would…she would drink sometimes. Never in a way that was concerning though. I never even saw her drunk. I only knew because sometimes I would find empty bottles in the trash in the mornings before she took it out. I mean, how could she not drink? She lived a high-stress life that was, all in all, pretty crappy. I would drink too with a life like that. It was no big deal. (*He takes a single grape and chews it slowly.*)

She’s in the hospital now. She’ll be okay though. Like I said, stuff happens.
It was just an accident.

It was just a car wreck, car wrecks happen all the time. She did have a few glasses of wine before she went out that night, but that was...that was normal for her. That was nothing new. *(He takes out two more grapes, rolling it around between his fingers.)*

I felt bad for the other driver. She’s fine though, she got through the wreck without a scratch on her. Her two boys though, they… *(He squashes the grapes with his fingers. Juice from the grapes runs down his fingers and trickles onto the table.)*

They didn’t make it.

But it was just a car wreck. No big deal, you know? She’ll recover, I know she will.

I bet she’d like some grapes right about now. I’ll bring them to her.

As for me, well, I could go for a glass of wine.

*BLACKOUT*
So...I Was Thinkin
Edward Cartey
Cartoon Shadows

Brent Middleton

Screams of terror tumble along the ground just as the sky does. The beauty of the crown-wearer remains untouched, and yet all over which she presides vanishes in a flurry of mortar and stars. A being of pure evil seeks to steal her away from her subjects, and when her lover throws away any inclinations of passivity, he himself is thrown out among the galaxies.

Passion overflows
Perilous journeys await
Peaches are eaten
Let’s Go To Yogi’s

William Sanchez

I was only eight when my parents dropped a life-changing bomb on me. They were getting a divorce. Divorce.

That seven-letter word transformed the course of my life. My mom received full custody and we moved to a new city. I feared the awkward adjustment of a new school environment, and feared making new friends. But the biggest fear of all was that my weekends were torn between my parents. I saw my dad twice a month. I was afraid I would miss my dad.


On my dad’s weekends, you could have easily found us at two restaurants. We made it easy. These restaurants became our traditions, our sanctuaries, and our place to connect. Friday nights were for Shakey’s Pizza and their thin crust pizza and mojo potatoes. For the remainder of those short 48 hours, we ate like kings at 1161 North Maclay Ave, San Fernando, California 91340. Tacos el Oso. This became my second home.

Tacos el Oso is Spanish for Tacos of the Bear. My Dad started calling it Yogi’s after Yogi the Bear, one of my favorite cartoons. Yogi’s is quicker and easier to say, so it naturally stuck.

My cousin’s house is located six houses away from Yogi’s on Knox Street. My dad had lived there on and off for years and he currently lives there. That side of my family was connected to Yogi’s by stomachs and geographical location. Everyone ate there. It was impossible to escape Yogi’s breath of sizzling protein and vegetables. Smoke wafted through the neighborhood. Pulled by its aroma, Yogi’s den grabbed me any chance it could.

Yogi’s lair lodged in a tight corner of a rundown strip mall. We were safe there. More importantly, I felt safe there. To others, it was very sketchy, especially late at night. It stood at the intersection of three gangs, San Fers 13, High Times Familia, and Pacas 13. But only if Pacas 13 dared step out of Pacoima and into San Fernando.
Tacos el Oso’s management went as far as hiring security for the late night hours. All this did not matter to me because Yogi’s was my comfort zone, my sanctuary from the rigors of the divorce. *Tacos, burritos, and horchata* eased my pain.

My cousins and I needed no excuse to walk down to Yogi’s. What we needed was money. We found it in sofa cushions, car seats, and from any family member eager to shut us up. All we needed was 25 cents. That quarter was our ticket to Yogi’s. Once there, we could eat tacos and all the radishes and condiments we wanted. We received our money’s worth. My eyes always set on the *asada* tacos. The grilled beef never failed me.

I was about to enter taco school, the home of my dad. Those lessons and memories lasted and shaped my culinary journey through life. He ripped me out of my comfort zone and I thank him for it. He knew I only ordered two kinds of tacos, so he expanded my taco repertoire. He introduced me to the adventurous cuts of meat. The tacos I never dared to order.

On one trip, he ordered a dozen tacos. At the time, I was unaware he wanted me to acclimatize my taste buds and stomach. Mixed in with the *asada* were four newer choices: *lengua, buche, sesos,* and *tripas.* Unaware, I saw the new choices on plates in front of me. Instinctively, I went to the ones I recognized, *asada* and *pollo.* Spanish for chicken that even Gringos know. Those were the first to go. That left the eight remaining choices. I dug into the others. I was hungry, Yogi’s never disappoints. One by one, they disappeared. Each one presented a new texture and flavor profile. My dad ate with me, but he did not tell me what I was eating. I did not ask. I ate and I was happy. I was with my dad. I trusted my dad and his taco choices.

Two weeks passed and we were back at Yogi’s. The same variety of taco choices laid in front of us. This time, my dad wanted to hear what I had to say about each one. When I had assessed the tacos, he enlightened me as to what I had eaten. In succession, they went down. I looked passed the cuts of meat to how they felt in my mouth and how the flavors exploded on my tongue.

My dad taught other vital lessons. The mark of an authentic taco. First, the tortillas have to be corn. Flour tortillas are for burritos. Next, corn tortillas can be lightly grilled or steamed. Never fried. Got it. The taco must have two tortillas. The full taco tortilla nestled on top of another tortilla. I asked him why that mattered. He explained that it was a crucial tool for judging if your taco had the right amount of meat and condiments. If you were able to completely eat the taco without spilling out, you just were robbed. The second tortilla was needed to make a secondary taco from the remaining pieces of meat and toppings that fall out of the first tortilla. In essence, every taco should be a two for one journey. Just like my dad and me. We were separated by long stretches of time, but we were joined as father and son in a ritual of bonding. With tacos.

Every visit played a special role in our relationship. If there was a lesson to be learned it was in one of Yogi’s square booths. Yet to this day, my dad and I do not talk much. Our conversations are about wine, UCLA football, Chivas soccer, and small talk. Never do we discuss important issues. However, inside the doors of Yogi’s we act as if we do. Those four walls represent a father-son relationship that never saw the dark light of divorce.

There is a disconnect between us. Maybe it was the divorce. Maybe it was the time apart. Or maybe because I grew up. Like the time I was leaving for Iraq. He did not drive the two and a half hours to Camp Pendleton to see me off. All I got was a phone call. I still did not know if he was scared, or he really did not want to be there. On that phone call, it was hard to come up with the words.

“I understand Dad.”

“It’s okay Dad.”

Inside, that’s not what I was feeling. I felt the opposite. To this day, I won’t ask him why. There is a lot I want to ask, but I won’t.

Without Yogi’s our relationship would be nothing.

For us, it fuels our rocky dynamic and is one of the few things that holds us together. Yogi’s served us Mexican food and hope. Hope that we can interact as father and son.

Some things have not changed.
I have seen my dad 2 times in the last 4 years and each time, we walked to Yogi’s. We talk about how the neighborhood, menu, décor, and quality of food has changed. We do not reminisce.

When I visit him next, I am not sure who will be the first to say, “Let’s go to Yogi’s.”
Sexism has not been erased from our society. Instead, it has recessed into men and women’s unconscious. Cecilia Mo, writer for Stanford University’s Clayman Institute for Gender Research, states in her article “What? Me Sexist?” that: “In a 1936 Gallup poll, only 30 percent of Americans said they would vote for a woman for president if she were qualified for the job.” Keeping in mind only approximately 60% of the population votes in presidential elections, she continues: “In contrast, by the late 1990s nearly 100 percent of Americans expressed a willingness to have a woman in the highest office in the country.” This shift in American ideals was promising but has yet to be validated by actual votes. Women’s standing and overall approval ratings in the political world are much lower than their male counterparts. While women have made great strides in the last several decades they are still fighting an uphill battle to get to Capitol Hill.

The truth is society doesn’t even realize that they are implicitly biased towards women in politics; they believe times have changed and the playing fields have been leveled and opened up to all. That reality has yet to be truly achieved though and our subconscious minds have some catching up to do.

Later in her article, Mo supports her assertion with the results of implicit biased testing conducted by Harvard and University of Washington professors, who found that: “When following instructions to sort images rapidly, the average person found it easier to pair words like ‘president,’ ‘governor,’ and ‘executive’ with male names and words like ‘secretary,’ ‘assistant,’ and ‘aide’ with female names. In other words, many people had a
lot more difficulty associating women with leadership.” These average people are men and women alike. They fall prey to societies past conventions of what a women should be, and not what they are capable of becoming.

The general population, believe that women are just as capable and effective in government and political stations as men. However, they just don’t realize that when they arrive at the polling booth they don’t actually associate female candidates with the leadership positions they are running for. Thus a seemingly untreatable illness in introduced to the political process, implicit biased. Society’s traditionally sexist past is catching up with its progressive future and binding women’s feet with society’s unconscious and unjustified judgments.

Voters need to vote for qualified female candidates, their inaction is only hampering political progress.
Porphyria and the Lady: Perfecting Femininity

Kaitlyn Bush

In the Victorian era, death, femininity, and artwork were common and important themes in literature. These three themes are brought together in Robert Browning’s *Porphyria’s Lover* and Alfred, Lord Tennyson’s *The Lady of Shalott*. In both of these poems, the main female characters meet the same fate for the same reasons. Each woman has dared to take control over her own life, so the male figures in their lives kill them to recreate them as ideal Victorian women in death.

It is important to first establish what the ideal Victorian woman is. A proper Victorian lady had her sights set on marriage at all times, for there were few other options for her. Up until marriage a woman was expected to remain pure, and once she was married, she was to be submissive and reliant on her husband. Women were placed on a veritable pedestal, which is a key concept: Women were pedestalized and idealized and were therefore punished in some way when they inevitably fell off that pedestal, unable to conform to the unrealistic expectations placed upon them.

In Browning’s poem *Porphyria’s Lover*, the speaker is waiting for Porphyria, his lover, to come meet him at his cottage so they can spend the evening together. Immediately, Porphyria establishes herself in a position of power. When she comes into the cottage, she reaches out to her lover first. She is the one to call out to him. The speaker does not respond, but he does note that “She put my arm about her waist, / And made her smooth white shoulder bare, / And all her yellow hair displaced, / And, stooping, made my cheek lie there…” (17-19). Porphyria strongly takes control of her sexuality here. She sensually bares her shoulder and fans her hair out, which was not
an appropriate thing for a woman to do. She also physically manipulates her lover so that he is positioned how she wants him to be, showing that she has control over him.

The way in which Porphyria positions the speaker is important as well. While the speaker thinks about his love for Porphyria, he says, “Be sure I looked up at her eyes.” (31). In order for the speaker to even look at Porphyria, he has to look up at her. In visually imagining this scene, the speaker’s position suggests his lack of power and subservience to Porphyria.

Porphyria’s power over the speaker is not only indicated in their physical positioning. Porphyria is of a higher social class than the speaker. During the evening in which the poem takes place, the speaker is merely at home while Porphyria has been out at a celebratory feast. The locations themselves indicate a difference in social class. The speaker is just sitting in his cottage, not socializing, while Porphyria is out at a special dinner party. Presumably, if Porphyria were of a low social class, then she would not be going out to special feasts. The speaker also criticizes Porphyria for being vain. He says that “…She / too weak, for all her heart’s endeavor, / To set its struggling passion free / From pride, and vainer ties dissever, / And give herself to me for ever.” (21-25). These lines confirm Porphyria’s higher social status. The speaker wants Porphyria to give up her more refined lifestyle to be with him, showing that for Porphyria, maintaining her social standing and her relationship with the speaker are mutually exclusive. Porphyria does love the speaker, but she cannot give herself to him completely because she does not want to sacrifice her social class for him.

Porphyria has asserted too much power over the speaker for her behavior to be considered proper for a Victorian lady. She, not the speaker, should be the subservient
one in the relationship. This is why the speaker kills Porphyria, so that he may assert power and control over her. This control is demonstrated in what the speaker does after he kills Porphyria. He says that “I propped her head up as before, / Only, this time my shoulder bore / Her head, which droops upon it still.” (49-51). The speaker has successfully changed the power dynamic in their relationship. He switches their positions so that she is now propped up on him with her head resting against his shoulder, indicating that he is now the one in control.

In his essay “Lacan, Browning, and the Murderous Voyeur: ‘Porphyria's Lover’ and ‘My Last Duchess,’” literary critic Earl Ingersoll addresses the speaker’s lack of traditional masculinity in his relationship with Porphyria. Ingersoll argues that the speaker murders Porphyria in order to escape being positioned as ‘feminine,’ i.e. a loved object to be abandoned again as he may have many times before…He has murdered her in order to turn her into a fetishistic object which can never leave. (154).

Ingersoll confirms that the desire for control was behind the speaker’s decision to murder Porphyria. The speaker resented being the one of a lower social class. He resented being the one who had to wait for Porphyria to come to him because that put him in a position of weakness. Porphyria had the power because she decided when she wanted to come see her lover. The speaker ultimately asserts his own power primarily by murdering Porphyria, but also by convincing himself that Porphyria was actually the weak one because she would not give up her social status.

Ingersoll also argues that the speaker turns Porphyria into a “fetishistic” object that cannot leave. This claim supports the idea that the speaker does not simply murder
Porphyria. He goes further and turns the entire moment into a piece of living art so that he may preserve the moment in which she confessed her love for him. He says that in “That moment she was mine, mine, fair. / Perfectly pure and good: I found / A thing to do, and all her hair / In one long yellow string I wound / Three times her little throat around, / And strangled her. “(36-41). The speaker feels that in this moment Porphyria is his, and she is “pure” and “good.” This is precisely why he kills her. He wants to preserve her in her most pure and feminine state. He did not want to hurt her; in fact, he cannot even face the fact that he did hurt her. After he kills her, he says “…No pain felt she: / I am quite sure she felt no pain.” (41-42). He repeats this over and over again to convince himself that he has not actually hurt her because he does truly love her.

The poem ends when the speaker says that “And this we sit together now, / And all night long we have not stirred…” (58-59). The speaker remains seated and unmoving all night with Porphyria, creating the sense of a living painting. He turns this moment into a piece of living art because he wants to forever preserve Porphyria’s love and goodness in this exact moment, effectively taking the control and power from Porphyria.

In Tennyson’s poem The Lady of Shalott, the Lady of Shalott is a bit different from Porphyria. She is completely alone and she does not have a man in her life. However, she is subject to an oppressive, external force, which is essentially what the speaker in Porphyria’s Lover is. The Lady of Shalott is controlled by a curse that keeps her in a small room in a tower, constantly weaving a tapestry of the town that she sees in the mirror. She is always weaving this tapestry, meaning unlike Porphyria, she is actually creating art herself. The form of art, a tapestry, also suggests the possibility of change and growth as she is constantly weaving it. This stands in stark contrast to the
unchangeable art form of Porphyria as a living painting, as she will forever remain dead and unchanging.

However, despite the fact that the Lady of Shalott seems to have control where Porphyria does not, she is ultimately powerless as well. She herself is not choosing to create this art; rather, she is simply doing what she is forced to do. The Lady of Shalott does try to take control of her own life however, just like Porphyria. She decides to look back on Camelot. The narrator says “She left the web, she left the loom, / She made three paces through the room, / She saw the water lily bloom…The mirror cracked from side to side; / “The curse is come upon me,” cried / The Lady of Shalott.” (109-117). As soon as she tries to take control she is punished. Her mirror cracks, the weather becomes stormy, and the Lady of Shalott is murdered.

Porphyria was metaphorically frozen by being turned into art. She was killed in such a way that her physical form was maintained, and she was kept in the scene of a living painting. The Lady of Shalott however is literally frozen. She gets on a boat towards Camelot, where, as the speaker says, “…Her blood was frozen slowly, / And her eyes were darkened wholly,” (147-148). The curse, just as the speaker in Porphyria’s Lover, ended up controlling the Lady of Shalott and freezing her femininity.

The Lady of Shalott ends when Lancelot finds her body. He says, ““She has a lovely face; / God in his mercy lend her grace, / The Lady of Shalott.”” (169-171). The Lady of Shalott is not remembered for being cursed and forced to live in a small room for her whole life. She is not remembered for weaving a magic tapestry. She is not even remembered for daring to take on a deadly curse because it meant trying to live her life. In the end, the Lady of Shalott is only remembered for having a pretty face. She is
turned into a piece of art just like Porphyria. Her tapestry, which is her real artwork, is
given no attention. Only her physical appearance is praised as merely “pretty.” The
Lady of Shalott has her life and independence erased. It is her looks that are ultimately
maintained and remembered, not her courage and attempt to take control over her own
life because that would not be proper for a Victorian lady.

Porphyria was murdered by her own lover because she had the power in their
relationship. As a result, she was murdered so that her lover could take control of her,
and then turned into a living work of art to preserve her goodness and pureness. The
Lady of Shalott, who did not have a man in her life, died when she dared to go against
the curse that controlled her, and was turned into living art herself. For these women,
death should have been an escape from the rigid expectations that ruled their lives.
Instead, their bodies were turned into physical works of art so that even in death they
could continue to be forced into the ideal of the perfect Victorian woman.
Works Cited


To Be Fair

Taylor Magnotti

“Jimmy, stop fidgeting in your seat please.”

“Susy, nice work writing neatly.”

“Brian, can you help me demonstrate how to do this science experiment?”

“Dayna, clean up the work area and Matthew carry the supplies to the counter.”

“Boys and girls, please listen.”

What’s wrong with these directions? They are saturated with gender biases. A teacher’s directions are often laced with gender stereotypes. Boys tend to be more rowdy than girls, which is the reason for more discipline issues. Girls tend to be more likely to have neater handwriting, which equals more praise. Gender stereotypes also point out the biases that boys are naturally more intelligent in subjects like math and science, while girls are better at English and history. In addition, jobs in the classroom are often stereotyped because girls are tasked with clean up duties and boys carry things. The separation of gender in the classroom ruins the academic experience, especially for girls. The concentration on the abilities of students based on gender stereotypes needs to stop.

A common occurrence and one of the most significant identifiers of gender bias is when teachers address the classroom with “boys and girls.” The “boys” are always addressed first in this statement and it can make girls feel inferior. Kathryn Scantlebury’s article, “Gender Bias in Teaching,” states that “Gender bias occurs when people make assumptions regarding behaviors, abilities or preferences of others based upon their gender.” To place students under such specific categorization stifles their ability to grow and express themselves.

Teachers need to look for ways to encourage individual student’s abilities and talents. Behavior should not be deemed right and wrong based on gender. There should be set rules that the entire class follows. With an equal ground for all behaviors and abilities, every student will have the same opportunities, despite their gender.
Gender biases pit girls and boys against each other at a young age, even if the students don’t realize it. Teachers need to communicate with their students in the same manner in order for success as a whole. Learning should be the forefront of school, not who puts the markers away or who answers a science question. If each student is treated with the same respect, this should limit the stereotypical gender biases found in schools.

Furthermore, the academic experience should not be hindered by gender stereotypes. Behavioral issues need to be dealt with on a general level, not in the singling out of any student, especially based on gender. How students learn depends on their environment. An inclusive atmosphere can help students feel more accepted. The key is to concentrate on the group as a whole and make all expectations the same for each student.

