



The Marshall Review

The Marshall Review

2010

A COLLECTION OF AWARD-WINNING ESSAYS, STORIES,
AND POEMS WRITTEN
BY STUDENTS OF
MARSHALL UNIVERSITY

MARSHALL UNIVERSITY — THE COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS
Huntington, WV

Marshall University
The College of Liberal Arts
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FOREWORD

This book is a tribute to good writing as the following essays, stories, and poems represent the work of students who received one of the William J. Maier Writing Awards for 2010. Winning one of these prizes is a unique honor that affirms **the students'** dedication to what is the single most important skill that they can develop in college, the ability to write well.

Mr. William J. Maier, Jr., created the competition in 1972 after reading Dr. John Teel's *National Review* article describing the freshman composition classes taught at Marshall University. In that essay, Dr. Teel argued that students are best served when they read and then write about the great works of the humanities that are the foundation of the liberal arts. Great writing is evidence that one has the ability to learn from reading, to analyze and form conclusions by comparing and contrasting ideas, and to share these insights with others through clear writing.

The goals Mr. Maier established for this competition were simple. First, he wanted to reward good writing and provide an incentive for students to develop their skills. Second, he wanted to provide financial support for Marshall University students. Indeed, the awards have always fostered competition and camaraderie that make the skills of writing, a necessary and basic educational task, more attractive to students, faculty, administrators, and the general public. We are proud to maintain the legacy Mr. Maier created and to celebrate the work of our students and the dedication of our faculty.

Students submit their work throughout the year in the following categories: First-Year Research, First-Year Exposition, Upper-Division Non-Fiction Prose, Graduate Non-Fiction Prose, Graduate and Undergraduate Fiction, and Graduate and Undergraduate Poetry. During the spring semester, faculty in the Department of English select the winning entries, which are then

announced at an awards ceremony in April. We present these works in honor of Mr. Maier's legacy to the University and to the good work of our students.

DREAMS, ACTING, AND MARILYN MONROE

Shae Deskins

Marilyn Monroe once said, “A career is born in public—talent in privacy” (qtd. in Lewis 1). Marilyn Monroe’s beauty and charisma allowed her to get her foot in the door of Hollywood; however, it took many failed auditions and many letdowns to get Monroe to where she really wanted to be. Marilyn Monroe’s career, as she said, was born in public—everyone knew who she was and everyone wanted to be her. But when Hollywood failed her the first time around, Monroe took her career to the next level, moved to New York for the Actors Studio, and started working on her talent. Marilyn Monroe’s involvement with the Actors Studio made her the celebrity icon that she is remembered as today.

According to *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, by Donald Spoto, Marilyn Monroe was born on June 1, 1926, in Los Angeles, California, as Norma Jeane Mortenson (Spoto 13-14). Her mother was Gladys Pearl Baker (Spoto 3). In *The Unabridged Marilyn: Her Life from A-Z*, Randall Riese and Neal Hitchens say that little is known about Marilyn Monroe’s father, although there were a few men suspected to have been her biological father (Riese and Hitchens 33). As a child, Monroe didn’t have a good home life. Her mother was very young when she gave birth and found it hard to raise a daughter while trying to work full time to support Monroe. As a result, Baker hired a foster family to watch her daughter through the week (Riese and Hitchens 33). As she grew older, Monroe continued to be neglected by her mother. She was taken in by anyone her mother could find to watch her (Riese and Hitchens 33).

Then, in January 1935, Monroe’s mother was hospitalized due to a mental breakdown; she was later diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia (Riese and Hitchens 34). When her mother was

put away, Monroe didn't seem to be too upset. In *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, by Donald Spoto, Monroe says, "I was sorry she was sick, but we never had any kind of relationship. I didn't see her very often" (qtd. in Spoto 40). Because her mother was mentally ill, Monroe was put into the foster-care system. In her autobiography, *My Story*, Monroe says, "I was an asset to have in the house. I was strong and healthy and able to do almost as much work as a grownup. I learned also that the best way to keep out of trouble was by never complaining. Most of the families had children of their own, and I knew they always came first" (15).

Monroe finally escaped the foster system at the age of sixteen (Monroe 14). When talking about it in her autobiography, Monroe says, "I was placed in nine different families before I was able to quit being a legal orphan. I did this at sixteen by getting married" (Monroe 14). Monroe did exactly that. On June 19, 1942, she married a merchant marine by the name of Jim Dougherty (Riese and Hitchens 133). This was the first of three failed marriages. The other two were to Joe DiMaggio on January 14, 1954, and Arthur Miller on June 29, 1956 (Riese and Hitchens 313).

Before Marilyn Monroe made it big in Hollywood, she started as a photographer's model until she was eventually discovered by Twentieth Century-Fox Studios in 1946 (Spoto 110). For almost a year, she didn't get any roles. Finally, in February 1947, she landed a small role as a high-school girl in a minor film called *Scudda-Hoo! Scudda-Hay!* In May 1947, she was cast in another small film, *Dangerous Years* (Spoto 120-121). Neither film contributed to her or the studio's fame, so the studio didn't renew her contract. Harry Lipton recalls, "Her immediate reaction was that the world had crashed around her" (qtd. in Spoto 121).

After her short-lived career at Fox Studios, Monroe was sent to an Actors Laboratory. She attended informal classes, read about plays, and practiced scenes with actors who had much more experience than she did (Spoto 122). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Monroe received a couple more small roles in movies such as *Ladies of the Chorus* in 1948 (Spoto 141) and *Love Happy* in 1949 (Spoto 149), and she posed nude for a calendar. She played a small role in *The Asphalt Jungle*, which was her fifth film (Spoto 161). These films didn't take her career to the next level either. In *The Unpublished Marilyn*, John Huston, the director of *The Asphalt Jungle*, says, "Marilyn Monroe was one step from oblivion when I directed her in *The Asphalt Jungle*" (qtd. in Haspiel 24). She also appeared in *Don't Bother to Knock* (Haspiel 32) and *We're Not Married* in 1952 (Haspiel 35). At this point in her career, Monroe had been cast in several movies and was still not widely known.

By 1955, she had grown tired of her acting career not going anywhere. In *The Unpublished Marilyn*, Eli Wallach says, "[Marilyn] saw herself drowning in Hollywood in 1955" (qtd. in Haspiel 120). Monroe decided to leave Hollywood and moved to New York. While there, she established a very close connection with photographer Milton Greene, whom she met in Hollywood, and his wife Amy (Spoto 302). The Greens introduced Monroe to the many social and professional circles they were in (Spoto 302). In *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, Amy Greene says, "With us she had something entirely new.... We were invited everywhere and were doing everything.... She wanted to be a star" (qtd. in Spoto 302). Marilyn loved her new life. Jay Kanter, one of Monroe's New York agents, says in *Monroe: The Biography*, "Marilyn seemed to me very free that year, animated, enthusiastic, looking forward to serious work. She liked being out of the Hollywood film business. It was a time full of promise

and she seemed to me to be taking hold of a new life” (qtd. in Spoto 302-03).

Back in Hollywood, Monroe had met Paula Strasberg, wife of director and drama teacher Lee Strasberg, while on a movie set (Spoto 278). An opportunity arose while Monroe was living in New York to meet with Paula and her husband Lee about the Actors Studio that he owned and taught at (Spoto 308). She decided to meet with them; however, she was too shy to make an appointment through a phone call. Instead, Monroe asked two of Strasberg’s former associates, Cheryl Crawford and Elia Kazan, to recommend her to Strasberg (Spoto 302). In his book, Spoto says that the relationship between Monroe and Strasberg was as “important as any in her life and that endured until her death” (308).

In 1951, Strasberg was named director of the Actors Studio. To Strasberg, Monroe, and all the other actors that passed through its doors, the Studio was a place to explore, take chances and make mistakes, and get advice from other actors just like them (Spoto 308).

Strasberg and Monroe were meant to work together. Strasberg’s daughter, Susan, says in *Marilyn Monroe: The Biography*, “Marilyn was drawn to my father... because she understood human nature.... They were really destined to meet and work together” (qtd. In Spoto 313). So, early in February of 1955, Monroe and Strasberg began their lifelong partnership in acting (Spoto 312). Monroe wanted to start her life out fresh. Strasberg told Monroe that she “simply had to open up her unconscious” (qtd. in Spoto 312).

Monroe began taking informal classes on Tuesdays and Fridays at the Actors Studio under the direction of Strasberg (Riese and Hitchens 2). Strasberg saw that Monroe was unique from the start. She would consume herself in studying while at the Studio and with a passion no one had ever seen before. In

The Unpublished Marilyn, Strasberg says, “When [Marilyn] came to New York, she began to perceive the possibilities of really accomplishing her dream, of being an actress” (qtd. in Haspiel 167).

In spring of 1955, Monroe began private lessons in Strasberg’s home because she was too shy to speak and take part in class activities (Spoto 327). He gave Monroe the best, the strongest, and the most “parental-professional” advice that she had ever received (Spoto 327). He truly believed that Monroe had “raw, untapped talent” (Spoto 329). Many believed that Strasberg and Monroe had such a tight bond because of their drive to be respected by the people that had pushed them away. Monroe thought there was no one like Strasberg. In *The Unpublished Marilyn*, Monroe tells Gloria Steinem, a fellow student at the Studio, that “Lee Strasberg is a genius, you know. I plan to do what he says” (qtd. in Spoto 330).

In the summer of 1955, Monroe finally began attending the group lessons at the Actors Studio (Spoto 330). At first she was too scared to speak; however, when she did eventually speak, she really had something to say and offered her views and opinions on everything that was discussed. By mid-May, she was a regular at the Studio and was really beginning to understand who she was and how much natural talent she actually had. At the end of 1955, Monroe was more content with herself than she had ever been. In *The Unpublished Marilyn*, while at a New Year’s Eve party hosted by the Strasbergs, she says, “I’m beginning to understand myself now. I can face myself more.... After all, I’m a mixture of simplicity and complexes” (qtd. in Spoto 340). The Actors Studio and Lee Strasberg had transformed this girl into the huge celebrity icon she will always be known as.

On February 25, 1956, Monroe returned to Hollywood where she and the Greenes rented a house (Spoto 349). She was back where she had started and was ready to prove to Hollywood that

she was one of a kind. People really saw a true change in Monroe. Spoto says, “People noted there was indeed a new Marilyn, a woman more poised, with more self-confidence and assurance than before” (350). According to Allen Snyder, “[Marilyn] seemed content and more serious than ever before” (qtd. in Spoto 350). Marilyn Monroe was back, better than ever, and ready to make movies!