Girls in school are generally praised for being cooperative and quiet listeners. According to Scantlebury, “Teachers often use girls as a civilizing influence on male students. Disruptive boys are reassigned to sit near or with girls.” But what impact does this have on the girls? It may disrupt their learning experience because they are cast in this motherly role. Also, girls are often given less attention in the classroom compared to boys because teachers spend too much time quieting boys.

Gender bias creeps into how a teacher teaches. Teachers use more of a rudimentary style of teaching for girls, while boys receive a more engaging and challenging technique. The comments on girls’ work is praised for appearance, while boys’ work is given specific feedback on the content. This negative effect on girls is detrimental to their continuation of their education and even present in the workplace.

The harmful effect of this inequality on girls as they grow into women is severe. By the time women get into the workplace, the biases are deeply ingrained. Throughout their education, girls have been inferior to boys and this is noticeable in the workplace as well. Carolyn Butcher Dickman, the author of “Gender Differences and Instructional Discrimination in the Classroom,” writes, “Most K through 8 teachers, almost all women, suffer from inadequate
preparation in science so that they fear teaching science and lack confidence in their ability to do so.” Consequently, according to Dickman, “The quality of teacher contacts varies between the genders. Boys receive more teacher reactions of praise, criticism and remediation.” As a result, women in the workplace are “often relegated to low-paying, clerical and administrative jobs, while men are often placed on career tracks that promise upward mobility and career advancement.”

In order to avoid the negative impact in the workplace, the change needs to happen in early education. Four steps to help eliminate gender biases include:

1. Actively integrate students in all classroom activities and subjects
2. Use gender balanced language
3. Avoid stereotypical jobs based on gender
4. Classroom rules and expectations need to be fair for girls and boys

These guidelines will help teachers focus on the most important aspect in a classroom--learning. If teachers are more attentive to how they give directions, praise, and how they teach in a classroom, then the outcome for all students’ education and the workplace will be more positive.

Encourage, be fair, and don’t stereotype.
Better Safe than Sorry

Jane Kenney

Crime is a fact of life. More and more things are happening which can be prevented with a closer eye. A lot of people disagree that we need this “closer eye,” but this is what can keep us safer in the future. We need more surveillance in our uses of technology.

The Internet has made a huge impact on us, making our lives significantly easier. We can find anything at the tips of our fingers. What happens when you search something about drugs for a class you’re taking? Your computer is red-flagged. What about looking up the history of making bombs when writing a paper about the Boston Marathon? Red flag. The government has certain key terms they keep watch over in case of an online threat or anything else of the sort.

An article I came across was titled, “My Family’s Google Searching Got Us a Visit from Counterterrorism Police”. The title is self-explanatory, but essentially a family searched some things that fell into the category of counterterrorism. This earned them a visit from the police. The items consisted of a backpack and a pressure cooker. If it were the case that this family was planning a terrorist attack, their neighbors’ lives could be at stake. Better to be safe than sorry (www.theguardian.com, Michele Catalano).

Something to consider when thinking about surveillance is that if we decrease the amount of surveillance we have, then we are essentially risking our own safety. Surveillance is not meant to be a loss of freedom or an invasion of privacy. Everyone’s opinion differs, but without constant monitoring of what is going on we can easily let crime happen when it is preventable. This can also be used to monitor conversations you have via e-mail and Facebook. The government doesn’t care about how your date went with that guy. However, they
do care if you and your friend are discussing how bombs are created, and they will keep a close eye on that conversation.

Let’s be honest with ourselves, the behaviors of surveillance in the US lie behind a wall of secrecy. There is no way to know about how our phone calls and texts are monitored, but they do it to protect us. Somehow our phone calls are recorded and stored away, every single one, but that does not mean the government officials are listening in on every single one. There’s no possible way to do that.

Essentially, all of our text messages, online chats, e-mails, phone calls, and Internet searches are recorded and stored away. Is this an invasion of privacy? Maybe. Does it limit our freedom? No. Does it help with future crime prevention? Absolutely. Maybe some people are against the notion of more surveillance, but if it’s going to help me feel safer, I’m all for it. Better safe than sorry.
North Park Baptist Church on one side of a fence, my house on the other, and weed smokers in the middle.

On my block of Nancy Drive in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a problem of noise, trash, and illegal drugs emerges. The unwanted disturbances came with the construction of a wooden fence that starts along the backside of my property, runs the length of the two houses next door, and intersects with the fence at Christian Witness Commons dorms. In October, Sacred Heart University paid for the fence because the woman at 377 Nancy complained about foot traffic through their property. SHU students along with neighborhood children had previously used their driveway to gain access to Park Avenue and the basketball court behind the church. The woman at 377 Nancy was the only person to complain. My front and backyard also saw foot traffic. My roommates and I did not mind because the students who used the yard were quickly on their way and did not linger. Letting others use our yard as a shortcut to campus was the neighborly thing to do. We did not see a purpose for the fence and we did not want it to be built. SHU thought they were helping, but they created another problem. Before the fence, there were no weed smokers. The weed smokers should not be there and they need to find another place to gather with other smokers. I prefer the neighborhood dynamic that existed before the fence. A backyard without borders and unwanted visitors. I want a peaceful co-existence without repercussions.
The church also did not mind people walking on their property either. The passage of people was not a neighborhood problem, but it became one. I talked to the neighbors where the fence had affected their properties. Katy Smith, the pastor’s wife of North Park Baptist Church, said, “the woman at 377 Nancy is head of the neighborhood watch and she did not like people walking down her driveway to get to the church parking lot.” Katy Smith did not have a problem with people walking to school and using the basketball court behind the church because “we are a community church.”

The fence ends at my property line and there is one major design flaw. There is a human sized gap between the fence and the natural vegetation growing throughout the neighborhood. By default, my backyard has become the only means of bypassing the fence. Every day students travel through the gap. My roommates and I use the gap, so we do not care if others do the same. What we do care about is the trouble brought on by the weed smokers who have taken residence here. At any hour, groups of students will congregate and huddle by the fence for protection from the wind and the eyes of Public Safety and the Bridgeport Police. Unfortunately, for all parties involved, I see and hear everything. My kitchen and second floor bedroom windows run parallel to the fence. The space between the fence and my house makes for an acoustic trap where sound waves bounce around and cannot escape. I hear the giggling, coughing, and talking at all hours of the night. On weekends, the noise is louder and the visits last longer.

The smokers take their trespassing a step further and consider the fence to be an extension of their own homes. My back patio lawn chairs have now become their lawn chairs because I always find them at the fence. When I place the chairs back on
my patio, they always find their way back at the fence. I do not want the intruders to be comfortable and prolong their intrusion. To stop them from sitting down, I considered putting the chairs in my garage, but I thought against it. I should not be the one inconvenienced. I live here. I should be comfortable, not them.

The area surrounding the fence gap bears the marks of the smokers. The ground and plants are littered with plastic bottles, trash, and empty zip lock bags. Katy Smith and I have cleaned up the garbage several times but we cannot keep up with the accumulating mess. I am afraid my dog, Semper, or my roommate’s dog, Jackson, will get into the trash and swallow something they should not; or, even worse, digest drugs.

Should I complain to SHU about the noise, trash, and weed smoke?

According to Sacred Heart University’s Statement of University Policy it states, “The maintenance of that community requires its members to avoid behavior that creates division, to promote behavior that enhances cooperation among groups and to encourage the development of each person as a unique individual.” Sacred Heart tried to bolster their community relations by building the fence, but at the same time ironically broke their own policy. The fence has divided the property lines and created a “division” among the neighborhood and the SHU community.

My ideas for a peaceful resolution are limited. The easiest and most passive plan is to wait for summer break. The neighborhood will once again be quiet for four months while the school is out of session. Unfortunately, this is not a permanent solution. SHU should have Public Safety patrol behind the church through the day and night. The presence of Public Safety might deter future activity and this would give the school an opportunity to confront their students. I should not have to deal with the weed
smokers. Public Safety already patrols areas off campus, so a new required stop across the street from campus will not stretch their resources thin. This school issue has seeped into the neighborhood.

Complaining to SHU, my concerns are justified by Sacred Heart policies. Sacred Heart’s Student Handbook states, “The damage and/or vandalism, defacement or willful abuse, to another’s property, visitor or of property owned, occupied or leased by the University is prohibited.” My issue affects the school, so they should be interested in what I have to say. The continuous use of illegal drugs could tarnish Sacred Heart’s reputation if the media and police get involved. I want the problem to cease and the neighborhood dynamic to return.
A Diaper Happens

Linda Vichiola-Coppola

The mission statement of Connecticut’s Beardsley Zoo boasts of its dedication to “acquainting a diverse public to the delicate balance that exists between living things and their environment.” However, not everyone who visits the zoo respects that balance.

A public restroom with a baby changing station is situated less than fifty feet away from the center of the zoo’s picnic grove. Numerous trash cans are positioned throughout the area. Yet, when I went to sit down to enjoy lunch with my cousin and her two children, I found a dirty diaper plopped on the ground underneath the picnic bench. At first I thought it was just a pile of napkins that someone had dropped.

I was about to pick up the mess.

Then I noticed that it had cute smiling teddy bears printed all over it. Flies swarmed out from underneath it. I prodded it with the tip of my shoe until it flipped over. I realized it was a dirty baby diaper. It wasn’t just soaked with urine. This was worse. It was soiled with feces.

There’s a limit to what sort of garbage I’ll move out of my way.

Shit is still shit even if it’s smeared on a cutesy diaper.

“Let’s sit somewhere else.” I told my cousin as she began to pull sandwiches out of the picnic basket.

“Why?”

“Just look under the table and you’ll see why.”
She glanced down and as soon as she saw it she sucked in her breath and began to rant, “Oh, God! That’s so disgusting! What is wrong with people? There’s no excuse for this. There are trash cans all over the place. How can anyone be so lazy?”

I don’t know if my cousin had ever seen a dirty diaper on the ground before. But this was not the first time I had seen one dumped in a public place.

While we quickly relocated our lunch to another table, the sight of that diaper sent a rash of thoughts through my mind.

Back in the late 1960’s, did my mother ever feel so rushed that she didn’t want to be bothered with the stink of a messy diaper? No, she didn’t. Back then my mother was still using cloth diapers. She was accustomed to dealing with inconvenience. Those disposable diapers, aimed at making a young mother’s life more convenient, hadn’t quite made the scene yet.

One thing that was making the scene, though, was a series of anti-litter campaigns. Concern for the earth’s ecology was just beginning to emerge when I was born. By the mid 1970’s there were billboards and television ads urging people not to be litterbugs. Meanwhile, many women were taking on careers while raising children. Products designed to make a working mother’s lifestyle more convenient became more marketable. In just ten years the cloth diaper became an old dinosaur as the disposable diaper evolved and increased in popularity.

Today, disposable diapers are widely used. They also account for over five million tons of untreated human waste in landfills. And can anybody give an accurate account for all the ones that never make it to a landfill? I can count one - on the ground at the Beardsley Zoo.
Whether disposable diapers end up in a landfill or tossed on the ground, they have no benefit for the environment if they are not disposed of properly.

The directions on the package of disposable diapers instruct that the baby’s fecal waste should be flushed down the toilet before the diaper is disposed.

But does anyone ever do this?

By re-using a cloth diaper, my mother undoubtedly had no other choice but to face the unpleasant task of flushing my shit down the toilet.

It seems terribly ironic that the environmental concern of this millennium is to ensure that many products are marketed as eco-friendly, while there still exists a percentage of people who are so caught up in the hectic routines of modern life that they’d rather avoid the inconvenience of behaving in an eco-friendly way.

Perhaps we should call them eco-inconsiderate.
Contextual Evidence: A Collection of Vignettes

Tess Pieragostini

Venn Diagram

The perfect curve of a circle, gently overlapping the curve of another. Two primary shapes, intersecting to form an almond of sorts. Segregating. Separating the things that are just so dissimilar that they cannot share space. Good and bad, black and white, rich and poor: the dichotomies that fuel the human condition. These things seem absolute. It is one or the other. Yet sometimes, you get the almond. The commonalities. The proportionately smaller region of the diagram. Those rare spaces that illustrate two diverging concepts on common ground. Those grey, ambiguous areas that eclipse the two circles entirely.

Hammer

A hammer. Hanging from the loop of my Dad’s Wrangler jeans. It is heavy. With a blue rubberized grip. A thick circular metal front. Two metal prongs on the back. A simple design that can create or dismantle the most complex of constructions. Strong, powerful, and versatile. Just like my Dad. I sit on top of a tub of grout at six years old in a stranger’s den or basement or kitchen. I watch him as he hammers, drills, and saws various cuts of wood to create a masterpiece. He appeases my request to let me use the hammer. Struggling to lift the tool, I miss. He takes over and continues his work. Sanding down the wood as a layer of saw dust sits on the floor. Measuring and marking with his favorite red, flat pencil. A construction site is no place for a small girl with a ponytail, baseball cap, and miniature work boots. Yet I demand to spend my days as a child with my hero. And of course he let me. The very definition
of “Daddy’s Little Girl.” When we weren’t at Home Depot we were cooking. Grocery shopping. Listening to music. Going to Starbucks for cappuccinos and rice crispy treats. A rugged, strong, tough guy and a sweet, chatty little girl. A man who would stop in the pouring rain to save worms on the sidewalk and gently air lift them back to the grass to appease me. A man who would go to great lengths to make his only daughter happy. A man who would go to great lengths to help anyone in need. The only Dad at girl scouts. The only Dad at school pick up. The only Dad who could fix anything. Toys, appliances, my problems. Anything. All he needed was his tool box.

_Trench Coat_

Sitting in the living room as my pupils take in the colorful glaze of cartoons. It is dark out. I hear the jingling of keys on the front porch, it must be six thirty. The sound of one key entering into the lock and turning. As the door is pushed open, a cold gust of wind is swept inside. Click. Clack. High heels slamming down on the hard wood floor. My Mom rushes into the living room, her nose flushed red. She comes in and gives me a hug and a kiss, her cold cheek brushing against my warm face. Coming home from work, wearing her black trench coat. The material is thick and shiny. Big black buttons and a sash. Long and spacious over her petite frame. Protecting her from the elements during her journey from the train station to her office building, twice a day. She asks how my day was. I tell her of all the exciting things Daddy and I did. She says she worked all day. Crunching numbers, cutting checks. She looks tired. Oddly enough it is my most vivid memory of my mother from childhood. Day after day, her coming home from work in order to give me the life she never had. She never complained. Instead, she
kept my Dad and I in check. Keeping our grandiose ideas and spending in perspective. A selfless individual who I spent the majority of my teenage years arguing with. I never understood her. Always playing the part of a martyr. As I got older, I finally realized her plight. A go-getter who had been sacrificing for others her entire life. And the sacrificing never ended. Private school, new toys, and new clothes. Always assisting me with anything I needed help with. One of the hardest workers I have ever known. Still coming home from a long day’s work in the same black trench coat.

Three

One. Two. Three. Not four, not five, not six. Three. Three plates on the table for dinner. Three stockings hanging over the fireplace. Relatively small in comparison to other families. I always wanted a brother or sister. Someone to play with. Instead, I was surrounded by adults. Garnering all of the attention. Everyone at my beck and call. I became precocious, mature, jaded. All at a very young age. I even dropped out of preschool. Refusing to go back because I did not enjoy nap time. And my parents let me. They supported me. They let me do my own thing. I guess they were very progressive. My Mom worked full time. My Dad worked, but mainly took care of me. A different family dynamic than that of my friends. Modern, close, weird. All adjectives that I am sure were used to describe us.

Grass

The picture perfect house. A beautiful colonial with blue shutters. A white picket fence and a swing set in the backyard. And of course there is grass. Vibrant, crisp green grass covering
every square inch of land that looks as if it has been cut with a laser. Bright flowers line the walkway, begging you to enter through the doorway. And then it is time to go home. Away from the quaint colonials. Down the bumpy, pothole filled streets. The houses are colorful, not white. Partly because of the paint choices, partly because of the colorful graffiti. There are no shutters, mailboxes, or swing sets. There are no trees. There is certainly no grass. There is grey, textured cement. Some parts are smooth, some are cracked, and some have handprints or names etched in. And then approaches 628 William Street. The corner house. Up the steep cement steps and into the right door, not the left. The left door houses Mima and Papa. Through the hallway, into the dining room, into the kitchen, out the back door. To the backyard. There is grass. It’s a dull green, but unmistakably green. With some small patches of dirt. The grass isn’t even. There is a tree buzzing with bumble bees. There is a yellow swing set, complete with monkey bars, two yellow swings, and a slide. The swing rocks back and forth in the breeze, making a slight creaking sound. To the right, the street. Filled with empty bottles, napkins, bags and litter of the sort. To the left, an empty dirt filled backyard. No swing set, no trees, no grass.

Fences

Fences are supposed to keep things in and keep things out. The fence keeps the small but spirited Yorkshire Terrier from running out into the street. It keeps the big, but misunderstood pit bull from coming in. Some fences are made of wood panels, some are made of well-placed stones. Ours was made of aluminum chain links. I reach out and put my hand through one of the diamond shaped links. It’s cold to the touch. As my finger gently outlines the
grey colored metal, I wonder how many links there are in the entire fence. Through the hole I see a face coming towards me. She is about my age, but darker than I. She asks if she can come in the yard to play. Her name is Chrissy. We play in the backyard. On the swing set. Rolling in the grass. We are best friends. As seasons change, we still play. We play with my clothes, my dolls, my toys—in my house, enclosed in my aluminum chain fence.

Dolls

I loved my toys. I was attached to each one. My Barbie’s, my American Girl dolls, my play kitchen. The colorful plastic. The doll’s perfect teeth, perfect smile, beautiful clothes. I would spend hours dressing all of them up. Brushing their hair. Giving them names. Chrissy loved them too. She asked to borrow them. She promised she would take good care of them and bring them back to me soon. She said I didn’t need all of my toys. She said I had too many. Each time I would say yes. But I never saw my toys again. Eventually I missed all of my toys too much and went to her house to get them. Up the steep concrete steps, into the hallway, into a room of nothing. Cold, dark, and empty. Chrissy and her family sitting on one small, torn couch. No dolls, no toys. Chrissy says her Dad took her toys. I leave Chrissy’s house. Go back through the hallway, down the concrete steps. Out onto the cracked, concrete sidewalk. Up my steep concrete steps into my warm, bright, and full house. I hold my dolls extra tight.

Uniforms

It’s time to wake up and get ready for school. I walk to my closet, open the door. I see a khaki skirt and green polo. I see a green and blue plaid jumper. A maroon kilt.
symbolizing my thirteen years spent in private, parochial education. I didn’t like the skirt; it was a green toned khaki that was unflattering. The green and blue jumper was my favorite. It was easy. It reminded me of Christmas. The kilt was comfy. Uniforms are a polarizing subject. Some love them, some hate them. Arguments against them are not very strong. Uniforms are easy. They look neat. They give all students an even playing field. No one has to worry about having the latest clothes. Everyone looks the same. I go to school. I ask my school friend to come over my house to play. She says her mom won’t let her because I live in a bad neighborhood. I don’t understand, yet I feel sad. I am one of them. I have on the same skirt, the same polo, the same jumper. Yet I am different. And they know it. They are not mean about it. I am not bullied, I am just different. They do not exclude me. My friend invites me over to her house to play instead. Her mom picks us up from school in her fancy car. We drive to her house. There are countless trees, beautiful grass. Her house is huge. There is a stone fence. We walk up the flower lined path, through the front door, into the foyer. It is cold, dark, and empty.