After her return to Hollywood, Monroe got right down to business. She starred in the production of *The Seven Year Itch* (Spoto 381). In 1956, she earned a major role in the film *Bus Stop* (Spoto 345). She also starred in the 1957 production of *The Prince and the Showgirl* (Haspiel 137). The director of this film, Sir Laurence Olivier, says, in *The Unpublished Marilyn*, on Monroe’s performance, “She managed all the business of stardom with uncanny, clever, apparent ease” (qtd. in Haspiel 137). Spoto says that Jack Cardiff, the cinematographer for this film, found Monroe “alternately terrified and strong...” (369). In 1959, she starred in the film *Some Like It Hot*, which was the biggest grossing American film for the first half of 1959 (Spoto 406). She played the star role in the 1961 hit *The Misfits* (Haspiel 120). Her co-star in the film, Eli Wallach, says in *The Unpublished Marilyn*, “Marilyn is not any one thing; she’s multidimensional. As an actress, she has a lot of imitators—but only Marilyn survives” (qtd. in Haspiel 120). She also had a star role in the film *Something’s Got to Give* in 1962 (Spoto 527). All of this success was credited to Marilyn’s attending the Actors Studios a few years before.

On June 1962, Marilyn Monroe made her last public appearance (Riese and Hitchens 117). In her final months, Monroe did a few cover shoots with *Life* magazine. On August 3, 1962, Monroe appeared on its cover, which would be the last time before her death (Riese and Hitchens 117). On August 5, 1962, Marilyn Monroe was found dead in her home by the Los

Angeles Police Department (Spoto 578). The cause of death was a drug overdose (Riese and Hitchens 136). Fifteen pill bottles were found in the bedroom when her body was discovered (Riese and Hitchens 136). Her tragic death shocked the millions of people she was adored by. A *New York Times* editorial says, “The tragic death of Marilyn Monroe shocked and unsettled the serenity of a summer Sabbath for many people in this country and all over the world. She was recognized and applauded sincerely by those who respected her quality” (qtd. in Haspiel 203). The *New York Daily News* also ran an editorial that said, “Marilyn Monroe is dead. Our hearts go out to her and to any who truly loved her. May she rest in peace” (qtd. in Haspiel 203).

Although Marilyn Monroe’s career was possibly improved by the Actors Studio, critics say she was a star from the beginning. In *The Unpublished Marilyn*, Leon Shamroy, the cinematographer who shot Marilyn Monroe’s first screen test, says, “This girl had something I hadn’t seen since silent pictures ... and she radiated sex like Jean Harlow. She didn’t need a soundtrack to tell her story” (qtd. In Haspiel 21). Her sex appeal boosted her career. In *The Many Lives of Marilyn Monroe*, Monroe says, “You know when a producer calls an actress into his office to discuss a script that isn’t all he has in mind If she can only get the part ... I’ve slept with producers. I’d be a liar if I said I didn’t” (qtd. in Churchwell 202).

Although some believe that Marilyn Monroe slept her way towards fame, the truth is she truly worked hard to get to where she was in Hollywood. With her dedication to the Actors Studio, Monroe was able to take her talent to the next level and prove to the world that she was as great as what she’d always dreamt of being. She was unique and unlike any other actress that Hollywood will ever experience. Evelyn Moriarty, Monroe’s former stand-in says, “[Marilyn] was the realest person I ever met” (qtd. in Haspiel 202). *Daily Girl* magazine says, “She was

probably the last of the big stars” (qtd. in Haspiel 207). Marilyn Monroe is eternally engraved in our hearts and minds and, with her successful acting career, will never be forgotten. Maurice Zolotow ended his 1960 biography of Monroe saying, “Her soul will always be restless, unquiet” (qtd. in Haspiel 207). Marilyn Monroe came into this world hoping she’d one day be a star, and she left this world knowing she was one.

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GUITAR HERO AND THE MUSIC INDUSTRY

Perry Cavender

Nowadays, no musical talent or background is necessary to become a rock star. All that is needed is a game console, a television, and a well-known video game, *Guitar Hero*. Simply plug in the plastic guitar, press the correct colored fret buttons and strum along to your favorite song as a virtual rock star in front of a large crowd of fans. Before long a “Guitar Hero” is born. This simplicity and instant gratification have made *Guitar Hero* an attractive game to those who either do not have the time to spend learning to play an actual guitar or would prefer to rock out in an easier, more modern way. Since its initial release, *Guitar Hero* has evolved to incorporate bands from all decades and places. Without a doubt, *Guitar Hero* has impacted the music industry in multiple ways and continues to be a well-utilized advertising mechanism for those in the music industry.

Guitar Hero was first released for the Sony Playstation 2 game console in November 2005 by Red Octane (Rocktastic). This original version sold an impressive 1.5 million units. When the second version of *Guitar Hero*, *Guitar Hero II*, was released a year later, its success was even more astonishing, with nearly 4 million units sold (Parker). Between the releases of the two versions, RedOctane was bought by Activision Publishing Incorporated for \$100,000,000. *Guitar Hero* IP's major selling point was fueled by the introduction of a wireless guitar controller, allowing the gamers to feel even more like rock stars as they gained further freedom in their movement. In August 2007, *Guitar Hero* reached out to even more gamers when an Xbox 360 adapted version emerged. During the same month another version, *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s*, was released for the Playstation 2. Shortly thereafter another version, *Guitar*

Hero III: Legends of Rock, followed. In June 2008 the first edition for the Nintendo DS was released, *Guitar Hero: On Tour*. *Guitar Hero* continued to expand the game consoles on which the program could be played as well as their list of different versions of the game. To date, *Guitar Hero* is available for the game systems Playstation 2, Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS and the Nintendo Wii. Now there are even versions such as *Band Hero* and *Guitar Hero World Tour* that allow friends to play together as a band with multiple instruments ranging from guitar to drums. These versions rival similar musical game, *Rock Band*. The newest adaptation of the game *DJ Hero*, a twist which involves a turntable controller, is aimed at those who enjoy hip-hop and rap music as well as aspiring DJs (Guitar Hero Corporate).

Undoubtedly, a musically based game such as *Guitar Hero* has influenced the genres of music listened to by the younger generations, who make up the majority of those playing these games. Jim Clark, a guitar teacher, thinks that “It’s refreshing, when you think of all those videogames that supposedly make kids want to go out and shoot people. What’s the worst that could happen with *Guitar Hero*? That you go out and form a band?” (Rocktastic). Also, Farhad Manjoo describes *Guitar Hero* as “juicing kids’ interest in guitar heavy music” in his article “*How ‘Guitar Hero’ Saved Guitar Music*”. The influence of the game’s music selection can even be seen in local clubs in Britain, where *Guitar Hero* is offered as a break from the dance floor. Additionally, as DJ Dan Ickowitz-Seidler notes, “[W]e did notice that when *Guitar Hero: Legends of Rock* came out, the DJs suddenly got asked for a lot of strange songs on the dance floor. We’d certainly never had a request for Cream until then” (Rocktastic). This is likely because, as Bryn Bennett observes, “These games have really changed what people are listening to, and video games are kind of pushing where music goes now”

(Cheng). This type of reaction is exactly why bands are now seeing *Guitar Hero* as a great way to get themselves and their music recognized, expand their fan base and boost their sales.

Guitar Hero's use of rock music was also arguably saved the rock music industry. With the various forms of entertainment out there today kids are less likely to spend their time playing a real instrument and more time playing video games or watching television, both of which give quicker gratification and are far more convenient. However, with the introduction of video games like *Guitar Hero*, many have been inspired to try their hand at playing instruments such as guitar. The UK's largest music charity, Youth Music, discovered that "of the... 18-year-olds in Britain who regularly play music games on consoles, around 2.5 million have been inspired to learn real musical instruments" (Rocktastic). Those 2.5 million kids may not become serious or even great musicians, but clearly they have caught the *Guitar Hero* bug and been persuaded to make an attempt at doing so, thus impacting those who teach music.

Naturally, guitar teachers are seeing how *Guitar Hero* has influenced its gamers to try and play the real thing as more and more students come to them wanting to learn to play the songs they have enjoyed rocking out to in the game. Rob Caviness, a teacher at Backbeat Music in Colorado, is undeniably benefitting from the game's popularity. Caviness has no complaints and even states, "Personally I've made hundreds or maybe even a couple thousand dollars on it, just because kids see the game and they want to go do the real thing." One of his students is an elementary student named Ben Eberle. Eberle has become a YouTube sensation with his impressive videos of himself playing the game and is an example of how the game is pushing kids to play a real guitar. After playing the game for hours he decided to try the real thing. From his many hours spent jamming on the plastic *Guitar Hero* guitar, Eberle notices how the game has made

the transition to playing guitar much easier for him in the sense that it has helped him with being able to stretch his fingers out sufficiently. Caviness even admits he can see how the game has in some ways prepared Eberle: “He has a much better sense of understanding of rhythm and his finger agility is more advanced than most other kids his level,” Caviness says of Ben. Caviness has been teaching Ben the Black Sabbath song “Iron Man,” a *Guitar Hero* standard, and “I think he’s learning it two or three times faster than the pace of other kids. He can hear something and just nails rhythms for it” (Manjoo).

Both those who simply play the game and those who take their gaming to the next level and learn to play the songs on an actual guitar are in many way creating profit for those in the industry.

The use of *Guitar Hero* as an advertising mechanism does not stop at simply having a particular group’s song on the game. Artists have found many other ways to use the game to their advantage. Among these are coordinating the release of the *Guitar Hero* game that features their song with the release of their newest albums and setting tour dates to pick up new listeners who have recently been exposed to them through the game or other fans who, having heard the new music, will be inclined to buy a ticket to the show (Rocktastic). The convenience of advertising through a video game by the masses has truly proven itself to be a valuable and effective strategy.

Guitar Hero’s impact on the music industry is also noticeable through the sales of music featured on the game. Evidence of the game’s impact can be seen in a recent survey by NPD market research. This survey revealed that “22 percent of US music buyers – and 35 percent of those aged 35 and under – had played a music game in the previous three months. For many of them the experience ‘[created] music discovery or [triggered] a digital-music or CD purchase’” (Rocktastic). Obviously there is some

connection between the exposure from the game and sales, so much so that the possibility of including a “buy button” on the games to catch impulse purchases has been explored (Palmeri). Moreover, Ted Lange, an associate producer for RedOctane who selects music to be used in the *Guitar Hero* games, testifies that many of the songs which are featured on the game do indeed see increases in sales on iTunes (Manjoo).