Pencil

Pointy. Dull. Repeat. The vicious cycle in the lifespan of a pencil. It is a shade of yellow-orange. Bright, yet muted at the same time. A thin, metallic band topped with a little pink nub. Straight edges on each side, yet still capable of rolling off the desk. Tap. Tap. Tap. Against my arm. Each time the point ever so softly pricking my skin. I hear my name being called out by my teacher. Reprimanding me for fidgeting with my pencil. I stop, blush. Decide not to talk for the rest of the day. Going over and over the reprimand I had received. Others would be yelled at and then proceed on with their day. However, I could not recover. Fidgeting, worrying,
overthinking. The way I spent the majority of my middle school years. Even the smell of school was overwhelming. Producing feelings of sadness. The ache of uneasiness felt in my stomach. Morning Prayer, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Religion, math, vocabulary, science. Subjects came easy to me. Yet I never wanted to be there. The constant anxiety. Anxiety over everything. The small stuff. Talking in class, saying the wrong answer, tripping in front of my peers. The big stuff. Worrying about my parents, my family. The crippling angst that never left. School was supposed to be fun. At the very least, it wasn’t supposed to be this stressful. Yet there I was fidgeting, worrying, overthinking. Anxiety continued to follow me. Over the big stuff and the small stuff. Yet nothing will stress me out quite like middle school. For even the sight of a rolling pencil makes me cringe.

Dominoes

The smooth rectangular block. The color of bone. With rounded edges creating the perfect domino piece. Perfect black, concentric dots indicating the value of each little briquette. Mima, my grandma, always taught me to use the doubles first so that I am left with a smaller number. In the kitchen on my grandparent’s glass table. My Papa would flip all of the dominoes over and shuffle them. The loud, crashing sound of my grandpa’s large, tired and calloused hands swirling the pieces around the table. We each take eight pieces. One by one we place a domino down in hopes that we become victorious. Mima sips her café that is as black as the night sky. From a miniscule espresso cup with delicate pink flowers. The smell is strong, but familiar. Si. Gracias. Por que. Spanish, the only language spoken in their side of the house. Mima and Papa talk about their jobs in the factories. Hard, strenuous, tiring jobs that they do
not like. They tell me to study, to work hard, to go to college so that I will never have to do the jobs they do. I would be the first in the family to graduate from college. They tell me of their hardships. How they came to this country from Cuba. With the clothes on their back, five dollars, and three children. They are kind, they are loving, they are generous. Only a few domino pieces left. It looks like I am winning. Mima tells me more about her job at the factory. How her company makes plastic bottles. How tired she is. Papa starts talking about his family in Cuba. How they cannot leave. How he cannot do anything about it. I finally lay my last domino down, it is the double blank. I win. Mima always told me to keep the blank for last. And I listened.

**Smile**

The anatomy of a smile. Fake, sincere, forced. Big, small. Revealing teeth, not revealing any. Braces, dimples. All characteristics of the many different types of smiles. I sit at a tan plastic table in a high school cafeteria. All of the chairs are yellow. Instantly regretting my decision to come to a high school in which I do not know anyone. Deciding to take a different path than my peers who I had known since kindergarten. Other tables have groups of girls sitting and chatting away. They probably all know each other. I see someone walking in. They do not appear to know anyone either. I decide to smile. Not too much as to come across as creepy. But with a definite smile, to appear warm and open. She sits down. I decide to introduce myself to get the conversation going. She introduces herself as well, she seems nice. More girls join in and we end up just like all of the other tables. Talking and chatting. I was on edge the first few months of high school. Forcing myself to be more outgoing. To talk, to make
friends, to smile. I was skeptical of the friendly outlook for some time. Previously surrounded by individuals who were catty, selfish, and jealous. That day sitting in the cafeteria, I decided to change my fate. To be able to start fresh. To go out of my way to be the person I had always wanted to be. Genuinely friendly, kind, and happy. To be able to recognize sadness or anxiety in others and help them in need. To be positive. To be a good friend. All it took was a hello. A kind word. A smile.

*Identity Diffused*

Identity Diffused. A psychological cognitive state of identity in which one has not searched for an identity and has not yet made a commitment to a certain identity or role. Characterized by a continual crisis. Looking back, I was in complete diffusion. It is a common part of adolescence. Yet, while most of my friends were excited about going on college tours and picking the perfect university, I could not be bothered. My Mom managed to drag me to two college tours. I chose one of the two. Done. But it wasn’t done. I knew that college was what was expected. It had to be done. It’s not that I didn’t want to go to college. I didn’t have dreams of becoming a hair dresser or a chef. I knew that I eventually wanted a career that needed a degree. I just felt uneasy. I wasn’t happy about leaving my family like most of my friends. I wasn’t excited to grow up. Left to internalize these sacrilegious feelings, I was completely miserable. And diffused. Going through the motions and hoping things would fall into place.
Dried violet petals. Each one a dusty lilac color with edges turned up and cracked ever so slightly. Thousands of petals, floating on a large tan column, encased in a layer of clear plastic. A dozen massive columns with the same flowery motif holding up the Intensive Care Unit in the hospital. Different from the chaos, the blood, the crying of the Emergency Department. The ICU has horrifying silence. It is clean. Quiet, except for the murmur of heart monitors and ventilators. A small waiting room off to the side with plush couches and a large oak conference table. Each nurse has one little desk separating the rooms of her two patients. The rooms are large, encased with clear glass. Filled with unidentifiable equipment. In each bed is an unidentifiable person, their identities covered by the fog of their sickness. And this is the place where my life stopped. My Dad, my rock, was sick. Very sick. Coming out of surgery everything started to fail. His heart, his kidneys, his lungs, all failing. Lying in bed, incoherent, his face covered with tubes. The doctors said they could do no more. They told us to say goodbye. As my fingers fiercely ran over each purple bead in my rosary, I pictured the column crumbling. The main pillar, the cornerstone of my family. Disintegrating right before my eyes. The priest came in. Last rites were said. And just when everything was about to fall apart-everything stayed perfectly intact.

_Intravenous_

Drip. Drop. Drip. A little pouch of liquid dangles from the rung of a metal IV pole like a Christmas ornament hanging off a tree branch. The liquid looks thick. It drops slowly. Drop by drop into a small little tube that pushes it further through spaghetti thin plastic. Winding down and around. Until it hits the vein and reaches freedom in the blood stream. Drip. Drop. Drip.
Droplets of liquid turned into bags of liquid. Hours turned into days. Days passed, but my Dad did not. Everything got better. IV’s and tubes slowly came off. But my own sanity did not. How. Why. A fluke? An absolute miracle? No one knows. The doctors who said they could do no more were now taking credit for saving my Dad’s life. The torment of a miracle ate at my soul. I had come face to face with all of my anxieties. Life was no longer the same. How can one go on with their daily routine after something so scary, so special, so mysterious. Why were we spared the agony of losing a loved one, while so many other families are not. And so I continued with bitter realism. Maintaining the idea that there would be no more miracles for this family. We couldn’t expect anything more. Drip. Drop. Drip. The rain comes down in gobs. Odd for August weather. Beading up over the hospital window. Blurring my vision. Intercepting the look of disappointment from my mom as I told her I was dropping out of school. Trying to savor the time I had left with my Dad, I made a decision. My once cognitively diffused state became more diffused. As the rain came down and sent the diffusion through my veins.

Bread

The serrated knife gently saws at the crusty outer shell of a hard roll. Leaving little sawdust filaments on the cutting board as it pushes through to the soft, chewy center. As the knife moves swiftly across the roll, revealing little air pockets in the spongey center. Carefully cutting just enough to create the perfect bed for a sandwich. Tiny, black poppy seeds roll off of the top, creating a little sea of darkness on the red and black checkered floor. The process continues for two hundred more miniature loaves, each placed in three wicker baskets. And then the deli opens its doors for the morning rush. Greeting customers. Taking orders. Using
the register. Cleaning and closing. Repeat. Day in and day out. The monotony of it all was the perfect medicine. Giving me just enough hardship to become completely fed up with the circumstances. Working and going home to take care of my Dad. He needed me and I was happy to be there for him. As long as I was there, nothing could go wrong. Until it went wrong again. And again. And again. Becoming friends with various nurses and doctors. Slowly becoming aware that life was going to happen with or without me there to direct it. And then my worries faded. After the anxiety and stress that occupied my being for so long, I realized that I was not meant to know how or why things happen. They just do. As the time came to enroll for school, I craved an enriching environment. As the first day of classes came I wore my shame like a scarlet letter, feeling silly for taking a semester off to “find myself”. To end up slicing bread all day. Walking down the long, crowded corridor. Sitting in a classroom. Realizing that slicing bread is what saved me. Realizing that life can take an apparent stand still and then return to normalcy at some point. Without an explanation or a reason. And here I am, back in a classroom. Taking notes, listening, absorbing. Slicing bread only on the weekends.

_Almonds_

Reaching into the nut bowl, I grab a large diamond shape piece. It has minuscule holes perforating the shell, allowing the goodness inside to breathe. As the metal nut cracker comes down on the hunk and snaps it open, a small, hard object is expelled. About the size of a fingertip. Wrinkled, ridged, and brown. Picking at the object, what looks like layers of brown tissue paper peel off to reveal the creamy, beige meat. Layers of seemingly superfluous matter. All nurturing and protecting the nut inside. Irrelevant pieces of information, memories, stories.
All coming together in an attempt to offer some sort of explanation for my here. The unconventional aspects of my childhood. My family members. Their stories. My privileged upbringing, surrounded by poverty and wealth. My experiences of misfortune and pure luck. All coming together to make me who I am. A blend of what life has to offer. Fortunate enough to have experienced all of these contrasts. To have gained such valuable life experience. To be able to bring all of these experiences together and use them to the best of my ability. These contrasts and similarities all working together to form a context. A context that cannot be explained in a simple, concrete way. A context that must be thought of as the almond. Centered between two perfectly concentric, overlapping circles.
Profile Picture
Edward Garrity
Have you ever heard of Azealia Banks? If not, it would behoove you to get acquainted. She is natural, wild, and completely insane. However, she’s also intelligent and a wickedly intellectual African studies enthusiast; it’s inspiring to see her Twitter spats blown up to the point of being headlines on popular blogs, music sites, and online publications.

She’s a female rapper from Harlem who gained a considerable following when she released a song entitled “212” to critical acclaim in 2011. Ever since then she’s been tossed through the unrelenting and insufferable pains of the music industry, garnering more attention for her Twitter rants and battles than her actual music, which is cross genre hip-hop that comes with an insanely witty and fluid flow.

More recently, she has come under attack from refusing to back down from criticizing Iggy Azalea, the Australian hip-hop-lite/ pop music phenomenon of the past few months, because of what Banks describes as “cultural smudging.” Banks is upset, and rightfully so, because of the lack of recognition that black hip-hop artists are getting for creating a genre that white people have now pervaded and stolen to accommodate their own desire for wealth and fame.

Banks gave a candid interview with Hot 97 about the issues that she has with Azalea, whose name itself Banks find comical because it is so dangerously close to being a rip-off. In the interview, she vents about the frustrations of being held down forcibly by an oppressor who is ubiquitous in America: white people. Even in the hysteria of a considerably more “liberal” world, so many words and feelings have been lost during the fight for equality. The issue was not settled, probably because it may never be settled. However, it was reawakened when Kendrick Lamar, another very prominent fixture in the hip-hop community, gave an interview with Billboard magazine. In regards to the events in Ferguson, Lamar said,
“But when we don't have respect for ourselves, how do we expect them to respect us? It starts from within. Don't start with just a rally, don't start from looting -- it starts from within." Banks blasted this statement on social media and responded, “Lol do you know about the generational effects of poverty, racism, and discrimination... There are things in society that benefit a select few of us. fine.... But don't put down the rest by saying they don't respect themselves... HOW DARE YOU open ur face to a white publication and tell them that we don't respect ourselves.... Speak for your fucking self...” She continues to discuss other things, including what she calls the “indoctrination” of America’s history books force-fed to young, impressionable black children, but the three tweets I gave in order of their appearance are the most pertinent.

She sounds crazed, but she’s right. Kendrick Lamar should not stand up in the face of discrimination, no matter the circumstance, and shelve it as if the effects of discrimination are a solely individualistic experience, implying that “weak minded” individuals are the reason it is still present in our society, when the community as a whole feels it, whether they show it or not. Recently in an interview with Oprah, Raven Symone, a popular black actress from The Cosby Show and That’s So Raven, blew Oprah away when she told her that she does not consider herself “black” or “African American,”; rather, she considers herself “American.” Oprah gasps and says that Twitter will have a field day, and it should. Raven Symone is attempting to stay in control of her emotions, but she is denying a very obvious fact in her life: her heritage. Now there will always be the argument that if we continue to adhere to the idea of distinguishing between skin color, then we are fighting against the chance to end discrimination. But there is an answer. There should be a celebration of difference, not a fight to homogenize those very visible and biological differences. We always want to jump to end something, rather than fighting to understand it and happily living amongst it.

The “trouble” that Banks is stirring is honest, intelligent, thought provoking, and emotive, and after reading an article by the person that this essay will really focus on, I felt what Banks felt. I had a raw,
biting reaction to Luis Pabon’s “Why I No Longer Want To Be Gay” that he wrote for an online publication called Thought Catalog. The article is an expression of Pabon’s issues with the modern gay community and how he wishes he were no longer a part of it, and therefore, no longer gay (I know, complete plot twist. I mean the title was all smoke and mirrors, seriously).

I was so appalled by the article that I left a comment on the page, and I never leave comments on articles. I’m not psychotic (insert sarcastic tone). Before I showcase a plethora of excerpts from the piece, I would like to preface the rest of this discussion with the first and last lines of the piece: “I no longer want to be gay...It’s just not where I see myself anymore.” Really, truly moving sentences, and I understand the pull toward clear and concise journalistic sentences, but come on. With an article as cringe inducing as Pabon’s, and for Pabon to even begin to let the rest of the intellectual gay community, and straight community, for that matter, to take him seriously, he needs to be a better writer. This is a profoundly sensitive subject, and he leads with “I no longer want to be gay” and closes with “It’s just not where I see myself anymore.” Really.

I was attacked and personally affected. Words spun out of my mouth and my eyes lit up. I blew through a paragraph of heat, my fingers burning from the rage. I was quick and calculated, spitting prose that was wise beyond my years. Who the fuck is a Luis Pabon, and more importantly, what is a Luis Pabon? He wasn’t even human anymore; he was shunned, disclosed, broken. His identity was white washed and I made it my point to ridicule him in the most tasteful of ways. Here’s my Banks moment. I would never have dreamed of letting this opportunity go. Every single day, I second-guess myself. Reread the manuscript of my life. Take a step back and think about the fact that my life, after coming out, will never be the same. That is just a fact. I will never be back in the closet shrouded in a cloud of unknown sexuality. Everyone is aware, and if they are not, if they are new to my life, then I am back in a cloud but my flamboyance is no longer the enemy. I am here, living and breathing proof of the gayness. That’s a great line if I do say so myself. Anyway, every day I regret my sexuality. Every damn day there is
a reminder of what life could have been, what it could be, but I fight against it. “Rage, rage against the
dying of the light.” The dying of confidence and self-assurance. However, I always rage and I always fight
and I get exhausted and for a moment there is a weakness. And then Luis Pabon writes an article that
takes every absolutely absurd self-evaluation and self-loathing, seizes them, and uses them to hit me
directly in the core of my being: my identity.

Where does it come from, our sense of identity? Pabon made me think of that immediately.
Where is this well that dredges this unintelligible force that begs me to think? Pabon has me outraged,
but he has me thinking. It’s interesting how words call forth hysteria, how they force us to evaluate
something. It’s also interesting how intimate the relationship I share with Pabon, a man who I ostensibly
know almost nothing about. Yet, here I am, and I feel as though I know him. I feel as though we share
something sacred. Universality is interesting because here I am feeling as though I know Pabon because I
was him and I am him. I understand him and yet I hate him. I immediately made my connection with him
selfishly and centered it on my experience. What does that say about me? What does it say about him?

Anyway, aside from my wax poetic banter, I am going to treat Pabon as if we know one another
intimately because that is how I feel, and that is how writing makes us feel. Pabon is gravely misreading
and misinterpreting his entire situation. Pabon attributes the new gay dating culture as being solely
interested in hooking up and one night stands with a plethora of raunchy new age, post-internet
abbreviated descriptions of different options for hook ups and interests. He says that he no longer wishes
to be gay because of the men that he comes in contact with and that they are solely after shallow sex and
nothing more. He even states that the closest option for intimacy that gay men have now is a one night
stand, and because of this he equates gay life to “starting to look a lot like a slow death simmering on low
heat.” He discusses how men use “electronic masks” to hide themselves in order to “project their own
discomfort.” He destroys the frivolous notion of chivalry and makes it sound as if it died during the Black
Plague. Pabon even states, “The middleman of courtesy has been eliminated and replaced with an
immoral devil who chaperones your destruction daily.” But here’s the thing; Pabon attributes all of this to gay life as if it is solely attributable to the gays. One of the biggest reasons why I have an issue with Pabon is for the precise fact that he acts as though he is oblivious to the worlds of straight men, straight women, and homosexual women. He makes it seem as though being gay in the 21st century comes automatically with a butt plug, a pocket copy of Urban Dictionary, and the empathy level of Gawker. By doing so, he is validating every individual that has a stereotype of gays fully constructed in their mind. He has no idea of the implications of his teenage complaints.

Humanity as a whole struggles. We conquer and we are conquered, we are whole and we are broken, and, more often than not, we are deeply wounded. These wounds do not dissipate as soon as they are opened, though; they fester and bleed out and need an exorbitant amount of time to heal. They have repercussions and they give us limitations. Gay men are forced out of the womb feeling inferior. We are forced to reconcile with two iterations of ourselves: the one the world sees and the one the world doesn’t see quite yet, or in some cases, never gets the chance to see. Gay men must stop and learn the world before they learn themselves. We must take into consideration every moment, every step, and every word. We analyze and over analyze. We deny ourselves. We deny others the chance to see ourselves. These all have repercussions, true intimacy being one of them. Growing into yourself still leaves a bit behind that lingers and waits to be used as a shield. How can anyone else understand when we can’t, or worse, don’t want to? The reason these men are so difficult is because they are weak, and yet we can’t always fault them for that. Yes, they must one day come to terms with it and mature, but maybe they aren’t ready, like when a teenage boy who loves books gets a hold of Dostoevsky and trembles at the knees when he reads the first paragraph. Every human being must find themselves, see themselves, be themselves, and be themselves around others. The issue with Pabon is that it seems like he won’t see that because he is too bitter about the fact that he isn’t in a relationship to care. Pabon’s entire article sounds like it’s selfishly pandering to his insecurity about being single, which is highly
embarrassing when it becomes the foundation for an article on a website with the name, “Thought Catalog.”