The game is so influential that Tommy Tallarico, a game composer, describes these video games as “the radio and distribution channel for the music industry of the 21st century” and those in the music industry are taking full advantage of this (Can Gaming Save). Initially, when the developers for the game wanted to use a particular song, they would have to go through a long and sometimes unsuccessful process to be granted permission to do so. Seeing the potential benefits, the artists and music labels are now coming to the developers requesting to have their songs included on the newer versions of the game. Some bands even decide to re-record some of their songs so they can be featured on the game or give permission for the game developers to use their original versions. Tim Riley, who listens to possible tracks to be included in each game, says:

We get calls from a manager, a label or an artist and they’ll say “Look, we’ve got this song here that’s going to be great for *Guitar Hero*, because it’s got these ripping guitar solos or this great melody!” It’s a big change from a couple of years ago when we had to explain why a certain song wouldn’t work in a game. Now everyone has played it enough themselves to understand the game, and they talk to us as if they’re one of the developers. (Rocktastic)

This reaction goes to show how quickly those in the music industry realized they could use this game to their advantage and

their willingness to cooperate after understanding the effect it could have on their success.

Current bands have proved *Guitar Hero* to be an effective form of advertisement for their new material. One example is Weezer. When their 1994 song “My Name Is Jonas” appeared as an available song to play, it experienced a tenfold sales increase. Also, the Boston-based band Bang Camero has *Guitar Hero* to thank for much of its success:

The band, whose music is featured in both *Guitar Hero II* and *Rock Band*, sells most of its tracks online, and Bennett (lead guitarist of Bang Camero) estimated that their *Guitar Hero II* song, “Push Push Lady Lightning,” accounts for almost 90 percent of the sales on iTunes, while sales of their *Rock Band* track, “Pleasure (Pleasure)” have quickly picked up since the game’s release in November. (Cheng)

These and many other bands have been fortunate to have the opportunity of reaching multitudes of fans through the game.

Not only have new artists seen increases in current music sales, older artists whose songs have been out for many years have also seen the impact of this game. One example of this trend is the music of Pat Benatar, whose song *Heartbreaker* is featured on *Guitar Hero III*:

Guitar Hero III was such a huge success that, almost overnight, record labels started seeing overnight sales increases in catalogue songs by the likes of Pat Benatar, even crazy stuff like Billy Idol or Spinal Tap, things which had basically sat stagnant and only sold 25 to 100 copies a week. Next thing you know, they’re selling thousands. That was the “oh, wow” moment, when labels could instantly see some sort of reaction from fans – and

specifically from a younger demographic, people who didn't even know who Pat Benatar was. (Rocktastic)

Additionally, "Same Old Song and Dance," an Aerosmith song included in the *Guitar Hero III* game, experienced a 136 percent increase in sales the week following the game's release. Also sales of the game for the Christmas season resulted in a 400 percent increase in sales of Aerosmith's song in the week following Christmas (Can Gaming Save). This goes to show how easily a generation gap in music can be overcome by simply providing the music in a way that is more appealing to a modern group of listeners.

It is truly amazing how a game such as *Guitar Hero* can affect various aspects of a struggling music industry. *Guitar Hero* has not only created a phenomenon in the gaming industry, but has also become a vital part of the music industry. This game has boosted music sales, and introduced new and old artists and bands as well as inspired its fans to try and conquer playing real instruments. Unlike most video games, it has been successful in releasing multiple versions that keep fans interested and hungry for more. Clearly, *Guitar Hero* does not plan on checking out anytime soon and will likely be an influential component in the music industry for years to come.

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HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINE VERSUS CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Kassie Cosgrove

Rheumatoid arthritis plagues over three million people in America alone (Shiel 2007). This debilitating and joint-destroying disease causes damage not only to joints but to organs, the blood, skin, eyes, nerves, and heart as it transforms even the healthiest looking individual into a state of utter immobility (Shiel 2007). Treatments have been developed over the years which involve pills, intravenously injected serums, and surgeries on afflicted joints, but none of these seem to be the “magic potion” for rheumatoid arthritis (Matsumoto). With no cure currently available for this autoimmune disease, caused by the immune system mistakenly identifying normal body tissue as foreign and attacking it (Shiel 2007), current treatment is all sufferers have to rely on in order to maintain their daily lives. Some patients are beginning to wonder if a more homeopathic approach would be better suited since western medicine has proven so faulty.

Homeopathic medicine is defined as a “medical philosophy and practice based on the idea that the body has the ability to heal itself,” according to Healthwise. This method of medicine was founded in the late eighteenth century in Germany (Healthwise 2007) and is intended to activate a person’s immune system to clear the ailment from the body without the need for harsh medications. Asian cultures are well known for their homeopathic techniques, which involve various potions concocted by homeopaths as well as acupuncture (Healthwise 2007) and the basic belief that regular exercise and a balanced diet will heal the body of anything. The use of this particular form of treatment is highly regulated in the United States by the

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) due to public safety concerns about the substances used in these elixirs (Healthwise 2007), which may actually be harmful. Cocaine, for example, was in medications for cough suppressant and cures for many other ailments up to the early twentieth century when people began to realize the highly addictive nature of the substance. This example illustrates the fact that many of the products used for homeopathic medicine are not well studied before being distributed to the public. Despite the tight control of what goes on in the distribution of homeopathic medicines, many tend to lean towards this particular form of treatment because it is considered natural and tends to have minimal side effects (Healthwise 2007). Many claim to have been aided by one of many homeopathic treatments from acupuncture, the placement of needles at pressure points all along the body (Healthwise 2007), to massage therapy, low-impact exercise, and mixtures of herbs and spices (Soeke 2003). No scientific studies have proven any significant findings about the benefits of partaking in a solely homeopathic course of treatment (Fisher 2008). Some physicians believe the placebo effect, a mental mindset that a drug is working when in reality it is not, is what causes people to experience less pain while suffering the disease, yet they continue to have permanent and irreversible damage to their bodies (Fisher 2008). Though these remedies can have a calming effect and cause few to no side effects, they do not seem to slow the progression of rheumatoid arthritis in any way.

Conventional, or western, medicines are expected to alleviate the pain and damage of rheumatoid arthritis as well as, if not better than, the homeopathic methods. Unlike their more natural counterparts, western medications for this disease are extremely powerful immunosuppressant drugs which leave the patient susceptible to a vast array of opportunistic diseases as well as a seemingly never-ending list of side effects (Matsumoto). A few of

these side effects include but are not limited to osteoporosis, lymphoma, blindness, extreme fatigue, headache, brain infections and gastrointestinal tract disturbance (Matsumoto). These drugs are so powerful and interfere so severely with the immune system because of the nature of the disease. Rheumatoid arthritis occurs when the immune system is out of control and needs to be depressed in order to decrease complications of the disease. Unfortunately, this means other ailments are free to take over the body. Conventional medications are scientifically proven with clinical trials and tangible data to significantly reduce and reverse damage caused by rheumatoid arthritis (Matsumoto). Up and coming medications are especially promising with the hopes of causing total and complete remission of the disease, according to the John Hopkins University Arthritis Center website, because they help to stop the overreaction of the immune system at the source, the cells themselves. No homeopathic treatment has yet been proven to interfere with any portion of the immune system in this way (Fisher 2008).

Doctors across the country tell all their patients that proper nutrition and regular exercise are key to maintaining one's health. The same is true of rheumatologists. It seems many physicians are attempting to attack the disease with a combination of homeopathic and conventional medicines because both seem to aid the patient in his or her recovery. In order to prevent interactions with the immunosuppressant drugs, patients would need to consult their doctors before attempting to begin any kind of homeopathic regimen, especially if they have other health conditions such as heart disease or diabetes (Soeke 2003). When these treatments are combined, more relief appears to be experienced for most people and, hopefully in the future, a mixture of these will prevail as the best means of treating rheumatoid arthritis before a cure is found.

As shown, research finds no significant benefit of participating in a homeopathic-only course of treatment; if anything, that only aids in the faster onset and progression of the disease because nothing is in place to slow down the overzealous immune system from wiping out the joint tissue. A mixture of conventional and homeopathic techniques seems to be the best bet for sufferers of rheumatoid arthritis to maintain a high quality of life while actually providing some kind of medical benefit (Soeke 2007). Proper low-impact exercise and a well-balanced diet are also key things which can work to help prolong and better an individual's life whether they have this condition or not. Unfortunately, no 100 percent effective treatment exists to help people fully recover from this disease, especially for those with the severest form. In conclusion, patients and doctors need to work toward the outcome the patient hopes for as far as utilizing conventional and homeopathic medicine.

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MONSTERS IN THE CLOSET

Tina Skaggs

The molding has been stacked in the corner of the kitchen for over a year now. Every time I think I am going to tackle this chore, cold fingers run up my spine as fear tickles my brain. This project requires the big scary tools that are the monsters in the barely open closet in the middle of the dark night, their power buttons shining red eyes jumping out to frighten a little girl into screaming and hiding under the covers. I do not want to touch them. Hell, I don't even want to be in the same room. These scary power tools, the various drills and saws my husband always warned me to never even plug in when he was not home because he really liked the way all my fingers were there for him to hold when he would grasp my hands.

As I sit drinking my second cup of coffee, I stare at the molding, hoping against hope there is another way, some answer lurking and hidden like the light that comes on to drive away the monsters in the closet. Reality and resolve come together by the third cup, and I know here is yet another obstacle and fear that I must overcome. Compared to losing my husband only a year before, this should be easy, right?

Thoughts turn to daydreams, and I remember our friend and my husband building our deck. They had used all these tools. If I can just remember how they set them up and used each one, I know I can do this. Then, all of a sudden, the light does come on in the middle of the darkness. Our son was there helping build the deck. He helped use the power tools. His dad was so proud he could run the saws and drills like a pro. Now I have a teacher and a helper. Step one accomplished! I now have someone who can give me step-by-step instructions. I know this will also be good for our son. He will get a chance to pass on something his dad

taught him. Now I just have to convince Nathan to place the safety of his mother's fingers in his hands. This may not be as easy as I thought. I type transcriptions for a living, and he may not like the idea of my hands ending up looking like hamburger, and so ironically no longer able to make hamburgers, much less bring home the bacon. It takes me about an hour to convince him he has the ability and confidence to teach me, and I have the discipline to learn. This is a very hard concept for a 15-year-old boy to grasp. He is not sure he can teach his mom how to use these tools. After all, there are no "do-overs."

We decide to start out with the drill. I have a basic understanding of how a drill works, and that immediately causes the sparks to fly. Nathan tries to show me how to change the bits, and I get all defensive. "I know how to change a bit! Give me that!" First fail of the lesson. I didn't get the chuck tight enough to hold the bit in so it slips and the drill jams. Contempt is not attractive on a young man's face as he looks down at his mom, who is about five inches shorter, and for the first time ever he gets to turn those words around. "I told you that you have to make sure it's tight. Are you ready to listen?" I humbly hand him back the drill so he can get the stuck drill bit out, and we try again.