Pabon is feeding into the wounded little boy inside who won’t understand that other people have feelings because his feelings aren’t being taken care of. I say this because Pabon says he no longer wants to be part of a world that is filled with insecure, selfish, childish adults and he refuses to discuss the fact that this is a stage of development that every single human being goes through at some point in their lives. It is a small step in the infinite journey of humanity. The search for meaning and purpose forces us to face the complexity that is humanity, not just in ourselves, but within other people, too, simply because of the fact that we are not born as individuals but rather as a collective whole, so connection is pivotal and illuminating. Pabon’s analysis is philosophically weak, and that is also why I am so outraged.

In the first paragraph Pabon says, “I know that on the surface this statement reeks of denial, self-loathing, and internalized homophobia commonly associated with accepting and integrating ones gayness but truth is, I just don’t want to be gay anymore.” Well, there we have it, the entire article in a nutshell, and the only reason I need to understand just how ridiculously immature Pabon’s argument and statement truly is. He knows exactly what this article is going to look like to the reader because it is exactly what it looks like: a statement that reeks of denial, self-loathing, and internalized homophobia, which is exactly what it will symbolize for the gay community aside from the other immature individuals who are also bitter about their relationship status. The only thing about the message of the overall article aside from everything Pabon stated is that after he gives evidence to refute that assumption, he illustrates how close-minded he is. I don’t mean that I am mocking or ridiculing him for the sake of personal satisfaction, but rather because, logically speaking, his argument is so weak. Pabon, I understand you, but I cannot agree with you. I have too much at stake here to give up my own identity to join in your immature whining. I am trying too hard to keep myself together, just like everyone else.
Aristotle’s Prime Mover

Chelsea Frenette

Aristotle’s *The Metaphysics* provides reasoning and understanding about human existence. Along with giving an in depth understanding of being, Aristotle also introduces, what he has deemed, a Prime Mover. He boldly asserts the Prime Mover is eternal, unchanging, and ultimately the primary source to all substances and movement. In his discussion of the Prime Mover, or what he also calls God, Aristotle claims that this divine entity must be good. The ideas that he meticulously explains in *The Metaphysics* have undeniably influenced the trajectory of philosophy, culture and history. By establishing the existence of a Prime Mover in deep philosophical terms, Aristotle created a monotheistic view that essentially altered the theological views of human existence. Though many have disproved points in his philosophy, Aristotle still remains one of the world’s most influential philosophers.

Before Aristotle addresses the fundamental source of all substances, he discusses the three different types of substances: two of which are perceptible, one being perishable and the other imperishable, and the third substance is immune to any change at all. He ends the first part of Lambda implying that there has to be a common source of the three substances, which must be discussed through a theological lens. As well as differentiating the types of substances, he also goes into the role of change in Physics. Like Heraclitus, Aristotle also believed that the world was in a constant state of change. He states, “Our model of change is that in all cases there is (a) a thing that undergoes change, {1070a} (b) something by which it is changed and (c) something into which it changes. We further claim that the role of (b) is played by a primary mover, that of (a) by the thing’s matter, and that of (c) by its form”(359). For Aristotle, movement isn’t a singular occurrence; rather movement is the result of a series of other initial movements. All of these movements must then have been created by an unmoving entity, which he will later prove to be the Primary Mover. In simple terms, if object A is in motion then there must have been some object B that caused that movement, and then an object C that caused object B to move. However, this ripple effect can’t go on forever, hence the Prime Mover. He argues that there must be an eternal and unchanging entity because if there wasn’t, all substances would be perishable. Clearly this is not the case because both time and the Earth are not perishable. He also explains that this eternal substance is wholly actual, for if it were potential then its existence would not be assured. By this, he means, the Prime Mover doesn’t have the potential to change, thus forever remaining in a fixed state. Additionally, the eternal substance has to be the source of all movements, or the Prime Mover. He states, “Matter is not going to set itself in motion – its movement depends on a motive cause, such as carpentry.”(370). It is
simply the most logical reasoning that movement must have been started by something that is impervious to movement itself. He concretely established the Prime Mover as the primary cause of all changes and movement in the world. It is impossible for something to come out of nothing; this why Aristotle claims the Prime Mover is the source of all movements.

Aristotle also poses that the Prime Mover is an object of desire, causing the movement of the heavens. Rather than the Prime Mover giving an action that creates the motion, which would ultimately make movement of itself, the movement is created from an attraction. There is no action that created movement, for if there were it couldn’t be the Prime Mover. This essentially results in the motion of things like stars and planets. The eternal motion and routes occur because the attraction to God. Aristotle further explains, “Its existence, then, is necessary, and in that it is necessary it is good, and it is in this way that it is a principle” (374). By saying that God’s existence is necessary, he means that there is nothing God’s existence depends on. God is an entity that never changes, and is, and forever will be, a constant. This obviously makes God eternal, and according to Aristotle, things that are eternal must also be good. The reasoning behind this claim of goodness forms because there is simply nothing lacking. If God is eternal, which Aristotle shows that he is, then God, as well as the universe he created, is good. On the other hand, humans are not good because our existence has a beginning and end. For Aristotle, human’s mortality prevents them from ever being good. Humanity and other substances merely imitate the goodness of the Prime Mover. Lambda is wrapped up by claiming there can only be a single Prime Mover, God, and must be defined by and totally be thought. Aristotle introduces the world to a Prime Mover that is wholly good. His ideas in Lambda have consequently affected the course of history as well as present day. For instance, his explanations of astronomy and the motions it takes have influenced theologians and philosophers like Thomas Aquinas. Additionally, he presents some of the most fundamental logic in his notions on movement that still translate today.

Though Aristotle’s notions on the Prime Mover have clearly impacted the course of history, is it truly relevant to learn all of his ideas? For example, it seems illogical to believe everything Aristotle argues in The Metaphysics when there is scientific proof of the Big Bang Theory. While it is clear that Aristotle asserts a primary cause and a definite mover to this universe, the Big Bang Theory contradicts these ideas. Aristotle claims that there must have been something that caused all the Universe’s motions, simply because it isn’t logical for nothing to just come from nothing. However, the Big Bang, which created the Universe, appears to have occurred out of total spontaneity. Aristotle also claims that Earth and time have no beginning or ending, making both eternal. According to the Big Bang Theory, the start
of everything came from the moment of the Big Bang. This would then mean that time started to exist at
the moment of the bang. Additionally, Earth was also something that had a start point. The Big Bang
Theory fundamentally disproves the idea that Earth and time were always in existence. As modern
science advances there are many beliefs that are proven wrong in his notions of the Prime Mover. It can
be argued then that it isn’t absolutely necessary to study all of his ideas in *The Metaphysics*.

Though I concede that the Big Bang Theory holds substantial proof of creation, I still maintain that
Aristotle’s philosophy of the Prime Mover continues to contribute to the trajectory of our world. In terms
of the Big Bang, there needs to be some sort of understanding to his conclusion of creation. The years of
300 BC weren’t exactly as scientifically advanced as they are now. Despite not having our modern day
knowledge, Aristotle still managed to create important observations that so many people used and found
success with. For example, his notions on movement are still being taught and used today. The idea of
cause and effect can be drawn all the way back to Aristotle’s logic. Everything that is and does has the
ability to do so because of something else. Whenever someone uses this method they must give credit to
Aristotle for their success. Along with his scientific influences, he also influenced people’s morality by
positing the inherent goodness of God. As mentioned before, he reasons that the Prime Mover must be
good because its existence is necessary. It is this goodness that attracts and causes the motions of the
world. By explaining that God is good, and that goodness creates an attraction that makes the Universe
function, then Aristotle essentially establishes the value of everyone being good. Ultimately, the existence
of a “good” Prime Mover encourages a mode of ethics in humanity. If everything in existence is trying to
imitate the Prime Mover, then there must be a hint of goodness in our existence. Although humans are
not eternal and therefore not wholly good, there is still a sense of encouragement that influences
humans to emulate the goodness that coincides with the Prime Mover. Aristotle makes a bold claim when
he explains that the Prime Mover is good. For in Aristotle’s age, Gods were perceived as angry and
vengeful entities. The development of a singular good God not only challenged the beliefs of that time
period, but also impacted religious views yet to come.

Aristotle’s *The Metaphysics* has provided humanity with a better understanding of human
existence for thousands of years. Perhaps one of his most important philosophies was his understanding
of a Prime Mover. By establishing the existence of a Prime Mover, Aristotle undeniably influenced the
trajectory of philosophy, culture and history. His philosophies have led to the success of many people
who have changed our world. The monotheistic outlook he developed also changed the views of
religions. As science and technology of the modern world advances, Aristotle’s ideas will still continue to have an impact on our world.

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Gut Bacteria and their Influence on Metabolic Disorders

Stephanie Sorbara

Abstract

The human gut microbial genome encodes for several metabolic processes that are not encoded for in the human genome. Through the study of metagenomics, mice, and human models, researchers have shown that changes in the gut bacterial composition can generate oxidative stress, release endotoxins, and induce lipogenesis. These pathways can disrupt normal metabolic function, resulting in obesity and other related metabolic disorders such as diabetes. Most of the health implications associated with obesity originate from the biological reactions carried out by the gut bacteria, which are strongly impacted by environmental factors. Probiotics, prebiotics and fecal transplantation are methods that can be used to replace destroyed microbes due to environmental impacts. Several other diseases can originate from disruptions in the gut bacterial community, thus future research must be conducted.

Introduction

The human body houses several different microbial communities within the oral cavity, stomach, intestines, female vagina, and on the surface of human skin. Each anatomical site contains different microbial species that differ in their abundance (Cho and Blaser 2012). Microbes can either increase or decrease in numbers depending upon the timing in which an individual is exposed to certain microbes, genetics, and environmental factors such as diet and antibiotics (Califf et al 2014). For this reason, the human microbiome is very specific and “personalized” to each individual (Califf et al 2014).
The gut micro-biome represents a complete ecosystem located within the large and small intestines. Although the microbiome composition strongly differs between individuals, research has noted that most healthy humans contain microbial species in the gut belonging to the Firmicutes, Bacteroidetes, and Actinobacteria phyla (Califf et al 2014; Cho and Blaser 2012). Together, the microbial species found within the gut aid in energy absorption, along with the breakdown of carbohydrates and proteins, which directly help regulate metabolic pathways (Bäckhed 2012).

The diversity and population of different microbial species found within the gut can be altered through several different factors, including diet, antibiotics, and exposure to different microbes (Califf et al 2014; Cho and Blaser 2012). Microbial diversity influences metabolic pathways through the production of endotoxins, oxidative stress, and lipogenesis, which can ultimately result in obesity and other related metabolic disorders (Brown et al 2011; Nadal et al 2008).

**Metagenomics**

The human gut micro-biome is composed of $10^{14}$ bacterial cells, proving it to be 100 times larger than the Human Genome (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Several metabolic pathways carried out in the human body are regulated by the genetic material encoded in the microbial genome, not in the human genome. For this reason, the gut microbiome can be considered a “virtual organ” and a “meta-genome,” as it is an extension of the human genome (Harley and Karp 2012; Qiao et al 2013).
Shortly after the human genome was sequenced, researchers were interested in sequencing the genomes of different microbes that live within the human body. This led to the establishment of the Human Microbiome Project (Gevers et al 2012). Traditionally, microbial species are cultured in a laboratory under environmental conditions suitable for growth, allowing for researchers to study individual microbes. However, many microbes found within the human body require specific environmental conditions that cannot be duplicated in a laboratory setting, thus leading to the development of metagenomics (Gevers et al 2012). The field of metagenomics uses advanced DNA sequencing technology to study microbial communities without cultivating them in the laboratory (Human Microbiome Project). Researchers sequence the 16S ribosomal RNA (rRNA) gene through the processes of Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) and amplification to properly identify a particular bacterial strain and classify it into a certain phylogeny (Gevers et al 2012). This particular genomic region is sequenced because it contains several conserved genes along with variable regions, providing great insight to evolution and its taxonomy (Microbial Reference Genomes). This technique proves to be very beneficial because it allows researchers to sequence the genes from the whole microbial community as opposed to studying individual genomes through methods involving bacterial cultures (Gevers et al 2012).

The purpose of metagenomics is to use the findings based upon 16S rRNA sequencing to help understand the role of microbial communities in human health and disease (Human Microbiome Analysis). However, this type of research poses some minor ethical controversies because researchers are dealing with non-human genomes (Gevers et al 2012). Due to the microbial genome being separate from the human genome, some questions arise as to whether
or not experimentally manipulating the microbial community is essentially altering biological identity (Gevers et al 2012). Since it is difficult to determine who exactly owns a microbial genome, some researchers propose that regulations, similar to those of gene therapy, may apply to metagenomics, in future research (Gevers et al 2012).

**Fetal inheritance of Gut Microbes**

The effect of environmental exposure to certain microbes is manifested in the process of child birth. Before birth, the fetal gut is determined to be sterile and lack any microbes; however, the microbial community begins to develop once the baby is exposed to the outside environment. The external environment includes the vaginal canal during vaginal delivery, or adult human skin in the case of a cesarean section (Califf et al 2014). Research has shown that the particular mode of delivery impacts the initial inheritance of an individual’s microbiome. For instance, babies who experience a vaginal birth express a microbiome similar to the bacteria found in the vaginal canal, whereas babies delivered via cesarean section, initially express a bacterial composition similar to the bacteria found on adult human skin (Califf et al 2014; Cho and Blaser 2012).

Furthermore, studies have also observed a correlation between diet and fetal inheritance of a microbiome. In the early infant years, babies primarily consume the mother’s milk, which is rich in lactobacilli (Cho and Blaser 2012). Interestingly enough, researchers have observed lactobacilli to be the most abundant microbe present in the fetal gut, indicating that microbial development is also initiated by the consumed diet (Cho and Blaser 2012). As the baby continues to grow and develop, research proposes that the intestinal maturity continues
to be regulated by environmental and genetic factors (Cho and Blaser 2012). For instance, the oral cavity presents a different microbial community before teeth emerge compared to after they emerge, which can be influenced by genetic tendencies and gut composition.

Throughout the course of human life, microbial composition does not remain static. For example, diets high in carbohydrates alter levels of *Rosenburia spp.*, the bacteria responsible for producing butyrate, an essential energy source for cells located in the colon (Caricilli and Saad 2014). If the production of butyrate is hindered, that may result in an unhealthy colon, because these bacteria aid in the processes regulating toxin and waste elimination.

Also, early treatments with antibiotics can strongly shift microbial diversity and contribute negatively to the overall development of the child, because antibiotics can kill off many bacteria species important in nutrient absorption and metabolic processes (Cho and Blaser 2012). If a child lacks the microbes necessary to absorb nutrients, this can present problems of malnutrition and other health implications in the future (Cho and Blaser 2012). Therefore, the gut microbial community plays a major role in human health and constantly changes throughout one’s life.

**Obesity and Microbial Diversity**

Following the emergence of metagenomics, researchers have gained great insight into the relationship between gut bacteria and metabolic disorders. For example, obesity is a disease characterized by a multitude of metabolic disorders that result in excessive amounts of body fat (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Generally, obesity tends to be regarded as a disease resulting from poor diet intake, genetics, and lack of physical activity (Cani and Delzenne 2009).
Though these are contributing factors, the excess of body fat is mediated by the role of the microbial species present in the human gut (Cani and Delzenne 2009).

Recent studies have shown that an altered gut flora is strongly correlated with the accumulation of body fat and weight gain. For example, researchers involved in one particular study examined many 16S rRNA gene sequences from both genetically obese mice and lean mice. They observed that the obese mice expressed an increased level of Firmicutes and a decrease in the number of Bacteroidetes compared to the lean mice (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Firmicutes are bacterial microbes that are involved in energy absorption, and Bacteroidetes are involved in the breakdown of carbohydrates and proteins (Cecchini et al 2013). The energy extracted from the Firmicutes is then invested into further metabolic pathways by the Bacteroidetes (Cecchini et al 2013). In effect, the obese mice were likely experiencing higher rates of energy absorption, and possible disrupted metabolic pathways due to the failure of the energy to be invested into metabolic pathways (Cani and Delzenne 2009; Cecchini et al 2013). Ultimately, the high extraction of energy, along with the failure to input that energy into metabolic processes causes that energy to be stored as fat in the body, which can accumulate over time and lead to obesity. These results indicate that the composition of the gut microbial community influence metabolic pathways involving energy absorption, ultimately contributing to the amount of body fat accumulated and metabolic phenotype (Cani and Delzenne 2009).

Additionally, these same researchers carried out another study using human subjects. They examined the gut flora of 12 obese subjects, and compared them to 12 lean subjects. Similar to the results obtained using the mice models, the researchers also observed a lower number of Bacteroidetes and a higher number of Firmicutes, in the obese individuals, as
compared to the lean individuals (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Next, the researchers placed the obese individuals on a very strict diet, which limited the amount of fat, carbohydrate, and caloric intake (Cani and Delzenne 2009). After intervening with the diet of the obese individuals for 52 weeks, the researchers examined the gut flora of the obese individuals again (Cani and Delzenne 2009). They noticed that the gut flora was much more comparable to that of the lean individuals, because the numbers of Bacteroidetes and Firmicutes in both groups were similar (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Based upon the results, the researchers were able to conclude that diet does impact the composition and diversity of the microbial community located within the human gut; however, the mechanism by which this happens is still unknown.

Furthermore, another study using both antibiotics and a high fat diet, displayed the impacts of such environmental agents. In this particular study, the researchers analyzed six different groups of mice, all experiencing different treatment protocols. The groups are as follows: mice fed a normal diet, versus mice fed a high-fat diet; mice treated with antibiotics along with a normal diet, versus mice treated with antibiotics and a high fat diet; obese mice without antibiotic treatment, versus obese mice treated with antibiotics (Cani et al 2008). Overall, the results indicated that after a four week antibiotic treatment, all mice treated with antibiotics expressed alterations in the diversity of the gut microbial community, regardless of the consumed diet (Cani et al 2008). Also, mice fed just a high-fat diet, compared to mice fed both a high fat diet and antibiotics expressed very dissimilar gut floras. They displayed only a 22% similarity between each gut flora (Cani et al 2008). Although genetics can contribute to the gut composition, the results indicate that antibiotics and high fat diets are clearly strong factors that play a role in altering the composition of the gut microbiome.
Mechanisms by which Gut Bacteria Initiate Metabolic Disorders

Additional research was conducted to better understand exactly how the gut microbial community influences the development of obesity by affecting many different metabolic pathways. Recent studies have shown a correlation of the gut microbial community to human metabolism by directly interrupting energy homeostasis along with alterations in the redox state. Normally, when humans ingest food, metabolic processes are able to compensate for the amount of energy that was expended throughout each day, ultimately controlling how much energy is stored as fat (Cani and Delzenne 2009). Those who ingest a higher percentage of calories compared to the amount of calories expended disrupt energy homeostasis and, as a result, develop more body fat.

Recent research using mouse models suggests that the microorganisms present in the gut strongly influence the regulation of energy homeostasis. In one particular research study, germ free mice lacking gut microorganisms were compared to conventionally raised mice possessing a normal gut flora. The conventionally raised mice consumed about 30% less food in their diet compared to the germ-free mice; however, the germ-free mice had 40% less body fat compared to the normal mice (Cani and Delzenne 2009). These findings were further expanded upon as the researchers conventionalized the germ free mice by transplanting a gut microbiota obtained from a normal, conventionally raised mouse, into the germ free mice and observed the results over a two week time period (Cani and Delzenne 2009). After transplanting a gut microbiota into the germ free mice, the mice were fed a lesser amount of food, but expressed a 60% increase in body fat (Cani and Delzenne 2009).
Researchers concluded that the observed weight gain was due to an increase in glucose absorption in the intestines, energy extracted from non-digestible consumed food, and a higher level of glucose and insulin in the blood. Glucose and insulin stimulate the activity of certain enzymes that aid in lipogenesis, the process by which food is converted into energy and then stored as fat in the body (Cani and Delzenne 2009). In comparison to the germ-free mice lacking any microbes in the gut, there was less weight gain, despite being fed a larger diet compared to the conventionally raised mice. Each of the processes observed in the conventionalized mice are carried out by the microbial species present in the gut. This provides insight into the importance of microbes in extracting the energy from ingested foods and initiating fat production in the body, which is crucial to health when maintained at healthy levels (Cani and Delzenne 2009).

Likewise, another proposed mechanism by which metabolic disorders such as obesity arise is due to alterations in the redox state. For instance, researchers imposed a long term high fat diet on experimental mice models and compared them to the control group, consisting of mice fed a normal diet. Specifically in the study, the researchers observed the bacterial strains of *E. coli, Lactobacilli,* and *Enterococcus* in both the mice fed a high fat diet, and those fed a normal diet (Qiao et al 2012). The results indicate that the experimental group fed a high fat diet experienced higher levels of oxidative stress as compared to the control group (Qiao et al 2012). In other words, the high fat diet resulted in the production of many free radicals; however, there were very few antioxidants present to rid the body of them. Additionally, they noticed an increase in the number of *E.coli* and *Enterococcus* bacteria along with a decrease in the number of *Lactobacilli,* in the gut of the experimental group compared to the control group.
(Qiao et al 2012). Through several different analyses, the researchers concluded that the diversity seen among the microbial species present in both the experimental and control group is significantly correlated to the amount of oxidative stress present with the organism (Qiao et al 2012).

Overall, the researchers found that high fat diets change the gut microbiota, which in turn, increases oxidative stress due to the resulting microorganisms. Though this study allows researchers to successfully make associations between bacterial species and biological processes, unfortunately it fails to provide the specific mechanism by which some microbes directly alter the process. Regardless, the studies have shown that diet alters the composition of the gut flora, which in turns generates an altered biological response due to different levels of particular microbial species.

Finally, a third mechanism by which gut bacteria alters metabolic pathways is through the production of endotoxins such as lipopolysaccharides (LPS). LPS is an endotoxin that originates in the membrane of Gram-negative bacteria residing in the intestinal gut (Boroni Moreira et al 2012). Normally, the present LPS is absorbed by enterocytes in the gut, however when this process fails, the LPS can reach the circulatory system, generating metabolic endotoxemia. High fat diets tend to prevent LPS degradation by the golgi, and instead, aid in the transportation of LPS across the intestinal barrier and into the plasma, where it becomes part of the circulatory system (Boroni Moreira et al 2012). Once LPS reaches the circulatory system, this toxin becomes present in the bloodstream and can hinder insulin signaling, ultimately causing an increase in weight gain (Boroni Moreira et al 2012). LPS activates toll-like receptor 4 (TLR4), which is a protein that aids in pathogen recognition to initiate an immune
response. As a result, the body experiences acute inflammation due to a series of activated pathways occurring in the adipose, muscle and liver tissues (Caricilli and Saad 2014; Ding et al 2010). These activated pathways counteract insulin signaling, which results in insulin resistance. The adipose, muscle and liver tissues fail to respond to normal levels of insulin, thus cannot extract glucose from the bloodstream. As a result, the pancreas continues to produce an excessive amount of insulin, putting the individual at a high risk for developing diabetes (Caricilli and Saad 2014; Ding et al 2010).

A primary factor responsible for the harsh effects of endotoxins on metabolic pathways is due to a weakened intestinal membrane. In the previously mentioned study, there was an observed decrease in expression of ZO-1 and Occludin, which are proteins responsible for the tight junctions of the intestinal membrane (Cani et al 2008). Due to low expression of these proteins, there were fewer tight junctions, which weakened the stability of the membrane. In turn, this caused an increase in intestinal permeability (Cani et al 2008). Due to a more unstable membrane, the ingested fats can more easily transport LPS across the membrane and relocate it into the plasma. Once this occurs, an inflammatory response is initiated, which was observed in the study by an increased expression of IL-1 and other genes involved in the immune system’s inflammatory response (Boroni Moreira et al 2012; Cani et al 2008). The activation of pathways regulating inflammation hinders insulin signaling, which in turn, disrupts energy extraction from food and its proper expenditure, leading to insulin resistance. In response, cells fail to respond to normal levels of insulin, and the pancreas continues to produce more insulin, which leads to an excess of glucose in the blood (Boroni Moreira et al 2012). Insulin resistance plays a role in the development of obesity because energy extraction from ingested food and
expenditure is not properly regulated, therefore leading to increased fat stores, weight gain, and possible type II diabetes (Boroni Moreira et al 2012). Thus, this complex cascade of pathways all stem from the response of the microbes present in the intestinal gut. The type of diet consumed influences the composition of the gut microbiome, which can weaken the intestinal barrier permeability, allowing for endotoxins to invade the plasma, initiate an immune response, and contribute to malfunctioning metabolic processes.

**Methods to Maintaining a Health Gut**

Evidently, several research studies have shown the significance of environmental factors such as high-fat diets and antibiotics in altering the composition of the microbial community. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to completely avoid using antibiotics, as they provide relief for many bacterial infections. Additionally, while high fat diets can be reduced, it is difficult to completely avoid them. Therefore, alterations in the microbial population are inevitable, but can still be regulated. One way is through the use of probiotics, which are dietary supplements that contain live bacteria to replace those lost in the intestinal gut due to environmental factors (Cani et al 2008). Bacterial species belonging to the genus of *bifidobacteria* have been shown to reduce the concentration of LPS in the plasma; however, this species tends to decrease in numbers as a result of antibiotic usage (Cani et al 2008; Nadal et al 2008). Therefore, by consuming probiotics containing *bifidobacteria*, individuals may be able to restore the intestinal gut composition and maintain a strong intestinal barrier to prevent an excessive amount of LPS leakage into the plasma (Cani et al 2008; Nadal et al 2008). Ultimately, they can reduce the risk of obesity, insulin resistance and other metabolic disorders.
Likewise, prebiotics are another way to restore a damaged microbiome within the gut. Unlike probiotics, prebiotics are not pills containing live bacteria; rather, they are dietary fibers found in foods such as onions, garlic, bananas, and the skin of apples. They nourish certain bacteria in the colon, which allow for those bacterial species to properly function and maintain a healthy gut, as opposed to directly ingesting certain microbes (Cani and Delzenne 2009).

Furthermore, intervention methods such as fecal transplantation can be used to restore a healthy gut. During this process, fecal matter is collected from a donor, mixed with a certain solution, and then placed into the gut of a patient suffering from an unbalanced microbiome via a colonoscopy or endoscopy (Harley and Karp 2012). The purpose of transferring microbes from the stool of a donor into the gut of a patient is to replace good bacteria that have been killed off due to environmental factors. This method also prevents the overpopulation of *Clostridium difficile*, which is a pathogenic bacteria specie that can cause many problems including fatal diarrhea (Califf et al 2014; Harley and Karp 2012).

Much more research regarding probiotics, prebiotics and gut bacteria must be conducted since there are several microbial organisms located in the gut that are also impacted by diet and antibiotics, which need to be investigated (Cecchini et al 2013). Also, the amount of fat and carbohydrates ingested must also be monitored, as high-fat diets clearly impact the composition of gut bacteria.

**Conclusion**
Overall, metagenomics has provided scientists with a great deal of evidence that gut bacteria does in fact contribute to the stimulation of certain pathways that direct metabolic phenotypes. Those who maintain a gut with very little bacterial diversity are characterized as having higher body fat, insulin resistance, and increased inflammation as compared to those possessing a very diverse gut microbiome (Caricilli and Saad 2014). Each of the metabolic pathways contributing to the development of obesity stem from the reaction of gut bacteria towards consumed foods. Without gut bacteria, the body would fail to extract energy from foods and invest it in necessary metabolic processes and aid in nutrient absorption. Gut bacteria can regulate weight gain, providing insight into how certain disorders, such as obesity, are biologically regulated. This can lead to advances in therapeutic strategies to treat obesity, because caloric intake is not solely responsible for the weight gain, but also the reaction of the gut bacteria to certain foods (Chen et al 2014).

Further research needs to be conducted because gut microbial diversity shows possible correlation to other diseases such as irritable bowel syndrome and Crohn’s disease (Brown et al 2011). These diseases show similar characteristics of autoimmune disorders seen in rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis, thus gut bacteria may indirectly impact auto-immune diseases as well (Brown et al 2011). Since the microbial community directs several pathways linked to digestion and immunity, it is likely that there are several other diseases that are non metabolic that may be strongly impacted by the gut bacteria. Much more research must be conducted to determine further correlations between gut composition and human health. This research can generate great insight into several other diseases and possible cures simply by maintaining a healthy gut.
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Live These Words

Raymond Corriea

Live these words
Go outside; play together
So live these words

Let’s just play
Go outside; live forever
So let’s just play

Not for shame
Play for pride, all for go
Not for shame

Day is spent
Things for time, never came and went
It’s all for a day to be spent

Hear a message
Telling things, for the way
Please hear the message

Live the life
To the fullest, make it wise
So please live the life

Live these words
Go outside; play together
So live these words
Music, Literature, and Trauma

Carrianne Dillon

I.

The discussion and study of trauma is more accessible to the average reader than it has ever been before. Numerous texts, seminars, and documentaries are available with a few clicks of a mouse. The burgeoning interest in trauma means that support communities are growing, and trauma is being addressed instead of repressed. However, with pages of information and opinions on hand, it’s easy to lose track of a few of the foundations of trauma theory.

First let me offer several approaches to trauma used in academia. In her book Unclaimed Experience Cathy Caruth suggests:

In its most general definition, trauma describes an almost overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (11)

Fairly straightforward, Caruth’s definition incorporates an event with the idea of a delayed response that might involve hallucinations or flashbacks. Judith Herman, in her book Trauma and Recovery connects trauma back to the “...bizarre symptoms of hysteria which Freud recognized a century ago...” (Herman, 2). Building on Freud’s psychoanalytic theory, modern academics have expanded the study of trauma to include rape, childhood trauma, mechanical accident trauma, war, domestic abuse, natural disasters and many more. The growing conversations on trauma are important, as they validate and give voice to all types of victims. In this paper, Caruth’s definition will serve as my definition of trauma; with the elaboration that trauma will be applied in a global context as well as an individual one.

It is common to encounter an intersection between trauma theory and literary theory, examining how trauma is manifested in literature. In Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction, Laurie Vickroy says, “Trauma narratives, I contend, go beyond presenting trauma as subject matter or in characterization; they also incorporate the rhythms, processes, and uncertainties of trauma within the consciousness and structures of these works.” (Vickroy, xiv). The production of a trauma narrative is part
of recovery for many survivors. While painful to create, the final product enables the growth of connection between the survivor and their community on a local and/or global scale. Judith Herman says, “The fundamental stages of recovery are establishing safety, reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors and their community” (Herman, 3). Once an individual feels safe enough to create an expression of their trauma, facing the “intrusive phenomena” (Caruth, 11) becomes part of the healing.

It is important to realize that each story is valuable, even within the same genre of trauma. Because each individual experience grapples with trauma differently, the more voices are shared the more a survivor may find someone with whom they identify. Judith Herman reminds readers, “No two people have identical reactions, even to the same event. The traumatic syndrome, despite its many common features, is not the same for everyone.” (Herman, 58). Herman considers the idea that the creation of a trauma narrative isn’t just for the survivor(s), but for those who follow:

...the survivor may consider how best to share the trauma story... in a manner that is neither secretive or imposing. The trauma story is part of the survivor’s legacy; only when it is fully integrated can the survivor pass it on, in confidence that it will prove a source of strength and inspiration rather than a blight on the next generation. (207)

Individual experiences form a global conversation, challenging every participant to ask and answer questions about the human condition. Herman also acknowledges, “To study psychological trauma is to come face to face both with human vulnerability in the natural world and with the capacity for evil in human nature.” (Herman, 7). All those who experience and study trauma must face these things within their communities and within themselves.

As intricate as the connection solely between literature and trauma is, my approach to the issue required me to start on more familiar ground. I hope to push the discussion in a direction that few, if any, scholars have attempted. The intersection between music, literature, and trauma is uncharted territory. I expected to have my pick of articles on interdisciplinary approaches to trauma, and though I encountered plenty of papers on literature and trauma I found no results that included music. The lack of scholarly research on the subject was puzzling and challenging. I wondered: Was I way off base with the parallels I saw? Had it already been attempted and rejected in academia?

What I discovered was that no one with my background had formally approached the topic. As a lifelong musician and English Literature major, my brain is fluent in interdisciplinary connections.
Recognizing similarities in compositional structures between novels and pieces came naturally to me. My music teachers, particularly my mother, encouraged me to make my music communicate a story. My English teachers encouraged me to find the music in language. Lo and behold, a thesis on the techniques utilized by authors and composers when engaging with trauma was formulated.

For as long as there has been strife and trauma, there has been art created to challenge, understand, and cope with it. Though Laurie Vickroy says “Writers have created a number of narrative strategies to represent a conflicted or incomplete relation to memory, including textual gaps (both in the page layout and content), repetition, breaks in linear time, shifting viewpoints, and a focus on visual images and affective states.” (Vickroy, 29), writers do not have the monopoly on said strategies. Just as Vonnegut, O’Brien, and Foer construct their novels, composers such as Tchaikovsky, Ives, and Penderecki utilize similar compositional strategies for communicating the turbulent emotions and reactions to war. Juxtaposition of themes, non-traditional narrative structure, and the search for answers all translate clearly between text and score. Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried* and Peter Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture* employ juxtaposition of themes to great effect. The non-linear and non-traditional structure of Kurt Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* is also utilized in Krzysztof Penderecki’s *Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima*. The timeless search for meaning shapes Jonathan Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, as well as Charles Ives’s *The Unanswered Question*. Sections II, III, and IV will discuss the pairings, section V will consider the impact of these connections and the questions they create, and section VI will conclude the paper.

II.

**Piece: 1812 Overture**

Composer: Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky

Link: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbxgYtcNxE8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbxgYtcNxE8)

Text: *The Things They Carried*

Author: Tim O’Brien

The *1812 Overture* was written in 1880 to commemorate Russia’s successful defense against Napoleon’s invading Army in 1812. Tim O’Brien’s *The Things They Carried*, first published in 1990, tells a story about the Vietnam War. I have paired the two because both works utilize masterful juxtaposition of themes. In O’Brien’s text beautiful language is used to describe intimate scenes of horror,
while in Tchaikovsky’s overture the musical voices layer the mournful, agitated, and joyous. O’Brien describes significant events in snapshots, turning them into stories from which readers can take what they need. Tchaikovsky uses musical snapshots to tell the story of his *1812 Overture*.

An elegy opens the overture, smooth and heavy in the strings. Moving deliberately and in unison, the strings take the audience to a calm scene, possibly evoking the image of a few soldiers watching as their brothers in arms are carried away. The heaviness of the music parallels the burdens carried by those who survive. O’Brien identifies burden as “…all the emotional baggage of men who might die. Greif, terror, love, longing—these were intangibles, but the intangibles had their own mass and specific gravity, they had tangible weight.” (O’Brien, 20). Both the author and composer express the heavy burdens carried by trauma survivors.

The elegy builds, adding the voices of the winds until at 2:20 the winds take the melody and the strings grow agitated. The strings push the orchestra along as a clamor builds in the winds and brass. The somber elegy is temporarily left behind as the musical voices tumble over each other until 3:45 when the lone snare drum begins, and the brass enter with their famous fanfare.

O’Brien’s repetition drives his narrative as well. He recalls sitting at the typewriter trying to write this story saying, “... as I write about these things the remembering is turned into a kind of rehappening...The bad stuff never stops happening: it lives in its own dimension, replaying itself over and over.”(O’Brien, 31). Music lets listeners vicariously experience the trauma. It enables us to feel the anxiety, face the discomfort, and reconcile our lives with the knowledge of these sad and terrible things. Approaching the four minute mark, the military drum rhythms begin, layered by trumpets and strings intended perhaps to emulate a flag waving in the wind.

One of O’Brien’s concerns is that a war story must tell the truth. The truth of war is not beautiful and it is not all glorious. A war story must encapsulate the grit and pain. Tchaikovsky explores the different tones of warfare, juxtaposing battle themes with themes of mourning, pride, and beauty. The beautiful thing that music can do is communicate multiple threads at the same time.

Under the military theme, the strings return with sweeping voices, providing beautiful melodic contrast. However, the section is brief and quickly becomes dark and frantic. Only a third of the way through the piece Tchaikovsky has created an emotional minefield. An average listener is now unsure of what comes next. The brass fanfare returns, but isn’t exactly right, the intervals slightly different. The
whole orchestra hurtles towards what a virgin listener might think is the climax of the piece. O’Brien warns:

If at the end of a war story you feel uplifted, or if you feel that some small bit of rectitude has been salvaged from the larger waste, then you have been made the victim of a very old and terrible lie. There is no rectitude whatsoever. There is no virtue. (65)

In keeping with the telling of a true war story it would be impossible for the overture to end around the six-minute mark. By 6:20 the military brass fanfare begins descending lines and fades. The following section returns to the strings. Time 6:40 marks a passionate and beautiful melody that soothes where the previous section unsettled. Listeners realize that:

After a firefight, there is always the immense pleasure of aliveness...There is a kind of largeness to it, a kind of godliness...you are filled with a hard, aching love for how the world could be and always should be, but now is not. (78)

After making it through the intensity of the military theme, the audience is relieved to be surrounded by beauty, for however long they can have it.

A war is not won in a single battle. The losses are just as powerful as the victories and ceasefires, and Tchaikovsky does not ignore this. There is a push and pull to the music that is as moving as the way O’Brien’s stories combine graphic violence with artistic word choice. O’Brien tells the story of the first man he killed, with the graphic description of the grenade effects juxtaposed with descriptions of beauty:

...his fingernails were clean, the skin at his left cheek was peeled back in three ragged strips, his right cheek was smooth and hairless, there was a butterfly on his chin, his neck was open to the spinal cord and the blood there was thick and shiny and it was this wound that had killed him. (118)

In each medium, the unsettling is layered with the beautiful; the pain and guilt are surrounded by a fervent wish for safety and victory.