Next is the jigsaw. I have used this tool before so this goes a little smoother. It is pretty easy to use and is perfect for cutting small pieces of wood. It has a straight blade that goes up and down like a sewing machine needle. Because I am an accomplished seamstress, this is a tool I can understand. Still stinging from the "I told you so" remark, I let Nathan give me all of the instructions before I take the jigsaw in hand. He smiles broadly and is quite impressed at how well I cut the piece of molding for the kitchen wall, until he figures out I have used this tool before. Then his face changes, and from the furrow of his brows, I get the distinct impression he would much rather be at

the movies with his girlfriend than wasting the day humoring his mother.

We decide it is time to take a break for lunch. What better meal to have than hamburgers and French fries with ketchup? That should take our minds off things for a little while. Nothing like bright red ketchup and chopped-up meat to ease the mind. As we are eating, trying not to think about how easily our hands could resemble our lunch, Nathan looks at me earnestly and asks, “Why do you want to know how to use this stuff any way? We do know people who can come and do this.”

I think very carefully how to put my answer into words. “Because when we get this molding put up and this project finished, Dad will look down and see how well he taught us, and he will be proud that we listened, especially you, Son.” My husband and I worked very hard to make sure we were always teaching and learning from our kids, so I was determined that I would carry on this tradition and remind the kids how much their dad really did teach them and learn from them. I never want us to forget him and his wonderful lessons and morals.

With a renewed sense of importance and pride, Nathan uncovers the miter saw. This is the tool that cuts the edges on comers so they fit nice and flush. This is a little tricky. Cut the wrong direction, and it is like trying to dance with two left feet. No matter how hard you try, it just will not come together smoothly. Using one of Dad’s old tricks, our son writes numbers on the back of each piece and draws the angle. Then I set the miter saw for the correct degree measurements and make the cuts. Perfect fit! That gets a high-five from my boy.

Finally, it is time to pull out Big Daddy. The pieces of wood we have to cut to finish up this project are too big for the jigsaw, and we need straight cuts, not angles. We put all the other tools away and clear off the work table. As he pulls out that big yellow box with the sharp pointed teeth of the circular saw sticking up

through the center, those familiar cold fingers dance up my spine and my brain tingles with fear. I begin to rethink the decision to let our son anywhere near this beast, much less asking him to try and teach me to use it. As hard as I try, I cannot stop the images flashing through my mind; blood gushing from the remnants of what was a split second ago a perfectly good hand; trying to find all the fingers; explaining to the ER doctor what I was doing messing with such a dangerous tool; and wondering how in the world a surgeon has such expertise that he can reattach the microscopic nerves. Once again, our young son looks at my pasty white face and, with a new determination in his eyes that remind me so much of his dad, he says, “Mom, we can do this. Dad taught us well.” So I grit my teeth, take a deep breath, and grab the first board. As the monster roars to life, the teeth of the blade whirring loud as thunder, we guide the board through. The board screams its agony as the sawdust blood sprays all around us, and I know Nathan and I have conquered more than one battle this day. The second and finally the third boards are cut. Tired but joyous, we put the monster back in the closet, and as he cleans up the sawdust, I pour us a fresh cup of coffee. With the battles won, we take seats on our front deck, and, smiling in triumph, we raise our cups in a toast to Heaven and know there is a very proud daddy and husband smiling back down.

MIDDLE-SCHOOL PUNK

Tyler Turner

If I had to pick a time in my life that I am ashamed of, it would be when I was a middle-school bully. I did terrible things to most of my classmates that I wish I could take back. I tried to apologize to most of the kids that I was mean to, but it did not really make me feel any better about myself. There was one kid that I didn't apologize to because I was too ashamed about the way I had treated him. The main reason I did these horrible things was because I thought I was cool, but I realized the kind of monster I had become.

I had made it through most of middle-school without getting into any kind of trouble. That is until I got into the eighth grade and turned into idiot. At the beginning of that year my friends and I started calling ourselves the Wu-Tang Clan. Just from that alone people thought we were stupid, which we were. We all thought that we were a bunch of hard asses that were better than everyone in the entire school. In reality we were a bunch of low-life thugs who picked on defenseless students. At the time I was having a blast. I thought that it was all fun and games. In the beginning, we did not do anything really over the top. Mostly, we played pranks on our teachers and all of the other students in the class would laugh. We would hide our teachers' belongings and rearrange the room when they left us alone in class. When people laughed, it encouraged us to do other terrible things because we thought it was cool to get the attention. We terrorized C-K Middle School. Our teachers hated us and they had every reason to. We got detention and in-school suspension, hell, a couple of us even got suspended. Eventually everyone that was not a part of our stupid gang hated us too.

After we had become bored with pulling pranks on our teachers, lunch ladies, and custodians, we decided to pick on fellow students. These were the same students who had laughed at what we did to teachers. The first student that I can remember the group picking on was a child named J.P. I do not really remember why we picked him first but we did. He was sitting as quiet as a mouse in the gym, not bothering anyone, and then we struck. We ganged up on him like a pack of hungry wolves going in for the kill. One of us found a tug-of-war rope in the gym's equipment room, and we decided to tie him to the side of the bleachers. Once we had tied him there, we grabbed as many dodge balls as we could and started to throw them at him. One of us even poured water down his shirt. I am not going to lie, I laughed like a clown at him. I remember at least once a week, we circled around two kids and made them fight. When the kids would try to get out of the circle, we would push them down and then they had no choice but to fight each other. We would not let them out until either a teacher broke it up or one of them started to bleed. We mentally abused a kid so extensively that he actually moved to another school. He came from a poor family and he looked dirty. That was why we made fun of him. None of us would sit by him in class or at lunch. I even refused to be his partner in group activities. We all acted like he smelled like rotten eggs and dirty socks. He did not deserve it, but I made fun of him anyway. Looking back on it, I don't think that he even smelled. But, being the ass that I was, I continued to make fun of him. When he moved away, we just started picking on another kid, and when we became bored with that one, we moved on to another. That same cycle continued until graduation. When the weather got warmer, the teachers would let us go outside after lunch. One time the sixth-graders had to go to lunch with the eighth-graders, and they were walking the track. There they were, out in the open just like sitting ducks. We ran all the way

across the field and beat the shit out of them. At the time I thought it was awesome but, like I said earlier, I was an idiot.

Then two events changed my attitude about being a bully. The first was an event that I am terribly ashamed of. There was a kid that walked home from school every day no matter how bad the weather was. I even saw him walking home in the worst thunderstorm that I have ever seen. As he walked home, I thought that it would be funny if I flipped him off. I thought I was a real tough guy. So as my grandmother's car drove up next to him, I extended my middle finger right next to his face. I did that for about half of the year, until the day when one of my friends asked me to go to our school's prayer session. I have never felt as horrible as I did that day. While the youth minister was going around asking for prayer concerns, I was cutting up with another idiotic bully like myself. I saw that it was the kid's turn that I had flipped off every day for months, and will never forget what he told the youth minister. That boy prayed for me, he asked God to forgive me for what I had done to him. I immediately felt sick to my stomach with guilt. It felt as though someone had punched me as hard as they could right in the belly. I could not believe that I had picked on such a nice and caring person. I felt like a little bastard. However, my bullying days were not over yet.

The second event that helped me realize what I had become occurred a few weeks later. One day after lunch we all went down to the gym to cause some mischief. We saw J.P. again sitting by himself, doing his homework, and we decided to terrorize him. We ran up the bleachers and surrounded him. The look on his face was that of sheer terror. One of the bullies pushed him off the bleachers and we jumped down and started to kick and punch him. It took the principal coming down to the gym to get us to stop pummeling him. He took all of us to the principal's office and yelled at us like we had just been sent to boot camp.

After he let us go back to class, I remember walking out and looking at J.P. sitting in the office crying. His face was black and blue and his nose and lips were bleeding. When I saw that, it felt as though I died a little bit inside. I saw his mom come in and tell him that everything was going to be all right, even though I knew she was wrong. I knew that we would still pick on him. Then I looked at my friends who had just committed this atrocity. It infuriated me to see them as they laughed at poor J.P. I realized that I had become a monster and I needed to go to being a human. So, the next day at lunch, I saw bullies throw J.P. into the bathroom to beat him up again. I knew that I could not let this happen, so I walked into the bathroom without saying a word and grabbed him and pulled him out of there. I walked with him up the bleachers and sat down next to him. I apologized for what I had done to him and he forgave me. I could not believe that he had forgiven me for all those horrible things. After I apologized to him, though, I felt that a weight had been lifted off of my back.

Since that day J.P. and I have become very good friends. I apologized to all of the other children but one. I could not bring myself to apologize to the kid that had prayed for me. I was too ashamed of what I had done to him. I know he would have forgiven me because he asked God to forgive me. I am too embarrassed to go talk to him, so I guess I will carry the guilt of picking on him with me forever. The main thing that I realized about my bullying experience is that bullying someone does not make you a man. The bigger man is the person that forgives the bully for his wrongdoings.

RUNNING A NEW PATH

David Caldwell

Many of us grow up around the same kids all of our lives. Through the school years we either get closer or drift apart. Our interests change. The kids I met in early elementary school I still call my friends. There are deep roots that have developed over time that cannot be severed. As I have grown, however, I have recognized that even the best of friends have to go their separate ways.

As a kid in middle school, I was an untamed free spirit that was out of control. My parents were always busy with work so I was able to run wild. My friends and I would stay out all night playing basketball and just hanging out. As we got older, we started to become influenced by our older peers that would hang out with us. The older kids were involved with drugs and took our crew of four under their wing. I remember a brisk, cold night in particular. My friends and I were sitting on the front porch of an abandoned house when kids wearing worn-out clothes came up to my best friend Kevin and asked him if he had some “green.” Kevin then went on to sell the two kids marijuana. The following night another kid came and bought from Kevin again. I was infatuated with the power we had over these kids and the money he was making. Without acknowledging any of the consequences, I began selling weed with my three friends.

It was my sophomore year of high school when all of my good times came crashing down. Because South Charleston had a home football game, everyone was partying before the game. I was driving my older friend’s rusted red Toyota, even though I did not have a license. He was really drunk, so he told me drive him and his girlfriend to the game. On the way we lit up a blunt and smoked in the car. As the thick smoke filled the car, I could

feel my body melt into happiness. As I stopped at a stop sign, I spotted a police car in my rear-view mirror. I began to get nervous but kept driving till I made a right at another intersection, but he was still tailing us. That is when I knew he was going to pull us over. I felt the sweat drip off of my boiling head onto my black shirt and then saw red and blue in the mirror. After I pulled over into the parking lot of a Wendy's, a tall African American cop walked up beside the car. He knocked on the window with his flashlight and I rolled down the creaky hand-crank window. You could see smoke gushing out the window, and in a laughing voice he asked, "Are you guys havin' a good time tonight?" I responded in a petrified voice, "Yeah, we were until now." Turns out he had pulled us over because the car had an expired inspection sticker.