In the overture the string melody morphs into a folk dance, but by 8:55 the piece returns to mounting tension. The military zeal and the emphatic string lines repeat the cycle from earlier in the piece, but once the folk dance winds down again the roughly three minute ending sequence begins. The ending is the most familiar part of Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture, incorporating cannon fire into the score. The technique is effective in offering the audience an almost full sensory experience, preserving the rush
and chaos of moments in war. By giving the trumpets the fanfare, the percussion the clashes of artillery, and the strings the adrenaline fueled action, every musician and audience member is fully engaged. As an audience member it’s hard not to close your eyes and imagine being surrounded by such cacophony in battle or in celebration. It is important to remember that the overture is a creation of nationalism and pride. It is war as recreated by a civilian of the victorious side. O’Brien’s novel is more subtle than the bombastic finale of Tchaikovsky’s overture. That being said, each man recognized and addressed the facets of a war story that make up the whole. Constructing their stories with attention to the painful, the somber, the hopeful, and the powerful aspects of a traumatic experience, O’Brien and Tchaikovsky grapple with the telling of a true war story.

The power of a story is immense, whether told through writing or through music. O’Brien says, “Stories are for joining the past to the future. Stories are for those late hours in the night when you can’t remember how you got from where you were to where you are. Stories are for eternity, when memory is erased, when there is nothing to remember except the story.” (O’Brien, 36). Additionally O’Brien views his story as a tool for preservation. To him, his story is where he can save a life by capturing the essence of an individual. He says, “In a story I can steal her soul. I can revive, at least briefly, that which is absolute and unchanging. In a story, miracles can happen.” (O’Brien, 224). Some pieces of music offer us this same miracle.

In O’Brien’s novel and Tchaikovsky’s overture, I see their miracle as producing something black and white, absolute and unchanging, which takes on new life each time a different person reads or plays what they have written. As O’Brien astutely conveys, the telling of a war story in particular is a difficult thing to do. There are examples of literature, art, and music that are little more than tools of propaganda that glorify war. It would be all too easy to listen to only the last two minutes of the 1812 Overture and internalize only the celebration of victory without meditating on the losses preceding that triumph. Without the juxtaposition of the military fanfare and the opening elegy, Tchaikovsky’s overture would lose much of its depth. Without O’Brien’s attention to the complexities of addressing trauma and the myriad burdens carried by those who live it, The Things They Carried would forfeit its authentic voice. In tandem, the art created by these two men allow civilians to comprehend the magnitude of that which they could not hope to understand without experience.

III.

Piece: Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima
Composer: Krzysztof Penderecki

Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dp3BlFZWJNA&feature=fp"}

Text: *Slaughterhouse Five*

Author: Kurt Vonnegut

Grappling with trauma rarely happens in a tidy, cohesive, linear manner. Both Kurt Vonnegut and Krzysztof Penderecki abandon traditional narrative structure in the formation of their stories. Published in 1969, Vonnegut’s *Slaughterhouse Five* faces surviving the bombing of Dresden (February 1945), a center of culture and art with no military significance. Written in 1960, Penderecki’s *Threnody* (a song, hymn, or poem of mourning or dedication to the dead) mourns the victims of Hiroshima (August 1945) by attempting to give voice to the horror, panic, and grotesqueness of the impact of an atomic bomb.

Vonnegut acknowledges the structure of *Slaughterhouse Five*, saying, “It’s short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre...Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds.” (Vonnegut, 19). Vonnegut needed to create a character who could be “unstuck in time” (Vonnegut, 22) in order to interact with parts of a traumatic experience. The immensity of the traumatic experience is too much to face head-on, so Vonnegut and Billy Pilgrim bob and weave through the story. Billy Pilgrim claims interaction with an alien species, the Tralfamadorians, in order to approach engaging with the trauma that he experienced in warfare. The senseless violence and unnecessary bombing of Dresden, in addition to the other horrors of the Second World War, were beyond traumatic for those involved. For Vonnegut, “Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren’t necessarily fun.” (Vonnegut, 23).

Vonnegut’s technique of having Billy jump between fact and fiction, Earth and Tralfamadore, mirrors the disjointedness of traumatic recall.

Vonnegut’s novel is disjointed and jagged, a narrative emulation of Vonnegut’s mental and emotional trauma. *Slaughterhouse Five* encapsulates the death of identity, integrity, and relationships, as well as regular, terrible, old death. Vonnegut wrestled with writing the novel, feeling it impossible to write a book explaining war to an audience who doesn’t understand, an audience that might not want to understand. A linear narrative structure would be useless here, because there is no way to communicate the splintering and fragmentation of traumatic experience if one must go from story point A to story point B. Coherence and order are the enemy of the unhinged, and “No art is possible without a dance
with death...” (Vonnegut, 21). As each section of this paper demonstrates, sometimes the production of the art requires years beyond the “dance with death” before being sent out into the world.

Vonnegut remembers being in college, saying, “Even then I was supposedly writing a book about Dresden. It wasn’t a famous air raid back then in America. Not many Americans knew how much worse it had been than Hiroshima, for instance. I didn’t know that either.” (Vonnegut, 10). Writing about trauma doesn’t happen in one clean shot. A cross between picking a scab and draining the puss from a wound, trauma is revisited, retold, and re-understood. Re-understood here doesn’t mean that sense is made of the trauma, but rather that emotions and insights are considered in new light. It takes multiple attempts to make sense of the senseless, and more often than not the realization is that the horrors perpetrated by humankind are beyond belief. In the novel Vonnegut calls out the basest self as the self that’s able to destroy the noblest aspects of humanity, the self that has power in chaos.

In both Slaughterhouse Five and Penderecki’s Threnody, “Absolutely everybody in the city was supposed to be dead, regardless of what they were, and anybody that moved in it represented a flaw in the design.” (Vonnegut, 180). There’s death, more death, survivors guilt, more death, and an inability to reconcile the fate of everyone else with one’s own.

Listening to Penderecki’s Threnody, the audience has an auditory version of the meaningful and meaningless nature of war trauma. Penderecki’s Threnody was dedicated on the fifteenth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Just as Vonnegut’s novel required chaos to facilitate expression, so too does the Penderecki’s piece require a non-traditional structure. Coming out of WWII, composers like Penderecki began using twelve-tone scales (Hansen 259) and symbol based sounds in their compositions. Penderecki buries traditional counterpoint (relationships between harmonically interdependent voices) under new and unconventional symbol-based sound effects; Vonnegut uses Billy Pilgrim’s interactions with the Tralfamadorians to satirize the American attitude towards war. In each work the combination of traditional techniques with non-traditional structure is masterful. The effect of the techniques in both works is extraordinarily unsettling.

Scored for fifty-two string instruments, Penderecki pulls the horror of Hiroshima from every part of each instrument. Beginning with staggered entrances of screaming string sections, Threnody shoves the listener mercilessly into the atmosphere of the piece. Knocking and wailing begin within twenty seconds, and build until 1:50, when a siren-like effect spreads throughout the sections. It is extraordinarily challenging to make sense of the piece on a first listen. It is also very challenging to listen
to the piece more than twice in a row. The power of the piece comes from both the initial shock as well as from the visceral connection created as the piece continues. Some moments fade to silence, reminiscent of Vonnegut’s comment about the silence after a massacre. The piece does not have a resolution; rather, the orchestra diminuendos and fades away. Similar to Vonnegut’s last, “Poo-tee-weet?” (Vonnegut, 215), the audience is left in a state of suspension, hoping for closure that does not come. There is, however, a story created in the chaos. It is not my place to offer a definitive story because it occurs differently for me than it might for someone else.

When I listen to Threnody I hear every single scream and cry, I see the cloud, I smell the flesh, and I taste the shame of annihilation. Just as with Slaughterhouse Five, by the end of my experience I am painfully aware of my conscience, my consciousness, and the presence or lack of compassion in others and myself. It is so easy in war to dehumanize, to make the people you’re killing the enemy, the other. What I find so moving about Threnody is that each scream of strings reaffirms the lost lives as individual people. The piece is uncomfortable, chilling, and difficult to sit through. However, committed listeners will find themselves unable to walk away.

Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima and Slaughterhouse Five are challenging to get through. The use of non-traditional structures puts a large part of the responsibility in the lap of the audience. Without a comfortable narrative and without familiar musical constructs, the audience is challenged to make their own connections and create as much cohesion as they need to face the content. Both the book and the piece are relatively short works. Because they pack incredible power into a compact frame, Vonnegut’s two hundred and fifteen page book and Penderecki’s eight and a half minute piece remain titans in conversations about responses to trauma.

IV.

Piece: The Unanswered Question

Composer: Charles Ives

Link: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbArUJBRRJ0

Text: Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close

Author: Jonathan Safran Foer
When engaging with trauma, the search for meaning is omnipresent. Why did this happen? Why did this happen to me? What will make this right? How do I survive having lived when others did not?

Though not explicitly written as a response to trauma, Charles Ives's *The Unanswered Question* is uniquely suited to engaging with it. Written in 1908, the piece was not performed until 1946, one year after the bombings of Dresden and Hiroshima. Jonathan Foer’s *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* was published in 2005, four years after the collapse of the World Trade Towers on 9/11/01. The characters in Foer’s novel are impacted by Dresden as well as by 9/11. The inability to find answers to their questions or meaning in their survival shapes the interactions between characters. *The Unanswered Question* was not written as part of the dialogue between music and war trauma, but in spite of that, it speaks to the struggle of both Oskar and his grandfather Thomas.

Thomas survived Dresden but he was so traumatized that he lost his ability to speak. Oskar, in the wake of losing his father in 9/11, does nothing but speak. He talks about his life, follows clues, and he searches for answers. The specter of death haunts both characters, shading their presents and futures with the dark weight of their experiences.

To help draw parallels between the works, Ives describes the characters in his piece thusly:

The strings play *ppp* throughout with no change in tempo. They are to represent “The Silences of the Druids—Who Know, See and Hear Nothing.” The trumpet intones “The Perennial Question of Existence”, and states it in the same tone of voice each time. But the hunt for “The Invisible Answer” undertaken by the flutes and other human beings becomes gradually more active, faster and louder through an 

*animando* to a *con fusco*... “The Fighting Answers“, as the time goes on, seem to realize a futility, and begin to mock “The Question”– the strife is over for the moment. After they disappear, “The Question” is asked for the last time, and “The Silences” are heard beyond in “Undisturbed Solitude.” (1)

The piece uses the strings as extremely soft and incredibly distant sustaining note holders, like the third party who is always present yet unable to interfere. The solo trumpet is the one who questions. The woodwind quartet tries to pose answers throughout the piece, but they get more dissonant and frantic as they meet with no success. I see Oskar’s grandfather Thomas as the sustained strings, Oskar as the woodwinds, and death as the trumpet.
Thomas has four chapters throughout the novel. The first two are titled “Why I’m Not Where You Are 5/21/63,” the third “Why I’m Not Where You Are 4/12/78,” and the fourth is titled “Why I’m Not Where You Are 9/11/03”. Each chapter is a letter to his son explaining why he was absent throughout his son’s life and why he didn’t return until after his son’s death. Though his chapters let the reader know his story, Thomas’s inability to verbalize any of it hurts him. Just as the silence separates the “druids” from the rest, Thomas’s silence cuts him off from the world. Thomas’s pain pours out, unbroken:

Does it break my heart, of course, every moment of every day, into more pieces than my heart was made of, I never thought of myself as quiet, much less silent, I never thought about things at all, everything changed, the distance that wedged itself between me and my happiness wasn’t the world, it wasn’t the bombs and burning buildings, it was me, my thinking, the cancer of never letting go, is ignorance bliss, I don’t know, but it’s so painful to think, and tell me, what did thinking ever do for me, to what great place did thinking ever bring me?(17)

There is no answer to give Thomas. The way his silence causes him to distance himself from his own life impacts others, but he does not directly engage with Oskar until forty years after leaving his wife. As a shadowy presence lending dimensionality to the work, Thomas fits neatly into the role of “druid”.

Ever inquisitive, Oskar mirrors the “Fighting Answers” of the woodwinds. A fundamental part of Oskar’s relationship with his father was the solving of puzzles, called “Reconnaissance Expedition”(Foer, 8). The last thing Oskar’s father gives him is a map of Central Park with no explanation. The question that remains unanswered here is, “Is no clues a clue?” He shrugged his shoulders, like he had no idea what I was talking about.” (Foer, 8). Each time Oskar asks if something is a clue relating to the map, his father would just shrug. Oskar recognizes that after chasing down false leads, “I could connect them to make almost anything I wanted, which meant I wasn’t getting closer to anything. And now I’ll never know what I was supposed to find.” (Foer, 10). The winds do exactly this. They question, they try to figure out a puzzle that has no meaning, and they make a bit of a mess of things in the process. The dissonance of the flutes creates a feeling of frustration; things don’t line up the way they should. Both Oskar and the winds search for answers, which remain unresolved.

In trauma narratives the topic of death is often present. Though Ives phrases it as “The Perennial Question of Existence,” when confronted with one’s existence, one of the first concerns of the human condition is what happens when we die. What gives our lives meaning? What is our purpose as humans?
What is one’s role as a survivor of trauma? These concerns take a lifetime (and sometimes a brush with death) to address.

In *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* Oskar’s grandfather is silent and absent, but his presence or lack thereof influences and shapes the lives of everyone else in the story. Oskar’s search for answers drives his story, always trying to decipher the meaning of meaningless clues. In “The Unanswered Question,” the sustained strings exist on their own plane and the winds struggle with their futile quest. Never fully present, suspended in time, and lacking a voice, Thomas colors the narrative while Oskar’s pursuit propels it.

V.

I mentioned in my introduction that I am among the first to approach trauma through both music and literature. In this section I’d like to take the opportunity to consider how I came to be leading the charge, the different directions this approach could take, and the impact it might have on a community level. I hope these questions and considerations will generate further discussion and interest in the intersection between music, literature, and trauma.

In *Twentieth Century Music and the Past*, Eric Salzman criticizes the fact that “…we still tend to think of the highest forms of music-making as the purest—that is, the most isolated and detached from other forms of human activity.” (Salzman, 2). It may be this divide between classical music and other forms of expression that has prohibited others from seeing the connections I see between music and literature. In at least the selections from Tchaikovsky, Penderecki, and Ives, I hope the audience can tell that there is very little detachment from human activity.

In his book *An Introduction to Twentieth Century Music*, Peter Hansen quotes Penderecki as saying “Music should speak for itself, going straight to the heart and mind of the listener.” (Hansen, 405). To me, the whole point of music is to wring emotions out of our daily lives that allow us to connect with those around us.

Music therapy is an important avenue for trauma and recovery. The connection of music therapy to literature could resonate with a therapist who may have had trouble enabling a patient to confront their trauma. Therapists could find connections to their fields that might revolutionize their approaches to treatment.
Victims of non-war trauma such as domestic or child abuse, rape, or natural disaster might find a small measure of solace in outreach programs that use the parallels between media to bridge the gap between experience, age or even gender.

Perhaps the combination of music and literature could impact the delivery of treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder. Both the production and consumption of music-literature therapy could offer new strategies for coping with PTSD, maybe increasing accessibility.

Many schools implement S.T.E.M. which involves a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math. A few schools implement S.T.E.A.M. which includes the arts. With budget cuts and needing to teach to a test, S.T.E.A.M. is losing steam. It is vitally important that the arts remain an integral part of education. Music and literature classes have the power to transcend ethnicity, gender, race, age, political boundaries, language barriers, and academic disciplines. Without exposure to the interdisciplinary connections created by music and literature, kids lack role models. Without a diverse set of role models, some children will think that they can’t do X, because they haven’t seen anybody who looks like them or acts like them doing X. If schools required one course in music, literature, and trauma (or a course like it), our education system might produce more empathetic, globally aware citizens.

VI.

Global awareness is a necessary component when discussing trauma. The events addressed in sections II, III, and IV included the Vietnam War, World War II, and 9/11. Though the authors related their stories through one or two individuals, audiences must not forget that these events resulted in global trauma. People all over the world were rocked by the atrocities resulting from these events. Yes, it is important to address the individual traumas involved, but the global responses are just as significant.

Addressing the tragedy that has defined my generation, the reaction to 9/11 was overwhelmingly powerful. Free concerts were held across the country. Classical pieces that have comforted mourners for centuries surrounded concertgoers, soothing the raw edges of anger and grief. Barber’s Adagio, the Brahms Requiem, and Beethoven’s 9th Symphony all enabled temporary communities of healing to form.

Poetry readings were held, speeches were given, and people turned to music and literature to try to make sense of anything. The interplay between literature and music is vital, as they inform one another across time and space. All artists must search for a method for internalizing and understanding human emotions and collective trauma, as well as a method for grappling with personal trauma. Individuals must decide what works for them, but it is clear that some methods are not limited to a single
artistic form. Through music and literature artists employ the juxtaposition of themes and non-traditional structure in a search for understanding.

I have always believed that, “where words fail, music speaks” (Hans Christian Anderson). Nothing illustrates my point better than the conversations between music and text. The works of Tchaikovsky, Penderecki, Ives, O’Brien, Vonnegut, and Foer endeavor to communicate the complexities of traumatic narrative. By pairing them off I hoped that one would speak where the other went silent.

It is my fervent wish that this initial foray into the discussion of trauma theory opens doors for others with similar interests. The confluence of trauma theory and literary theory is well developed and growing steadily, and I’d like for the addition of music to gain momentum. I hope the ideas offered in this paper inspire at least one other person to use what they know most intimately to join the conversation. More questions than answers may arise, but an interdisciplinary approach to trauma is sure to make those answers count.

Works Cited


Adventure is Out There
Sarah Backus
Vicious Human Nature

Rachel Andriunas

What is the most dangerous animal?

You.

In David Livingstone Smith’s book, *The Most Dangerous Animal*, he explores the violence in human nature, specifically war. No one wants to admit that humans are violent by nature. We would rather lie to ourselves and go on believing that humans are good and compassionate than face the truth about our nature. We, as human beings, need to understand that we are violent by nature and that we are constantly lying to ourselves about it.

When looking for the truth about our human nature, we turn to evolution. Social animals are usually xenophobic, a genetic trait exhibiting hostility toward strangers. Because social animals are so closely bonded to their communities, “contact with a stranger of the same species is the most potent trigger for aggressive behavior among nonhuman animals, and it has been observed in virtually every species with complex social lives” including our closest primate cousin, the common chimpanzee (Smith 74). This gene or trait of xenophobia has been passed down from our primate relatives to us and is now embedded in our genetic core. This shows that humans are inherently vicious towards others who are not part of their communities.

We see violence towards those who are not part of our own communities in human history through discrimination and segregation when it comes to those who are different in some way. Psychological studies have been done to investigate this part of our human nature. Psychological scientist, Kiley Hamlin, conducted a study on infants who have not yet been completely influenced by the judgmental world. The study showed that the infants had a
preference for puppets who liked the same food as they did and were prejudiced against the ones who did not ("Babies Prefer Individuals Who Harm Those That Aren't like Them"). They had this preference because of the innate connection that all humans have with those who are like them and therefore a disconnection or separation with those who are different. And this is why we have a more aggressive behavior towards strangers or those outside of our communities.