The three of us had to get out of the car and were handcuffed as we waited on the K-9 unit. The cold shiny cuffs were so tight on my wrists that they left rings for days. I was traumatized as I heard the barks from the dog and the scratches of his toenails on the trunk of the car. The cops found a bag of weed in an old Kroger bag and a half-empty bottle of liquor in the trunk. We were all under age, so instead of going to jail, we had to call and wait on our parents. Coincidentally, my parents were out of town, so a friend, pretending to be my older brother, picked me up. This did not matter because my parents found out anyway.

My parents determined that the best thing for me was to live with my grandmother. Even though she only lived a mile away, it was like I had moved to a different country. My lifestyle was turned upside down. I still hung out with my friends, but once school let out I had to come straight home or I did not get any dinner. My after-school hours were spent doing household chores, homework, and watching the *Oprah* show with my grandmother. One time I snuck out because I could not take being confined to her house anymore. She found out and would

not let me back in. I spent that night sleeping on her cold concrete front porch. Needless to say I learned my lesson and never snuck out again.

One rainy day I missed the school bus home. I did not want to walk in the rain, so I decided to run the three miles to my grandmother's house. The next day a tall, muscular man stopped me in the hallway and asked me if I wanted to run track. He said he had seen me running the day before. This man was Mr. Redman, the athletic director at my school and assistant track coach. I thought about it and decided to join just so I would not have to go straight home after school. I was the only distance runner at South Charleston, so Mr. Redman introduced me to Brad Kohler, one of his friends with whom he had run at Marshall University. Brad was young guy in his early twenties, and he became my coach.

I remember my first track meet; it was cold, rainy, and windy at Laidley Field in Charleston. I was running the 3200 meter. When I toed the line with the other participants, I felt at home. The gun went off and the race began. I was in last place through the first couple of laps because I did not know how to pace myself. I heard in the distance, "Pick it up, pussy! Run with some purpose!" That I did and I moved all the way up to second place to finish my race. Brad trained me using the tools he had learned from college, and I quickly blossomed into one of the best distance runners in West Virginia. My junior and senior year I got superior to the point that Brad took me to some out-of-state cross-country and track meets to run against better competition. My senior year of cross country I went down to Charlotte, North Carolina, to a race that was sponsored by Footlocker. It had over a hundred runners from Ohio to Texas and everywhere in between. I ran like a majestic deer in an open field as I placed thirty-first and missed out on All-South honors by only one spot.

Brad taught me about the hard work, pain, and sacrifices you have to make succeed in running as well as all of life's endeavors. During the last half my sophomore year through my senior year, I slowly dedicated myself to running. I did not forget about my best friends, but I thought more about my past actions and my future goals. I cared and still care deeply about my friends, but I could not continue down the same road as them or it would lead to more trouble. Numerous times I would have to tell my friends that I couldn't be out late with them because I had to get up the next morning for a workout. I still hung out with my tight group, but I cut out the late nights and drugs in order to achieve something greater, an athletic scholarship to college.

It is a shame that a dreadful incident had to occur in order for me to re-evaluate my daily life. I am grateful though for the opportunity that was put in front of me by Jason Redman and Brad Kohler. They both opened up my eyes to the skills that encompass me. My grandmother was the foundation that turned me around, and she provided the hammer that was necessary for breaking me down so that I could be built back up. She instilled character and values that I previously did not possess. Every time I go home and see my friends doing the same old things it gives me more motivation to succeed in all facets of life.

THE FRAGMENTED MIRROR: *MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN* AND ANTI-ALLEGORY

Sarah Moore

I told you the truth.... Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality... and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own. — Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children*

Truth, fiction, reality, metaphor, history, nation, individual—these concepts lie at the core of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. Throughout the novel, the narrator and protagonist, Saleem Sinai, relates his version of truth — a version that he frequently reminds the reader is one perception of reality, one fragmented piece of the whole, like a shattered mirror. It is with these scattered pieces in mind that the reader can confront Saleem's segment, a story that tells of Saleem's own mirror-like qualities in his reflection of and union with India's history. This bond has been observed by a number of critics to demonstrate an allegorical relationship between Saleem and India. However, this claim is one which denies the complexity of the intermingling of the aforementioned motifs by limiting the text to one interpretation of literal meaning—a perilous assertion considering the narrator's own warnings about the dangers of a singular version of truth. Still, the presence of allegorical elements cannot be denied even by Rushdie who admits that *Midnight's Children* “clearly has allegorical elements” (qtd. in Kuchta 206). It is these allegorical parts which will be examined to identify their role in the context of the narrative. This examination of the intricacies of Rushdie's use of allegory will

expose the complications of literal and metaphorical meanings in the text, leading to the failure of traditional allegorical conventions in exchange for what is referred to as an anti-allegory.

Allegory is a literary technique in which the characters, events, and places of a text can be interpreted both literally and as metaphorical representations of another concept, person, place, or thing. In their literary terms manual, X. J. Kennedy, Dana Gioia, and Mark Bauerlein define allegory as having “two levels of meaning: a literal level that tells a surface story and a symbolic level in which the abstractions unfold” (4). This technique has gone through a series of literary movements. It was first made popular in the medieval period through morality plays, and its popularity among authors continued into the Renaissance. It was writers of the Romantic period, such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who defamed the allegory — a tradition which has since continued for writers in the Western world (Kennedy, Gioia, and Bauerlein 5). Yet the dismissal of allegory as a technique has not been followed by writers affected by the aftermath of colonization. Critic Michael Reder notes that “[a]llegory is a mode popular in traditionally colonial texts,” which were published by “[w]riters such as Forster, Scott, Kipling, Conrad, and Cary,” and which established a new definition of allegory that “has historically meant a way of speaking for the subjugated Others of the European colonial enterprise—a way of subordinating the colonized” [emphasis in original] (233). Allegory, as a result, has influenced colonized writers and carried into modern postcolonial literature, especially in India, where it has become a literary trend.

Rushdie’s position on this literary trend demonstrates his apparent disgust with the magnitude of allegorical use in Indian literature as well as the literary technique itself. Blatantly depicting these feelings, he states, “[i]n India allegory is a kind of

disease” (qtd. in Reder 236). This viewpoint is further exemplified in Rushdie’s response to typical notions of allegory and attempts to create a “veil behind which is the real text,” asserting, “I quite dislike the notion that what you are reading is really something else” (qtd. in Reder 236). Thus, he affirms his disdain for the allegorical form and content that make every text revolve around hidden meanings that might not be intended. Rushdie’s comments—though it is arguable that they should be treated with the same measure of authority as those of any other critic—hold considerable weight against the pattern of allegorical literature in India and the tide of critics who seek to stamp the allegorical label on *Midnight’s Children*. His claim that the novel was written with his disgust for allegory in mind opens the door for multiple perceptions that would otherwise be suppressed by the traditional Indian allegorical frame, which calls for one reality, one metaphorical interpretation of the literal meaning, one truth behind the veil (Reder 236).

This framework for multiple perceptions and multiple realities provides the basis for a technique in opposition to that of the customary allegory. This technique has been dubbed by Reder as “anti-allegory,” a term defined as “a style of reading that is invited by a text, a method of reading against suggested or typically allegorical figures and connections” [emphasis in original] (232). This technique counters the Indian allegory’s repression of alternate realities and allows for an intermingling of numerous metaphors and literal meanings that exchanges the two and results in a complex use of allegory, uninhibited by traditional allegorical conventions. An anti-allegorical reading also reveals Rushdie’s rebellion against the origin and function of allegory in colonial literature as an initial tool of colonizers. Perhaps the most essential aspect of an anti-allegory is its similarity to parody in mocking traditional allegory through

imitation (232). It is with these ideas in mind that the reader can discover the anti-allegorical aspects of *Midnight's Children*.

One of the first indications of the mimicking and parodying of allegory is found in Saleem's connection to India. In his introduction, Saleem describes himself as being "mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country" (3). This bond between Saleem and India presents a traditional use of allegory that is immediately obvious through the metaphorical representation of his tie to and imprisonment in his country which is also portrayed as a literal tie between the fates of both Saleem and India. At one point, he professes that he "was linked to history both literally and metaphorically, both actively and passively" (330), a statement that again makes this allegorical connection plain. Throughout the novel, Saleem reverts back to this connection and maintains that he is India and that he is "the mirror" of the nation (3, 160, 330). Again, the metaphorical and literal interpretations here reveal an evident allegorical declaration. The Prime Minister's letter that calls him "the mirror" can be read in a number of different ways. Saleem is a metaphoric reflection of his country's new birth, but according to the Saleem-India connection, he is also a literal reflection of India as the major events in his life will be affected by the major events in the history of his nation. It could also be interpreted that his private life will metaphorically reflect that of the public, just as he is literally capable on an individual basis of affecting history and his nation, as he did when providing the protestors with a chant (331). This untraditional representation of allegory due to the possibility of many realities exposes the rejection of traditional allegoric conventions. Not only does Rushdie present the allegory with a sort of self-awareness through its blatancy and concern with his own allegorical claims, but the use of allegory itself is thus

twisted in and out of traditional and re-fashioned roles in a manner that scoffs at the customary Indian allegory.

The reflective relationship between Saleem and the history of his nation can also be examined more specifically concerning the events of his life. The first parallel can be observed in the previously mentioned connection between Saleem and India, which was caused by the dual births of both Saleem and the independence of India. During his early childhood, Saleem as narrator notes how his efforts to grow up too soon had metaphorical and literal effects. These efforts could be seen metaphorically to cause, result from, or simply correlate with the “infant state’s attempts at rushing towards full-sized adulthood” (331). At the same time, Saleem’s attempts can be literally observed to have bowed his legs permanently (205), which metaphorically ends in the final downfall of the state. Saleem’s amputated finger is also pointed out as a connection to history in that both “rushed out in fountains,” but with the nation, “all sorts of everywhichthing began pouring out all over us” (331). Through this instance, individual metaphorical ties can be distinguished as well as the literal meanings of Saleem’s amputation and the literal affects of the nation’s “pouring out” on the people. These few examples suggest the many correlations and meanings—both metaphorical and literal—that confirm the anti-allegorical nature of multiplicity found within the text.

Saleem’s link to history also spreads across familial relationships as his family members are cut down in coordination with historical happenings. Saleem’s experiences during the Indian-Pakistani war correlate with the historical period. Though he states that he is “unaware of the intimate connection between the war and myself” (475), the description of his experience in Pakistan effectively exhibits this connection:

The terrible fatalism which had overcome me of late had taken on an even more terrible form; drowning in the

disintegration of family, of both countries to which I had belonged, of everything which can sanely be called real, lost in the sorrow of my filthy unrequited love, I sought out the oblivion of... looking for death. (474)

Saleem's hopelessness and grief lead him to search for death as his escape, an idea which metaphorically mirrors the typical moods of the people and the fragmenting of nations that occur in war. Still this allegorical metaphor for death carries further into the literal realm of death, because of the metaphorical connection between Saleem's family and history. Consequently, it is no coincidence that the majority of his family is literally wiped out by bombs, which Saleem claims are "actual or mythical bombs," "either a matter of fact or a figment of a diseased imagination" (474). Thus, the allegory is fragmented just as fact and fiction, reality and myths are indeterminable or perhaps intertwined in a hybrid of truth and untruth that is unequaled in customary allegorical frames. Abdulrazak Gurnah explains a further familial connection: As the "multiple Indian family is fragmented and at war, [Saleem] cracks (or soon will crack) into six hundred million fragments" (103). Thus, the motif of fragmentation can also be observed in the connection between Saleem and the people of India—which presents another type of familial relationship, considering Saleem's binding to the nation. In addition, the allegorical trope is overlapped and disintegrated, providing another counter to a traditional allegorical reading.

Progressing through this tangle of allegories, another example is found in Saleem's birthright. William Methwold, the British gentleman who portions out his Methwold Estates to various Indian residents including the Sinais, is also credited with being the seducer of Vanita, the peddler's wife, and the biological father of Saleem. Methwold's seduction of Vanita allegorically represents the seduction of many Indian women by

the British during the colonization period. Reder argues that, as a result, Saleem can be viewed as both the “victim” and “product” of allegory: “dependent on allegory for his existence... but, abandoned by his father, spurned by allegory nonetheless” (236). Furthermore, this event can be stretched to represent the domination of the British in controlling — raping even — India and assuming no responsibility for the resulting effects following India’s independence. It is also significant to note that Saleem’s explanation of this event is prefaced with Methwold’s description of his own “very Indian lust for allegory” (127), a direct reference that again mocks the conventions of traditional allegory through this narratorial consciousness.

Another evident aspect of this anti-allegory can be observed in Saleem’s perceptions of and reactions to the allegories that have been made evident. He is driven by the prophecies of his birth and the declarations of his connection with India (3, 330). Though he seems aware of his own conception at the whims of allegory, this drive stems from a sense of purpose and an obsessive belief in his own allegorical tale that binds his fate with India’s. Even as an adolescent, this attitude can be observed in Saleem’s actions as he questions the other swapped child of midnight and his rival in the Midnight Children’s Conference, Shiva: to whom he says, “The thing is, we must be here for a purpose, don’t you think? I mean, there has to be a reason, you must agree?” [emphasis in original] (305-6). Though heartfelt, his belief in purpose, meaning, and fate reveals his almost fanatical fixation (a fixation that Shiva laughs at) with his historical connection that can be followed throughout the text. Gurnah also identifies Saleem’s “obsessive delusion of centrality” and his certainty in maintaining purpose (104), yet Gurnah fails to relate this delusion to the allegorical Saleem-India connection and instead attributes his obsession to unsuccessful relationships—a solution that does not wholly encompass the

complexity of the issue at hand. Towards the end of the novel, it is possible for the reader to see through the cracks in his story, just as the fissures are opening and presumably disintegrating his body, since there is no evidence for his impending death except for Saleem's personal beliefs in his metaphorical and literal decay—beliefs that have been formed too literally from his individual perceptions of his history.

Another critical element in the narrative is Saleem's reconstruction of his history. His assertion that he is "literally disintegrating" as a result of being "buffeted by too much history" is one which illuminates the historical allegory taking place (43). His own historical past is metaphorically responsible for his difficulties in retelling it. An additional link is exhibited in the loss and restoration of Saleem's memory, the latter of which correlates with his surrender to the magician's troupe and the surrender of the Pakistani troop leader, Tiger Niazi, to the Bangladeshi leader (530). This example makes the metaphorical connection between the historical event and the event in Saleem's life, and it also emphasizes the literal effect of his "capture" on the re-establishment of his memory. Critic Todd M. Kuchta also recognizes the "subversion of conventional allegorical structure through the 'scraps, shreds, fragments' of memory" (205). As a result, memory can be observed in creating history, metaphorically and literally, and history can be observed in "buffeting" the body in such a way as to cause its ruin, which is also stated by Saleem to have been caused specifically by the Widow—the prime minister, Indira Gandhi (588). These allegorical correlations form a dense web of various metaphorical and literal meanings that again defy established norms by transcending the conventional Indian style that involves one metaphorical interpretation of the literal denotation.

Through these allegorical examples, *Midnight's Children* depicts the blending and fragmenting of metaphorical and literal

meanings, reality and myth, and truth and fiction. The result cannot be defined by one truth, just as one perception of truth and history cannot present an accurate portrayal of the whole. Thus, these allegorical examples are more effectively seen as anti-allegories: allegorical replications which challenge traditional forms through imitation, mocking self-awareness, and multiplicity of interpretations. Even more importantly perhaps, the anti-allegorical perspective reminds the reader to heed Rushdie's warning and be wary of single perceptions that assert themselves as the truth on a subject and to maintain a broadminded outlook that will encourage the unification of multiple perspectives or, to phrase it metaphorically, the fusion of mirror fragments, which will create a complete mirror and a more accurate reflection.

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A STUDIO AND TENNIS SHOES

Chad Pemberton

As I saunter into a jet black gym, a draft of nippy air whiffs through my thick, ungroomed hair, causing the hair on my forearms to stand up like a porcupine's **quills**. A stranger to this place wouldn't know what to expect, but the details are sharp to me: how the color of the floor glows like maple syrup; how the light fixtures dangle over the gym floor, with each one shining slightly different; and how the lone set of wooden bleachers rests dangerously close to the black out-of-bounds line.

This is it, though: the place that has taken pictures of my highest of highs and lowest of lows. When I squat on the bleachers, the cracking of my knees and the breathings of the gym resonate throughout the openness — I don't remember it ever being this quiet. I sling my duffle bag off of my shirtless back and scoot the bag across the floor. Reaching into the bag, I yank out my tennis shoes, a limber pair of navy and white Nikes with frayed shoe strings, faded handwritten inscriptions, and a rancid odor wafting from the inside liner. It's a smell acquired from countless nights like tonight. My nose crinkles; it's a bittersweet smell.

My shoes need to be prepped for the task ahead, so I tug at the strings and pry at the sides. I jerk the tongue forward, sliding my foot into the shoe. My index and middle fingers tighten each criss-crossed set of strings until I reach the top. Now, it's time to tie the bow, but I hesitate, allowing my mind to drift like a ghost, through the gym walls, across the gravel parking lot, to a slide show of my past.

* * * * *

Pouting on the couch, I clutched my new shoes, black and crimson Nikes, and chucked them at the floor. I won't do this. It's stupid, I thought.

"Chad, we won't shoot basketball together until you learn to tie your shoes," declared my dad with his eyebrows pursed. His words lashed against my ears. This time, he wasn't backing down.

"Why can't you just do it, Dad?"

"Because you're going to be in kindergarten in a month, and I can't leave work every time you need your shoes tied. You have to be prepared for the times when I won't be here." Unimpressed, I crossed my arms and planted my chin on my chest in disgust. How dare he refuse to shoot basketball. We do it every day.

Picking up my shoes, he tossed them in my lap and said, "Chad, if you want to play in the NBA, you have to learn to tie your shoes. Michael Jordan ties his shoes."

"I'll just pay someone to tie my shoes for me," I retorted. "Duh!"

"Well, when you decide you want to shoot basketball again, I'll be outside playing with Heather and Melissa."

With my dad heading toward the screen door, in a half squeal, half cry, I screamed, "This is stupid!"

* * * * *

Double knotting the bow, I slither down the bleachers until my butt meets the cold floor. It's difficult to know. Is that where it began—my acute attention to preparation? Basketball should be synonymous with preparation, the way I had to learn skill by skill in a particular order. My father was right (as he was most of the time): I had to be prepared.

Before I start my workout, I know that I need to stretch, but I hate stretching. No, I loathe stretching. But it's part of the preparation, a step in the dance. Stretching to touch the tips of

my shoes, a sharp pain rushes through my calves down to my heels. It feels as if two teams were playing tug-of-war with my calf muscles, both sides at a standstill, both hauling with all of their might.

Jumping to my feet, I wiggle my legs, releasing the tingling feeling from my cold muscles. Even though the room is lightless, I stride toward the light switches. It's like driving in your hometown—no matter how long you've been away, you always know how to get where you're going. The clicking of the switches and the buzzing of the heating light bulbs reminds me of an antique movie projector. This sound sends me to the archives of my memory, forcing me to replay moments from the sport I cherish.

* * * * *

Silence flooded the car ride home. It's the way it was after every game, but why did it have to be so silent after this game, I thought. As each second expired, my tears steadily rose from my throat to my eyes, like a bathtub filling with water. Trying to distract my emotions, I started to pick at my shoes.

Tracing the outline of the Nike check, I thought about the game, the twelve-year-old championship bout that I had watched from the bench. Each time the coach glanced down the bench, which seemed to lengthen exponentially as the game progressed, hope smoldered in my stomach. But my hope was dashed with each second that I sat staring at my teammates dice through the full-court press, at the way their smiles and struts were influenced by the raucous crowd. By the fourth quarter, I abandoned the thought of entering the game. I just wanted to go home. But with forty-five seconds left, coach told me to check in. This was like throwing alcohol in an open wound; this was when scrubs, the players who would never grace the court in a remotely close game, roamed the basketball court. This meant I was a scrub.

After the game, I had to sit through a thirty-five-minute awards ceremony. The room radiated fervor as players' names were called to accept accolades. When my name was called, I paused, allowing myself a moment to corral my emotions—I didn't earn a first-place trophy. Here I was, walking up to receive a first-place trophy that I didn't contribute to. I should have been thrilled that we won, but all I wanted to do was go home, to my room, to cry. To me, the trophy was a glimmering statue of my mediocrity.

On the drive home, I left my eyes on the Nike check. Allowing them to investigate freely would have been a ticket to water works. As I stared at my shoes, my chest brewed with shame—they were new. Mamaw bought me new shoes to wear in the championship game, and they didn't even work off a penny of what she paid for them. The metallic red tips of the strings glistened in the sun, accenting my blue-and-red jersey. I was not fit to wear these shoes or the jersey, I thought. Enraged, I ripped off the first shoe, but as I held it, the texture disturbed me. The lining felt dry as a cat's tongue—it's difficult to work up a sweat rotting on the bench.