If we only look at the biological side, competition and killing other members of our community makes sense. We biologically want to spread our genes by taking out our competition and weakening our neighbors, so that we can have the best and most plentiful of resources in order to reproduce and pass on our desired genes. Smith paraphrased Winston Churchill who said, “Genetic history is written by the victors” (Smith 81). This quote is also true on a larger scale of communities fighting or competing with other communities. Our reason for war is to secure and protect resources for our own community. And after a war breaks out, the winning side will most likely be the community who was more aggressive and violent than the more pacifistic side. And the vicious warriors who won will be the ones to reproduce and pass on those violent traits. Therefore violence in our nature has prospered and continued to be passed along from generation to generation.

Hobbes, author of *Leviathan*, believed that the natural condition of mankind was that all men are equal. But this equality in a community leads to competition over resources, because the men will feel equally entitled to something and they each have equal confidence in themselves that they can win it. “If any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies; and in the way to their end... endeavor to
destroy or subdue one another” (Hobbes). The competition that arises between them over the desired resource will lead to war. This “natural condition of mankind” where everyone is equal inevitably leads to fighting within the community. But we do not realize that we naturally want to kill each other over resources, or at least, we do not let ourselves accept the fact that that is where competition leads.

Some people believe that human beings are not violent by nature, and they will argue that it is our environment that causes us to behave violently. By nature, we are the most social of animals and will control our aggression in order to live in social groups. And it is true; human beings are one of the most cooperative animals on Earth, and the only way that we have survived is through cooperating with others in our communities and working together. David Livingstone Smith supports this need for cooperation in our lives by analyzing how we play with each other, “only human beings play games in which teams try to defeat one another” (Smith 142). All other animals will play individually or one on one. Humans are the only ones who come together with others and work toward a common goal. So although we may commit violent acts towards one another, deep down we are naturally cooperative and we want to work together. But while we cooperate with those in our communities, a lot of the time, the common goal for which we strive is to defeat an opposing community. Even though we act as teams, we are still violent and looking out to destroy the other side.

Another argument of why humans are not completely violent by nature is Adam Smith’s theory of moral sentiments. This theory describes the natural connection of sympathy between all humans. Smith refers to this as a “fellow feeling.” There are two parts to this feeling: the psychological part where someone feels bad for another person and the physiological part
where someone can literally feel a dimmed version of what another is going through. If you are watching a sports game, for example, and a player gets injured really badly, you can hear the crack of the bone and you wince; you see the way the player’s leg is bent the wrong way and your leg feels a little funny. In the physiological component of sympathy, humans use their imagination to put themselves in the positions of others and react as if the situation were happening to them. This sympathy is in our human nature. So how can we be naturally violent, if the act of seeing another in pain literally puts us in pain as well? How can we go to war and kill thousands and justify it against our natural sympathy? The answer is dehumanization. We dehumanize the opposing side to keep our consciences at ease while we violate our natural sense of sympathy. The best way to recognize dehumanization is to look at war and military propaganda where the enemy country is portrayed as some sort of monster or beast. Seeing these kinds of things takes away the connection that we have with them as humans because all that is shown is a disgusting animal which we will not feel bad or guilty about attacking. And this act of dehumanizing our enemies in order to make it easier to accept killing them is just one part of the self-deception that we have when dealing with violence in our human nature.

Self-deception provides a “balm for an aching conscience” (Smith 109). This is so that we can still think of ourselves as good, compassionate human beings and cover up and forget about the evil, violent animals we are. We feel badly that we commit violent acts and so we want something to make it better. That something is self-deception, and we all do it. “Free will makes us morally responsible for our actions, but explaining humans behavior biologically robs us of responsibility and reduces us to the stature of mere animals” (Smith 20). So when we question why we are violent, the answer of human nature takes away the thing that makes us
human: having the power to control our behaviors. We feel responsible for our actions and so we cover them up with self-deception.

We refer to people who commit extreme acts of violence, for example terrorists, as madmen when actually they are psychologically normal. We think of them as insane because we do not want to accept that humans are naturally violent, that we are naturally violent.

“Purveyors of violence, terrorists, and merchants of genocidal destruction are... average human beings, averagely intelligent, averagely wicked... They could be your neighbors, parents, or children. They could be you” (Smith 4). When we see or hear about such extreme acts of violence, we comfort ourselves by thinking that only someone who is psychologically insane would do something like that. We use self-deception to reassure ourselves that a normal person would never have it in him to do something so brutal. When really “all human beings have the potential to be hideously cruel and destructive to one another” (Smith 4). Violence is literally in our human nature, and we continue to constantly lie to ourselves about it.

The “War Prayer,” by Mark Twain, is a direct representation of how we lie to ourselves about what war really is. When we pray for our soldiers out in war, we pray for their strength and courage. Twain vocalizes the unspoken prayer in everyone’s mind, “O Lord, our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells...” (Smith 108). To make it easier for us to accept what war is actually about, we focus on the bravery and heroism of our soldiers and we ignore the part of war that is pain and suffering. And we ignore the part of ourselves that is rooting for the death of the other side. We make up all these different names for horrible things that go on in war in order to make it seem like it is not so bad. “Today, we do not kill people; we ‘take them out’ or ‘neutralize the target’” (Smith 109). When we put things in nicer
terms, it helps to forget the horrid violence which is actually going on. And that is only one example of this doublespeak that we use when deceiving ourselves about war.

Smith refers to the phrase “know thyself” and he concludes that we do not really want to know ourselves because it is not what we want to hear. We only want to know ourselves selectively. We do not want to know that we are naturally violent, that we want to kill our neighbors; we do not want to know that we have been deceiving ourselves this whole time. No one wants to think of himself as wicked. And this is one of the reasons why we do not have a lot of research on the concept of war, because people do not want to find out for sure that it is a natural human need to kill each other. “[But] saying that war is driven by biology is not the same as saying it is inevitable” (27). Humans are the most intelligent animal and it is possible for us to overcome natural behaviors. But in order to do that, we need to know more about the topic and more about what exactly we are up against when we say we want to overcome the necessity of war.

We need to accept, whether we like it or not, violence is part of our human nature. We cannot be afraid of this side of ourselves. We cannot continue to ignore it and pretend we are perfectly good. We need to allow research on war to be done, so that we can learn more about this repressed side. “The more we know about ourselves, the more skillfully and effectively we can pull the strings that control our own behavior” (Smith 27).
Works Cited


My Philosophy of Literature

Brent Middleton

Philosophy and literature each have an important role to play in how people understand ideas. A philosophical treatise will typically examine the concept the author is trying to convey in a straightforward, organized manner. Meanwhile, literature does just the opposite; it seeks to display the author’s ideas more abstractly via the use of literary tools and various perspectives and experiences. In this paper I will look at the benefits of literature in philosophy, specifically how it can help one understand philosophy differently and in ways that a typical philosophical work could not. I will then look at the criticisms leveled against literature as a viable conduit for philosophical thought, and will question how meaningful its functionality is as such. Ultimately, I will argue that literature’s contribution to the world of philosophy is both meaningful and, to a certain degree, needed.

At its heart, philosophy is about the love of wisdom and the search for it. Philosophy has continued to evolve through discourse and academia since its inception. Outside of the discipline itself, however, philosophy is all around us. Literature is one of the many mediums in which philosophy finds a home. Like with film, people use literature with a specific philosophical vision in mind to express their ideas in a creative fashion. One immediate benefit of this is that it expands the kind of people who can become a part of the philosophical community. Once thought only to be suitable for serious academics, writers with philosophical minds but creative inclinations have now also been able to be respected for their contributions to the world of philosophy. Similarly, traditional philosophers have also been able to better communicate some of their ideas by way of literature. Though not as clearly stated and
straightforward as a philosophical treatise, literature is in the unique position of allowing people to more easily become personally affected by the content the author is trying to present. While one could read Descartes’ *First Meditation* and induce upon oneself the state of being he describes, it takes determination and focus to do so, and most simply read the book and try to *imagine* what he must have felt like. Literature has the ability to make the reader more directly *experience* the emotions and ways of thought that the author wants him or her to experience. Where Descartes only gave a straightforward first-hand account of his experience, the author of literature could better describe the doubt, loneliness and possible fear that come with the doubt of all existence with the use of descriptors. Such an author could also set up the character going through Descartes’ process in such a way that the reader feels a bond with the character, causing the reader to care more about their fate and, thus, pay closer attention to the process itself. Through the imaginative use of language, one could invoke the exact feelings that Descartes was trying to illustrate in a much more effective manner.

Literature is more effective than traditional philosophical works at aiding the reader in understanding complex states of being. This is especially true of first-person narratives, when the reader is closest to experiencing what the character is experiencing. However, one need not even go that far. In *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, a third-person narrative, Tolstoy successfully illustrates the problems that come with living a life based purely on what is thought acceptable in society. Using literature, Tolstoy was able to clearly communicate criticisms of a selfish life and a life without compassion. It could have been “easier” to simply state his argument for a compassionate life as opposed to a selfish one in a thesis or essay format, but it would not have been as accurate a depiction of what he wanted to express. By reading Tolstoy’s fictional
account of a man going through life and living it simply for himself and to appear presentable to others, and then to read the consequences of such actions, one can come as close to understanding the results of living a selfish life as possible. The mental agony and torment felt by Ivan in his final days of life could not have been better described by a philosophical treatise; there is a definite extra layer of depth that results from the storytelling and descriptive capabilities of literature as a medium. This is similarly exhibited in Ivan’s fury and disbelief that none of his family or friends would recognize that he was dying.

This natural tendency to distance oneself from tragedy is also explored by philosopher Susan Brison in her book *Aftermath: Violence and the Remaking of a Self*. A fusion of literature and philosophy, Brison first describes her experience being violently raped while on vacation abroad and then uses it to examine the effects of sexual violence on identity. In this, she describes how important it is for rape victims to retell their story as often as possible as part of the healing process. However, in the narrative Brison recounts the distance that almost all of her family and friends kept from her after finding out about the incident, and that whenever she tried to tell someone about it, almost everyone brushed it off or deflected the topic to move onto something else. Similarly, all of Ivan’s family and friends refused to accept that he was dying, and would talk about anything else but the obvious. Literature makes it much easier to understand such complex human tendencies and relationships as these; in a way, the narratives actually show the reader instead of just telling them, and readers tend to respond more to being shown than being told. Thus, the level of understanding the text and what it is trying to communicate is elevated.
In addition to being a way to impart the message of the author more richly, there are also practical reasons as to why literature works as a philosophical medium. For one, more people are willing to read novels than philosophical essays or treatises. Because of this, significantly fewer people would have read Tolstoy’s work if he had not chosen the form that he had, thus limiting the potential outreach of the messages he was trying to convey. Though this alone is not a valid reason to prefer the form of literature in some cases over philosophical texts, it may certainly make a difference to the author—not necessarily for sales, but for the reach of his or her ideas. Thus, some might choose the format that will result in the most people being able to engage in their text; this likely contributed greatly to the fame and notoriety of Dostoevsky.

There are several criticisms that can be leveled against literature’s value in the field of philosophy. One might argue that when the reader of literature is encompassed within the narrative, it is quite easy for that person to be lead to specific conclusions. The majority of purely philosophical texts present arguments that deal with possible counter-arguments, and then open the floor to criticisms. With literature, once drawn into the story the author is painting, it is sometimes difficult to step back and criticize the thoughts and/or actions of the characters if they appear to be justified. Something akin to being put under a spell, this is especially evident in first-person narratives, such as in Jean-Paul Sartre’s *Nausea*. As the reader sees the world through the eyes of Roquentin, it is easy to become lost within his viewpoint of reality. The meaninglessness of existence may come as a strange notion for most readers, but it is unlikely that it will be dismissed by most; in literature (especially when used in academic contexts), the author somewhat assumes the role of an all-knowing being. Because this
author—and, in this case, subsequently his character—is speaking and reacting to an experience as though there were no alternative, the passive reader will simply take Roquentin’s viewpoint as valid. Though most readers of *Nausea* presumably won’t apply such a perception of reality to their own lives, for the most part the philosophy that it imparts will remain unchallenged and unexamined. This is an experience strikingly different than one would have reading a philosophical work, which is almost always read in a critical fashion.

Another seemingly valid criticism of literature is that it inherently does something different than philosophy does. Philosophy, one might argue, deals with the rational, while literature deals more with the emotional. Literature allows the reader to directly empathize with an example of the perspective that the writer is trying to argue for or against. Philosophy can give examples, but those examples are not usually meant to be emotionally relatable; they’re just meant to illustrate a point in the argument or way of reasoning. This appeal to emotion that makes a point more convincing and clouds the judgment of people from interpreting things rationally is similar to what Plato warned against in the *Republic*. When arguments are not made in a straightforward fashion and are instead made convincing with emotional ties to characters and imaginary circumstances, especially if the readers are inactive, readers can easily be lead astray in their assessment of the ideas and principles presented.

While there is something like an authoritative author fallacy that can be found in literature, to assume most readers will fall for it is assuming a lack of critical thinking of readers of literature. This “authorial fallacy” can only occur if the reader is unaware of being lead in a certain direction by a narrative. Though literature may serve as a more accessible way for others to experience philosophical thoughts and concepts, it does not have to be a “dumbed
“down” version of philosophical treatises, and it certainly does not implicitly cater to a less intelligent audience. Although academics, students, and avid readers of philosophy may have the advantage of developed critical thinking skills, literature as a medium of philosophy can serve as a reasonable introduction to more critical texts; even if the readers of literature are not at first aware and critical, they can become so by this introduction. Of course, many readers of philosophical literature will not investigate the more academic, dry philosophical texts; but then again, they may not need to. Philosophy as literature can itself be enough philosophical stimulation for some, and while it is not traditional, it is nevertheless effective in engaging the reader in a way of thinking that may have been otherwise inaccessible. If one wishes for more people to become interested in philosophy and philosophical ways of thinking, making these more accessible is a logical way to do so. And even for those who fear that people not used to being critical of texts will fall for the “authorial fallacy,” one must remember that it is quite common for one to read one book, have an impression of it, and then read another that challenges that previous impression. In this way, even if people do not read philosophical literature critically the first time, they can certainly do so the second or third time after reading other philosophical literature. This is similar to the appeal to emotion criticism leveled against philosophical literature; though readers may form emotional connections to certain characters, this does not necessarily mean that they will not think differently about those characters after reading other things or reflecting after a couple read-throughs. It is somewhat condescending to think that those who do not typically read traditional philosophical texts are less capable of thinking critically as those who do.
Literature and philosophy do not have to be at odds with each other, but can work together to create a significantly larger philosophical readership. Though they go about doing things in different ways, it seems as though oftentimes philosophy and literature can have the same end-result: facilitating the communication of ideas, arguments and perspectives, and presenting different ways for people to think about things than they are used to. While philosophy typically lacks the “show” and literature the “tell,” when combined they can create true philosophical masterpieces that are not only rigorous, but that can be felt and related to universally.

Works Cited


I’m in a relationship with someone completely via text message. We have only limited face-to-face communication. No smiling and waving. No goodbyes or welcome backs. No spoken words exchanged. No shared space. No mingling breath and ideas. Just numb fingers tapping at tiny keypads. Just little swoosh sounds when a message is sent. A high pitched double tone when a reply is received.

We met when we were in high school. Hunter was the senior. I was the smitten sophomore with a puppy-dog crush. We were both on the same sports team after school, and whenever we talked it was just the basics. A “nice shot” comment every few minutes. A high-five here and there. Life was simple and we co-existed while we competed and we went home to separate lives. We were two happy individuals.

Then our phones met, and the simplicity ended.

Talking is dead. It’s all texting now.

With texting everything is supposed to be simple.

But it’s not.

Texting seems like an ideal method of communication. It allows for two people to stay connected easily with the push of a button. Just hit send and suddenly there is an instant conversation.

Or is there?

For Hunter and I the simplicity of texting meant the end of real communication. We became so attached to our phones that we lost the art of spoken conversation. Any time speaking on a phone is mentioned we always duck our heads and shy away. Forget about face-to-face communication.
Now, instead of talking on a cellphone, we use the little gadgets to update our Facebook pages, scroll through Twitter, double tap on Instagram, and hookup through Tinder. We live our lives through stupid little phones. We try to stay informed.

We text.

I text.

I hate it.

Some people love texting. Some couples manage to mix texting with real-life talking and the outcome is fine. But not Hunter and I. We text for different reasons.

He texts me so he can have an option.

I text him to feel connected. To try to convince myself that I’m not alone. But at the end of the day I curl up in bed, hug my pillows, and as I drift off to sleep, I mindlessly check my phone.

Why do I do this?

To reassure myself that Hunter hasn’t texted me back. To stalk his Facebook. To check Snapchat to see if he viewed my story. Only after that do I finally fall asleep. Before the darkness comes and I succumb to deep, dreamless sleep, I try to reassure myself that someone still cares. That he cares.

But I know he doesn’t.

I know he doesn’t care but I search for a glimmer of hope. I tell myself that in the morning I won’t want to text him. I promise myself that I’ll get over it. But then I wake up. I look at my phone. Maybe this morning I’ll have a “good morning” text. Maybe today will be different. Nope. And I realize how alone I truly am.

I put the phone down. I try to push my disappointment to the back of my mind. Five more minutes of sleep and I’ll be good. In five minutes, I can start over again. This time I won’t look at my phone. I’ll get up, shower, and get dressed without removing my phone from its
place on my desk. When I’m ready for the day I grab my phone. I don’t check for messages this time. I’m starting over. I’m forgetting all about him.

    My dependence on my phone is gone.

    I’m proud of myself.

    Then my pocket vibrates.

    Every time I feel that vibration I think that I will see his name on my screen. I long to see his name on my screen because that is the only way we communicate.

    I’m still stuck in this texting relationship.

    I despise myself for holding on to someone I should have let go of a long time ago.

    It’s all so annoyingly complicated. Sometimes it’s easier to blame him for my pain. I convince myself that he’s the jerk. He’s the one who started the texting. He’s the one who knows I’ll fall into his traps. He’s the one who knows how much I want to be with him. He knows I’m scared. And he uses my fears.

    It’s his fault.

    It’s my fault.

    We are both at fault here. We text each other when we feel lonely. When we want to feel connected we pick up our phones and text. We text for a bit. We argue. We agree not to text again. We agree that it’s over. But we know it’s not. A week may pass, maybe a month. But nothing will change. We won’t text, but we know that we can if we want to. We drag each other through the annoyance and the pain because we don’t want to be alone. Even though we fight and we disagree we plug along. We don’t delete numbers from our phones. We stay friends on Facebook. We stalk each other on SnapChat. We aren’t friends. But our phones are.

    We sacrifice our own peace of mind because we want to maintain the assumption that someone cares about us. He talks to me knowing that he will be frustrated. I talk to him knowing that tears will flow. We cling to our phones and the connections they create because at the end of the day we just don’t want to be alone.
But are we communicating? Technically, yes. Our phones buzz and light up with shared words and pictures. Communication requires so much more though. In order to truly communicate with someone we have to be willing to share ourselves. Communication is commitment. Texting is avoidance.