Sensing the anguish seeping from my demeanor, my dad encouraged. "Congratulations on winning the YMCA tournament. Your name will be in their program forever, as a champion; that's something to be proud of..."

"I guess," I muttered, tears now trickling down my face. "I just don't understand why I didn't get to play, Dad. I practice every day, sometimes for three or four hours. Some of the starters on the team don't practice at all, and they don't even like basketball. It's not fair."

Gripping the steering wheel until his knuckles were white, he said, "I know you work hard, and it's not fair. But I know where you're coming from..."

By this time, we had made it home, and my dad was now pulling into our driveway. “I just want to quit. Why should I even try so hard if I’m not even going to get to play?” My face was now planted in my hands.

“When I was your age, I was in the same boat. I worked hard, but I never got to play much on these all-star teams. But you have to understand that you can’t let this discourage you, Chad. Make this your motivation. Work harder.”

“It’s just frustrating. I want to be the greatest player, and I’m the worst... the scrub.”

“Keep working hard and it will pay off down the road, I promise. Let today be the fuel for your fire.”

Rubbing away my tears, I gushed, “And I want to make you and Mom proud...”

He wrapped his arms around me and squeezed. “You do make us proud. You’re our only son, and your hard work makes us even prouder.”

Hiding my face in his shirt, I whispered, “I’m going to be better next year. I’m not going to have dry tennis shoes anymore.”

* * * * *

It’s time to start my workout: bouncing the ball between my legs, I push off with my left leg and sprint towards the basket; spinning when I enter the lane, I lay the ball off of the glass with my left hand. After I rebound the make, I toss it out to the three-point line and jog to retrieve the ball. I snag the ball like a wide receiver in the end zone and establish my pivot foot. Poking jab steps and fakes at the phantom defender, I lunge to the left after faking right, dribbling once and stopping on a dime to elevate and release my shot at the peak of my jump—swish.

As I walk to the foul line, I dribble the ball between my legs, occasionally whipping it around my back. First, I align my left foot with the middle of the rim. Staring at the rim, bending my

knees, bouncing the ball precisely six times, and breathing in deeply and exhaling, I whisper to myself: finger pad control, back spin, follow-through. I stroke my arm forwards, flicking my wrist and holding my follow-through like a statue. The ball rattles on the rim and then drops through the net.

Three hours later, exhausted, I lounge on the bleachers, beads of sweat cascading off of my hair, down my back and chest. Thousands of drops of sweat shimmer off of the amber court, illuminating the floor like tiny magnifying glasses. This is the studio into which I've poured thousands and thousands of hours, running sprints until I couldn't see straight, practicing monotonous dribbling drills, and emulating moments that rarely made it to game time. Even though my fervent love for basketball was often a mixed bag of crippling heartache and unadulterated euphoria, I used the lessons that it taught me to pilot me through life.

* * * * *

I straddle the bench in front of my locker, sliding off my worn-down black knee pads, wringing out my sweat-saturated practice jersey, scripting the forthcoming conversation. The last locker clanged shut. Appearing from behind the wall of Columbian blue lockers, Jeremy prodded, "Are you going to drop fifty points tomorrow night? You've been telling me all year you're going to. Quit talking shit. Tomorrow is your time to do it, senior night."

"I'll do what I can, Jeremy. I'll say this: I'm going to surprise everyone."

"What's that?" Jeremy joked. "Are you going to finally come out of the closet?"

Laughing and shaking my head, I respond. "You're an idiot. I'll see you tomorrow, man."

The bang of the locker-room door echoed throughout the vacant room. As I stared into my locker, everything seemed to be in its place: my blue-and-white practice jersey hanging on the right hook, my jump rope dangling on the middle hook, my black satin shorts slouching on the left hook, and my navy and blue Nikes with “R.I.P. Papaw” inscribed on the side resting on the bottom shelf. To my right, down the wall of lockers that looked like a row of oversized dominos, hung a mirror the size of a twin bed. For a moment, I hesitated, but the image in the mirror—me, sitting on a bench—shattered my uncertainty. I knew what I had to do—everything wasn’t in its place.

In the coach’s office, Steve Morrison, a man who resembled Gumbi with his long, thin appearance, lounged in a computer chair in front of his desk. The assistant coach, Brad Meredith, sprawled out on a red-and-yellow 1980s retro couch. With the door halfway shut, I knocked lightly as a formality. “Can I talk with you all for a minute?”

The coaches responded in unison. “Sure, Chad. Come on in.”

I swallowed hard, trying to suppress my uncertainty. For a moment, I just sat, corralling my thoughts—tell them what you want to do. Tell them why you’re doing it. My internal soliloquy must have lasted longer than a moment, because they were both now looking at me oddly, the way people stare at nude art.

“Is everything okay?” they asked.

My first word began with a stutter. “Yes, I’m doing just fine. Are you all doing okay?”

Both had a confused look on their faces. Coach Morrison responded, “Yes, we’re fine. What do you need?”

“Well, I wanted to talk about senior night tomorrow—”

Coach Morrison interrupted. “Are you excited?”

“Yes, I’m excited, but I want to throw an idea out there, one that I’ve thought extensively about.”

“What’s that, Chad?” Coach Meredith asked.

I elaborated, “We have six seniors on the team. Obviously, we can only start five. But I wanted to run something by you all.”

“What’s that?”

Breathing deeply, I explained. “I want Patrick to start in my place tomorrow night. Out of all the seniors, he has played the least. I know what it’s like to rot on a bench all year long—it exhausts you physically, it piles on the pressure of having to play well when you finally do go into the game, and it wrenches every ounce of fun from basketball. Senior night is a time for seniors to bask in their accomplishments, a time for recognition, a time to make it a night that they’ll never forget. I’ve done all of that though—I’ve listened to the crowd chant my name, I’ve won awards, I’ve made game-winning shots, I’ve played every minute of every game for the past two years. Patrick needs to experience that. I want him to experience that.”

Looking surprised, the coaches approved. “That’s a nice thing for you to do, Chad, a very mature gesture.”

“To me, it’s not so much the nice or mature thing to do. It’s the right thing to do.”

* * * * *

Ready to leave the gym, I stand next to the light switches to soak in the moment. I refuse to call this my sanctuary—there have been far superior players before and during my time. But this was my studio: a place where I painted the floor with droplets of perspiration after hours of vigorous practice, a place where I nurtured my craft, my love, a place where I lost myself in the camaraderie of competition with myself, my teammates, and my opponents.

It was a studio that instilled me with memories that I will cherish until I’m on my deathbed—the unadulterated euphoria I experienced when crowds chanted my name or when my tenacious, gritty performances touched people in a meaningful

way. It was a studio that forced me to face my mediocrity in spite of my aspirations for greatness—the humbling revelation that my talent and size would never fulfill my dreams and expectations. It was a studio that started with a boy with talent as small as a lump of clay and fashioned him into the man that he is today—the days spent under the gleaming lights of my studio and the tennis shoes that have cushioned life’s unexpected blows. Because I’ll always need a sentiment etched in my brain of where I’ve been to chaperone me to where I’m going.

COLONIAL HIERARCHY IN ISAK DINESEN'S
SHADOWS ON THE GRASS

Matthew Dawson

The introduction into my life of another race, essentially different from mine, in Africa became to me a mysterious expansion of my world. My own voice and song in life there had a second set to it and grew fuller and richer in the duet.—Isak Dinesen, *Shadows on the Grass*

In the opening pages of Isak Dinesen's *Shadows on the Grass*, the author establishes the theme which largely motivates the work: the master-servant relationship. This relationship, for Dinesen, is necessary, "in order to form and make up a Unity, in particular a creative Unity" (377-78). Fondly regarding her servant Farah as an extension of her own self, or her "right hand man," Dinesen recalls the memory of her departure from Africa: "as I watched his dark immovable figure on the quay growing smaller and at last disappear, I felt as if I were losing a part of myself, as if I were having my right hand set off..." (Dinesen 377). Maintaining the master-servant dynamic to the very end of her stay in Africa, Dinesen spends the next two pages of *Shadows on the Grass* alluding to several examples of the master-servant dynamic in literary precedent (Shakespeare's King Lear and the Fool, Cervantes' Don Quixote and Sancho Panza) as a justification for her dominant relationship with her servants (378-79). Dinesen's dominant status as a white European colonizer in Kenya creates a distance between the author and the subject of her work that reinforces colonial hegemony. The paradigm through which the author recalls her experience in Kenya prevents Dinesen from sympathizing with her subjects to the extent that the native Africans are portrayed as childlike,

gullible, and immature “Natives” rather than authentic individuals.

Writing about Dinesen’s *Shadows on the Grass* in the book *The Narcissism of Empire*, Diane Simmons describes **the author’s** self-portrayal “as the benevolent and amused mistress of an immense coffee plantation, surrounded by adoring Africans with whom she lives in reciprocal harmony” (99). She claims that Dinesen is a typical “imperialist” in her attempt to recreate Africa as an exotic setting for her childhood fantasies (102) in which Dinesen envisions herself as a “white queen” and her servants as “loyal, often comical, feudal retainers” (99). However, Dinesen does not always maintain this feudalism, as Simmons claims that she also plays the role of a “needy child” with her servants acting as “attentive parents... who are always there to pamper and admire her” (99).

Despite the variety of ways in which Dinesen envisions her relationships with her servants, Simmons maintains that there is one constant: “[Dinesen] appears never to see the Africans as beings with lives of their own, separate from herself” (99). In Dinesen’s colonial hierarchy, the white landowners are on the top tier, with non-native servants such as Farah acting as personal advisers and assistants on a lower level, and finally the native Kenyans are at the very bottom: “The Natives of the land ... have got their own old mysterious and simple cultural traditions, which seem to lose themselves in the darkness of very ancient days” (381). The native Kenyans, in Dinesen’s world view, never reach a level of maturity or mental growth which would enable them to better themselves. Although the young Kenyan children were generally more advanced than European children, they “seemed to come to a standstill in their mental growth” around the age of nine, which leaves them, as Dinesen describes, “strikingly precocious as young children” (382).

Dinesen's African memoirs have received sharp criticism for this childlike portrayal of the natives. In describing the Kenyans as childlike, Dinesen creates the illusion that they live in a primitive time. Simon Lewis describes Dinesen's representation of Kenya as a "temporal displacement" (64). In his article "Culture, Cultivation, and Colonialism in *Out of Africa* and Beyond," Lewis claims that "Her life in Kenya is presented not so much as a life in another place as in another time..." (64). Susan C. Brantly confirms this stance: "Dinesen has a tendency to describe the Africans as 'primitive' and at an earlier stage of historical development than the Europeans" (86). This perspective from which Dinesen presents the native Kenyans in *Shadows on the Grass* serves to reinforce colonial hegemony. Brantly explains it thus: "This narrative stance, relegating the natives to a lower rung of the temporal ladder, is another means of placing the Africans in a subordinate position" (86).