So no, we’re not communicating. We’re not actually opening up to each other. We’re not sharing our biggest fears over text. That’s not what we do. We fear sharing face-to-face because if we do that we can’t edit our personae. We can’t put a filter on our image. We can’t Google a quote that will make us sound witty or intelligent. We can’t show a fraction of who we are.

Face-to-face means we have to show everything. And sometimes everything is too much to show.

*Talking* face-to-face evokes emotion.

*Talking* means that our friendship has to expand beyond the wavelengths between our phones. We have to smile and wave at each other. We have to share space. We have to share ideas. We have to mingle breath and we have to recover the art of spoken word. Moving lips need to replace tapping fingers. Words need to be expressed vocally and emotionally instead of digitally. We need to start seeing each other as other human beings instead of letters, emojis, and names on screens.

*Texting* results in ruin.

When will something change?

Our relationship could be epic. It could be an epic romance. It would probably be an epic fail. But at least it would be something. Because right now it’s nothing. Our relationship is virtual. Yet I cannot call it a relationship because deep in my gut I know that it is a pitiful excuse of a relationship. It is pain, tears, and heartbreak. It has gotten me nowhere. I’ve been stuck in this pathetic circle of texting communication for years and nothing has changed.

And nothing will ever change about it until I become brave. I need to embrace myself before I embrace another human being. I need to feel confidence in myself before I can even
think to imagine that another person would be confident with me. I need to let go and just believe that I’m worth something and that someone cares.

Right now I’m just a lonely excuse of a millennial. I do things different because I’m too scared to let people see the real me. People think I’m shy. I’m just restricted because I limit myself. I create barriers and I overthink every little thing I do. I try to make my life seem like a movie. I desperately hope that my hero will ride up in shining armor. I’ve turned Hunter into that person. I try to convince myself that someday he will change and be my Prince Charming.

My Disney-induced dreams are dumb. They don’t exist in the modern world. My dreams are what make me cling to my phone. At least the Internet has glimmers of fantasy. My life has nothing. I have no one. I am no one. I’m scared. I try to make people fit a particular mold. I put on a façade each and every day. I build walls around my heart. And then I become upset when no one climbs them. When Hunter doesn’t climb them.

I hide behind my phone. I keep running from the truth. But I can only run so far.

Cellphones make running easy.

But how long will the race last?

*How long will I last?*
“Dude she ‘friendzoned’ me!”

“I can’t date her, I’m in the ‘friendzone’.”

“Once you’re in the ‘friendzone’ you’re never getting out.”

These are common phrases heard in today’s young adult males. But before addressing this absurd imaginary zone, I must ask, what even is the “friendzone?” This term is so ridiculous that even Urban Dictionary defines it as: “The ‘friend zone’ is like the penalty box of dating, only you can never get out. Once a girl decides you’re her ‘friend,’ it’s game over. You’ve become a complete non-sexual entity in her eyes, like her brother, or a lamp.”

Interesting. Yet false. This is obvious bullshit and if you believe this makeshift definition then I’m genuinely surprised that you’ve made it this far in your own romantic relationships and have not thrown in the towel to be a cat dude. I’ve never in my life heard a woman say that she got “friendzoned.” Frankly, why would she?

This term is fictional.

This imaginary “zone” was created by you idiot males, who are so focused on sexual endeavors that you would dare try to ruin and plague something as pure as friendship. There is absolutely nothing wrong with being her friend! And no, it does not put you in the” friendzone.”

Can you honestly tell me you’ve never ended up dating a friend? I’m willing to bet you can’t. It’s inevitable. If you say otherwise, you’re blatantly lying.
The basic idea of the “friendzone” is that being her friend gives you no chance at being in a relationship with her. This is not only false, but also shallow. Being her friend is the gateway to a relationship which will flourish more quickly and lovingly because of the bond you already possess by being her friend. Friendship is a pure and wonderful bond that everyone experiences throughout life and to make it seem negative by creating a “zone” about it is sickening.

The second one expresses interest in her, she will have doubts. Her mind will race to the questioning of your intentions, feelings, and compatibility. For lack of better term, it sucks. And because she is considering it in her mind, this mythological “friendzone” does not exist. Just because she may not want to pursue things with you at this time does not mean you are in a specified area guarded with witchcraft and nuclear weapons. You’re not. To be honest she’ll probably develop a crush on you the second you start to like somebody else.

Dave Matthews said it the best, “A guy and a girl can be just friends, but at one point or another, they will fall for each other...Maybe temporarily, maybe at the wrong time, maybe too late, or maybe forever.” All too often it is at the wrong time. Perhaps she is facing adversity or overcoming a personal challenge, perhaps she fears judgment, perhaps she is in a relationship and is scared to end what is comfortable, or perhaps she’s is fearful to begin something new. None of this means your chances have been shot into oblivion.

When did this “friendzone” even occur? Maybe she doesn’t even want to be friends with you. And why is it that our generation can tarnish something as genuine and pure as friendship? Turning it into a negative. Newsflash... “I don’t want to hurt our friendship...We’re too close of friend...If we broke up it would never be the same” are generally used as scapegoat
lines. They can either be tools used as an escape from true feelings or the exploration of feelings that may arise. Basically, a cop-out to avoid any complications that come with admitting feelings. Or they could be partially true.

So what if she doesn’t want anything romantically with you at this moment? Get over it! You’re an adult and you’re making absurd reasons and zones to explain why you got rejected. Your “friendzoner” did not make a conscious effort to emasculate you, hurt you, or piss you off. Perhaps she was just being real with you. Since when is that a problem?

“Dude she ‘friendzoned’ me.” No she didn’t. You’ve created this terminology to make yourself feel better and put the “friendzoner” down.

Grow up.
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Meredith Conroy, a freshman biology major in the honors program, is from Dracut, MA and plans to graduate in 2017 as a student in a 3+3 program. Academically ambitious, Meredith is in the Choir Program and has received acclaimed awards such as a Presidential Scholarship, leadership awards, and various local scholarships and awards.
from her home town. She was selected as the only teenager to be on Parish Council in her home town. Conroy has multiple essays submitted to the Writing Across The Curriculum program here at SHU, and after graduation she plans to become a physical therapist for veterans and she may possibly join the peace corps.

**Raymond Corriea** is a local senior from Shelton, CT graduating from Sacred Heart in May 2015. An avid gym and exercise enthusiast, Raymond enjoys a hobby in sports when he is not dedicating time to his studies. As a Media Studies major with a Music minor, Raymond received Dean’s List honors in the Spring and Fall semesters of 2014. After graduation Raymond plans to search for a job in the field of film or television production or possibly in the field of music, writing, and poetry. He has previously published with *Pioneer Magazine* and *Spectrum*.

**Carrianne Dillon** is a senior from Old Greenwich, CT, graduating this May. She is an English Literature major and a member of the Sigma Tau Delta and Delta Epsilon Sigma Honor Societies. She has been published in *The Harp Column*. After graduation, she hopes to teach and begin graduate school applications with the hope that time and finances will leave some room to travel in the future.

**Antoinette DiVisconti** is from Bridgeport, CT. She is graduating in 2015 with a degree in English.

**Danielle D’Onofrio**, from Staten Island, NY, graduates in 2015 with a degree in Marketing and Graphic Design and a minor in Fashion Merchandising. She is in the honors program. She has received many awards such as graduating with magnum cum laude, the Thomas Moore Honors Scholarship, Dean’s List, the Welch List Award, National Residence Hall Honorary, Sean Carter Scholar Award, Welch Scholar Award. She is also in several honor societies like the Order of the Omega Honors Society, Delta Epsilon Sigma Honors Society, Beta Gamma Honor Society. She writes an editorial for the *Imprint*, a fashion website. After graduating this May she would love to go backpacking in Europe.

**Eddie Feeley** is a freshman marketing major at Sacred Heart who is working towards a triple minor in honors, advertising, and theatre. From Walpole, MA, Eddie won the Coach’s award in cross-country when in high school and also published for his High School Yearbook and Literary Magazine. While at Sacred Heart Eddie is very involved with the Theatre Arts Program (TAP), and is the recipient of a Performing Arts scholarship. As for his post Sacred Heart Years, Eddie’s plan is “probably a job.”

**Chelsea Frenette** is from Prospect, CT. She is graduating in 2015 with a degree in English.

**Edward Garrity**, a Graphic Design major with a dual concentration in Graphic Design and Studio Arts. He is graduates in 2015 Summa Cum Laude, and is from Middlebury, CT. After graduation wants to a career in graphic design. He won First Place in the
Intermediate Graphic Design Student Art Exhibit in 2013, an Honorable Mention in Advanced Graphic Design in 2015, and is a member of the Delta Epsilon Sigma National Honor Society. His work was also featured in the April 22nd 2015 issue of the Spectrum.

Joseph Heenan is a Psychology major from Montclair, NJ. He is a Philosophy minor and plans on graduating in December 2015. He is a member of the Psy-Chi Psychology Honors Society, the Theater Arts Program and the SHUpermen. After college he hopes to either attend law school or graduate school to get his Masters in Psychology.

Willow Holschuh is from Wilmington, VT. She is graduating in 2018 and is pursuing a degree in English with a French minor.

Dennis James Hutt is a dedicated Nursing student from Branford, CT. Dennis was inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing and is graduating May 2015. After graduation Dennis plans to work in Pediatric Nursing in Aurora, Colorado before pursuing a master's degree in nursing. Dennis also hopes to join the Army or Air Force National Guard in a few years after he establishes his residency. Once he has that settled Dennis is hoping to volunteer for nonprofit mission trips to nations in need of medical support. This issue of Horizons is his first publication.

Jane Kenney is from Southington, CT. She is graduating in 2017 with a degree in English.

Samantha King is from Easton, CT. She is undecided and will be graduating in 2018.

Michaela Lachance is a junior for Cooperstown, NY who plans to graduate in 2016. An Honors student with an Exercise Science major and a Geriatric Health and Wellness minor, Michaela plans to attend PT school post-graduation. Her essay “Interview: Chronic Illness and Frailty” won the Third Place in the 2015 WAC Writing Prize Contest.

Caroline Leather is from Tinton Falls, NJ. She is graduating in 2017 with a degree in Sports Medicine.

Taylor Magnotti is from Wallingford, CT. She is graduating this May with a degree in English.

Mikaela Marbot is a junior from Hoosick Falls, NY. As a double concentration (literature and writing) English major in the honors program, Mikaela is working towards her Masters of Education as a student in the Isabelle Farrington College of Education. She is the Poetry editor for the 2015 edition of Horizons and was the Essay and Nonfiction editor for the magazine last year. As a result of her committed work ethic, Mikaela was recently inducted into Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. When not studying Mikaela spends her free time bowling and competing for Sacred Heart’s Division 1 Women’s Bowling team and was most recently name to the Northeast Conference All-Tournament Team at the 2015 Championships. Dedicated to academics
and athletics, Mikaela is a Dean’s List Scholar, a Northeast Conference Scholar Athlete, and was named an Academic All-American by the National Ten Pin Coaches Association for her commitment to academics while not on the lanes. After graduating undergrad in May 2016 Mikaela will remain an additional year at Sacred Heart to finish her studies for her masters. If she doesn’t not find a job in Connecticut shortly after finishing her schooling, Mikaela plans to return to her small hometown to being a local career as a high school English teacher.

**Brent Middleton** is a senior from Greenwich, Connecticut. Double majoring in Philosophy and English, Brent is a member of Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. Brent will be graduating in May 2015 and plans to join Americorps NCCC before going to grad school for one of his majors. He presented his creative work at this year’s Sigma Tau Delta conference. Brent’s essay “My Philosophy of Literature” was Co-Winner of The Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies Contest.

**Megan Ofner** is a junior English Major from Hamilton, New Jersey. She is assistant captain of the Women’s Division I Ice Hockey Team. Her other activities include the Student Athletic Academic Committee, member of Kappa Delta Sorority, Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society and member of the pre law club.

**Maribel Paredes**, from Shelton, CT, graduates in 2015 with a major in Art and Design. She has gotten 1st Place in Advanced Illustration. After graduation she plans on continuing to work for [Peperramma.com](http://Peperramma.com).

**Tess Pieragostini** is a Psychology major from Bridgeport, CT. She is a member of the Thomas Moore Honors Program and is a recipient of the Trustee Scholarship, Capitol Scholarship, Dean’s Scholarship, and Betty Pinder Memorial Scholarship. After her expected graduation in May 2016, she hopes to attend graduate school to become a school psychologist. She is a Writing Across the Curriculum winner. Her essay “Contextual Evidence: A Collection of Vignettes” won the Second Place in the 2015 WAC Writing Prize Contest.

**Mark Podesta** is an aspiring poet and fiction writer who is graduating in May 2015 and attending Columbia’s MFA Program in Creative Writing in the fall of 2015. He writes some reflective stuff in hopes to help others. It’s all very self-centered and egotistical, but it’s fun.

**Allie Potenza** is from New Canaan, CT. She is graduating in 2018 and she is pursuing a degree in English

**William Sanchez** is a Northridge, CA transplant pursuing an English degree with a writing concentration. In his junior year, he is Editor at Large for *Horizons* and the incoming Copy Editor for Sacred Heart’s *Spectrum* newspaper. He is a member of the Thomas Moore Honors Program, Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, and Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity. He plans to attend graduate school upon graduation, in hopes of an MFA Creative Writing or an English, literature MA degree. Writing allows him a safe
outlet to share his combat and life experiences while in Iraq and Afghanistan during his 14 years as a United States Marine and Government Contractor. His work has been previously published in Horizons.

**Leanne Scorcia** is a sophomore Computer Science, Game Design and Development major with a Honors and Studio Arts minors. She is from Islip, NY. She has received several awards such as the Pioneer Band Outstanding Freshman Award, a Greek Life Scholarship Award, Dean’s List and the Thomas Moore Honors Program Scholarship. After graduating she plans to go on to graduate school.

**Kim Snyder** is from Shelton, CT. She is an English major with a concentration in Literature, and she is a member of Sigma Tau Delta. She presented her essay at this year’s conference in Albuquerque, NM. Upon graduating this May, she will be working in marketing and applying to graduate school.

**Stephanie Sorbara** is from Freehold, NJ. She is a Chemistry major with an Honors minor, and she will be graduating in December of 2015. She is a member of the Thomas More Honors Program, the Beta Beta Beta National Biological Honor Society, and she is the treasurer for the GSE Chemistry National Honor Society. Her essay “Gut Bacteria and their Influence on Metabolic Disorders” won First Prize in the 2015 WAC Writing Prize Contest.

**Judith Tacuri Brito** is a Spanish major with a Communication and Media Studies minor. From Norwalk, CT. She plans to graduate in 2016.

**Linda Vichiola-Coppola** is from Bridgeport, CT. She is majoring in English with a concentration in writing and will be graduating in 2016. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honors Society.

**Melanie Vollono** is from the suburbs of North Haven, CT. She’s an English major in the process of applying to the education program. She’s a Student Union Manager and president of the English club for the 2015-2016 academic year. She will also begin as Perspectives editor for Spectrum and she is a choreographer for SHU FORCE. After she graduates, she wants to move somewhere warm, get a lot of tattoos, and smother the patriarchy.

**Matthew Wagner**, a grad student in the Education program at Sacred Heart plans to graduate with his Masters of Education in May 2015. Originally from Brookhaven, NY, Matthew had a successful undergrad career in athletics at Sacred Heart as the 2012-2013 Track and Field Captain, and he is the school record holder in Hammer Throw, placing 6th in the Hammer Throw at 2013 New England Track and Field Championships. Academically Matthew was inducted into Sigma Tau Delta English Honor Society, and he graduated Cum Laude. For now Matthew is a substitute teacher in Stamford, teaching Language Arts to eighth grade students.

**Taylor Walsh** is from Carlsbad, CA She is graduating in 2017 with a degree in Political Science.
Christine Zangrillo, a sophomore from West Haven, CT, is a psychology major at Sacred Heart. Christine competes as a sprinter on SHU’s Division 1 track and field team and made the 2014 Northeast Conference Spring Honor Roll. Christine’s devotion to academics also earned her spots on the Dean’s List for her first two years as a Pioneer and she earned the President’s Excellence Academic Scholarship Award. Upon graduation Christine plans to attend graduate school to obtain a master’s degree in social work to pursue a degree as a therapist. This is her first publication with Horizons, however Christine was published in the Anthology of Poetry by Young Americans in 2008.

Editor’s Notes:

Nicholas Aquilino is from Shelton, CT. He is the Webmaster of this year’s edition of Horizons. He graduated in 2014 with a degree in English. He toured Europe before starting a full-time job at People’s United Bank in Bridgeport, CT.

Mary Awad is the Creative Fiction/Drama Editor of this year’s edition of Horizons. A native of East Norwich, NY, she is majoring in Digital Communication and minoring in English. After her anticipated May 2016 graduation, she hopes to be accepted into the Fulbright Scholarship program for a research project in Kosovo or attend graduate school abroad in order to satisfy her desire to travel. She has written for Groove, a local New Haven publication, The Artifice, an online magazine for articles about games, anime, art, and pop culture, The Oyster Bay Enterprise-Pilot, and Levittown Tribune, her local newspapers. Mary is also a member of the Delta Epsilon Sigma Honor Society, NRHH, and SHU band program.

Sarah Backus is from Meriden, CT. She is the Art and Photography Editor of Horizons. She graduates in 2015 with a major in Media Studies. She has made Dean’s List, is a member of Kappa Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, and has received outstanding freshman, sophomore and junior awards from the Pioneer Bands. Her work has been featured in The MAX, and the 2014 Horizons issue. She is a member of the Sacred Heart University band program and has been a section leader for two years. After graduation she plans a career in the area of media studies or production.

Kaitlyn Bush is from Fairfield, CT. the Nonfiction/Essay Editor for this year’s Horizons. She is majoring in English, with a concentration in literature, and minoring in music. She is a member of Sigma Tau Delta and presented her paper at the annual conference in Albuquerque. She is also a member of the Delta Epsilon Sigma Honor Society. She will be graduating Summa Cum Laude in May with the Gold Medal of Excellence in English. She will be interning at the Capitol Theatre in Port Chester, NY, over the summer.

Mikaela Marbot is a junior from Hoosick Falls, NY. As a double concentration (literature and writing) English major in the honors program, Mikaela is working towards her Masters of Education as a student in the Isabelle Farrington College of Education. She
is the Poetry editor for the 2015 edition of Horizons and was the Essay and Nonfiction editor for the magazine last year. As a result of her committed work ethic, Mikaela was recently inducted into Sigma Tau Delta International English Honor Society. When not studying Mikaela spends her free time bowling and competing for Sacred Heart’s Division 1 Women’s Bowling team and was most recently name to the Northeast Conference All-Tournament Team at the 2015 Championships. Dedicated to academics and athletics, Mikaela is a Dean’s List Scholar, a Northeast Conference Scholar Athlete, and was named an Academic All-American by the National Ten Pin Coaches Association for her commitment to academics while not on the lanes. After graduating undergrad in May 2016 Mikaela will remain an additional year at Sacred Heart to finish her studies for her masters. If she doesn’t not find a job in Connecticut shortly after finishing her schooling, Mikaela plans to return to her small hometown to being a local career as a high school English teacher.

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