Dinesen describes the role of the white colonizers as providing "light" to deliver the native Kenyans from the dark ages: "We ourselves have carried European light to the country quite lately, but we have had the means to spread and establish it quickly" (381). The "means" through which the Europeans are able to deliver this light lies in their higher ranking Somali servants such as Farah. The Somalis, Dinesen writes, "were greatly superior to the Native population in intelligence and culture" (381). Even granting European arrogance, Farah's usefulness is indispensable to Dinesen in exercising her will over the plantation:

So it came that our particular clan of early settlers—arrogantly looking upon ourselves as Mayflower people—might be characterized as those Europeans who kept Somali servants and to whom a house without a Somali would be like a house without a lamp... We were the people who, wherever we went, were followed, at a

distance of five feet, by those noble, vigilant and mysterious shadows. (385)

Despite the sometimes “noble” qualities of the Somalis, Dinesen fails to see them as maturing beyond adolescence: “In my dealings with Farah and his tribe I felt that whatever else I might risk from their hand, I did not run the risk of being pitied—no more than I would do in my dealings with a young boy at home” (383). She sets herself up as very superior to the Somalis as if there were no possible way for them to look down on her or feel sorry for her.

Dinesen describes a time when the Prince of Wales told her that he would like to have dinner with her one evening and see one of the “big Ngomas,” a ceremonial dance. The complication, however, is that “these Ngomas were ritual dances connected with the harvest, and all settlers knew well enough that in this matter the Natives would rather die than break with a sacred law of a thousand years” (399). And although Dinesen is fully aware that the dance is a spiritual event, she still wants them to break their longstanding cultural law for the sake of sparing her shame in failing to entertain the Prince’s curiosity: “It would be a dark, eternal shame to our house and to all of us, were the Prince to come out to see an Ngoma, and we have no Ngoma to show him” (400). Dinesen manages to acknowledge the validity of another culture’s traditions while at the same time dismissing them in favor of entertaining a European guest. The dance, which is over one thousand years old, is a relic of a past civilization to Dinesen. The Ngoma and the traditions surrounding it will necessarily be subordinate to the here and now, which, in Dinesen’s world, is Dinesen herself. Lewis asserts that it is Dinesen’s tendency to view the natives as living in the past “that allows her to appear to endorse the modern anthropologists’ belief in the plurality of civilizations without denting her faith in the transcendence of aristocratic European culture” (65).

Out of reverence for his master and her house, Farah goes out to speak to the chiefs of the local tribes and persuade them to perform their ritual dance, reminding them that they owe Dinesen a favor for her assistance in arbitrating a dispute “between them and the Government concerning salt-rocks to which they had formerly brought their cattle to lick salt” (399). This is hardly an even return because for their part of this bargain the Chiefs will have to break a thousand years’ tradition in exchange for access to a salt lick that they had already been using for a thousand years before the colonial government chose to restrict their access. Nevertheless, this is a matter of honor for the Chiefs as their debt must be repaid, and so they comply with Dinesen’s wish, assembling “between two or three thousand dancers at the dancing-place by [Dinesen’s] house” (401).

Thoroughly pleased with her display for the Prince, Dinesen remarks, “It was a fine Ngoma, I have seen no finer anywhere,” despite the fact that the ceremony was performed entirely out of its appropriate context and amounted to a break in their cultural tradition. The Ngoma was fine because Dinesen had willed it to happen, without concern for the native tradition, and she narrowly avoided a shameful failure to entertain the Prince. This is not to say that Dinesen was ungrateful, for she did make a particular effort to express her gratitude and presented a gift of either “a particularly fine rug or a goat” to each of the chiefs (401).

Aside from entertaining European aristocrats, Dinesen spent much of her time in Africa on safari. Big-game hunting is an essential aspect of Dinesen’s life in Africa. It seems that she never had any intention of moving to Africa to manage the coffee plantation that her family bought for her, but rather to live on an endless safari. Dinesen remarks, “When I first came out to Africa I could not live without getting a fine specimen of each single kind of African game” (409). Dinesen must have accomplished

this feat fairly early on in her stay in Africa, for she claims that during her final decade in Africa she killed game only to provide “meat for [her] Natives” as the sport had become “an unreasonable thing” to kill for only a “few hours’ excitement” (409-10).

Dinesen speaks with reverence about the elephant and stages her objection to the ivory trade on the grounds that it is killing an animal for profit rather than for the glory: “The manifestation of the glory of God was turned into an object of exploitation. Is it to be wondered at that he cannot forgive us?” (408). Lion hunting, however, was a different affair altogether. Dinesen found it “irresistible” (410). The lion, as the supreme hunter on the African continent, is the only creature with which Dinesen feels she is evenly matched: “But a lion-hunt each single time is an affair of perfect harmony, a deep, burning mutual desire and reverence between two truthful and undaunted creatures, on the same wavelength” (408). It would be beneath her to continue killing peaceful herbivores, but the lion is a beast rivaling her as a hunter.

Such is the case when Dinesen recalls the account of killing a particularly regal lion, the very lion, she affirms, which is depicted on “the royal coat of arms of Denmark” (410). As she steadies her aim on this particular lion, she promises herself that if she should kill it she will offer its skin as a gift to the King of Denmark. The King, it turns out, is pleased with the gift and responds by sending Dinesen “a kind letter... in which he thanked [her] for his lion-skin” (412). Dinesen transforms this letter into a mythical object in the eyes of the native Kenyans, her “*Barna a Soldani*,” or letter from a king: “Within it, in paper and blood, a covenant has been signed between the Europeans and the Africans—no similar document of this same relationship is likely to be drawn up again” (419).

This letter would later become the single most effective item in Dinesen's medicine bag for years to come as she fulfilled her role of the benevolent landowner by caring for the injuries and ailments of the Natives. It so happens that a young Kikuyu tribesman is severely injured when a tree falls on and crushes his leg as he is clearing a patch of forest to make way for Dinesen's expanding coffee plantation. As the accident occurred several miles from her house, Dinesen does not have access to her stock of morphine to alleviate the man's pain. As the man pleads with her to give him something for his pain, Dinesen searches her pockets: "In my distress I once more put my hand into my pocket and felt the King's letter" (414). She tells the injured man, "I have got a *Barua a Soldani* ... and that is a thing which all people know, that a letter from a king... will do away with all pain, however bad" (414).

Dinesen manages to convince this man that the letter possesses a magical power of healing and, almost instantly, his pain is relieved. With the best intentions, Dinesen manages to improvise in a desperate situation to maintain her pattern of paternalism. This man must have had tremendous faith in Dinesen for this *Barua a Soldani* to alleviate his pain. And on Dinesen's part, this appears to be an act of true sympathy. Word of this letter and its "miracle-working power" quickly spread across Dinesen's plantation: "Soon they took to carrying up those of their sick who were in bad pain, so that they might have the letter laid on them and for a while be relieved" (415). Dinesen refuses to break the fantasy she has created and allows the natives to continue believing that the letter has magical power. The letter is reserved for only the most extreme cases, and when a patient with a toothache would ask for the *Barua a Soldani*, the other natives would chide him with "haughty, scornful laughter" (416). Dinesen explains, "I have seen this particular attitude, or this particular mentality, in the dark people in other matters as well.

... There are things which can be done and others which cannot be done, and they fell in with the law, accepting what came with a kind of aloof humility or pride” (416).

There is one event in *Shadows on the Grass* in which Dinesen shows humility. Dinesen always acts as if it is her responsibility to take care of the natives living on her plantation, especially providing medical care. Dinesen treated and bandaged the legs of a young boy which had been burned quite badly (430-31). Suddenly, the boy quit coming around before Dinesen felt it was time to discontinue treatment. She decides to go look for him. When she finds the boy, she sees that “the long bandages, with which I had taken so much trouble, had been unwound, and that from heel to hip his legs were smeared with a thick coat of cow dung” (432). Dinesen cannot help but feel that she, like her treatment, has been rejected, and she cries: “They have never till now seen me cry. Maybe they had not believed that a white person ever did cry. I ought not to have done it” (433).

Dinesen wakes the very next day to find that a crowd has gathered on the terrace outside her house. After much anticipation, “this old woman of the terrace now, in the grip of her left hand, held forth her right hand to me, as if she were making me a present of it” (435). The woman had only a small superficial burn, but she and the rest of the crowd “had agreed to bring [Dinesen] what, against all reason and against the inclination of their own hearts, [she] had wanted from them.” Everyone brought her some scratch or bruise to be treated. Dinesen had never before this moment considered that the people of her plantation could take care of themselves, and she realizes how foolish she must have looked to them as she tried to play nurse to every minor ailment. This inspires Dinesen to have a shocking revelation when she realizes that these people have been taking care of themselves for quite a long time before she ever arrived in Africa:

We white people, I reflected, were wrong when in our intercourse with the people of the ancient continent we forgot or ignored their past or did indeed decline to acknowledge that they had ever existed before their meeting us. We had deliberately deprived our picture of them of a dimension, thus allowing it to become distorted to our eyes and blurred in its Native harmony and dignity, and our error of vision had caused deep and sad misunderstanding between us and them. (428)

In *Shadows on the Grass*, Dinesen recreates a world in which she is the benevolent owner of a coffee plantation and the very center of life for the nearly two decades in which she lives in Kenya. Dinesen demonstrates that, as a true aristocrat, she is bound by the responsibility of noblesse oblige to take care of the natives who serve her. She describes it as a mystical time that has already disappeared by the time she sits down to write her memoir: “I myself came out to the Protectorate of British East Africa before the First World War, where the Highlands were still in very truth the happy hunting grounds, and while the white pioneers lived in guileless harmony with the children of the land” (384). However good her intentions may have been in writing the memoir, Dinesen’s epiphany—that the natives had lives of their own, aside from her influence—is hardly enough to remedy her limited colonial perspective, or “error of vision,” which pervades *Shadows on the Grass*. Dinesen describes a life in Kenya where she rests finely at the top of the hierarchy, looking down at the natives as children in dire need of her assistance.

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POST-COLONIAL THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE IN *THE SEA AND THE MIRROR*

Keith E. Peck

W. H. Auden's postscript in *The Sea and the Mirror* portrays post-colonial aspects in the relationship between Ariel and Caliban and embodies what Homi Bhabha calls "colonial mimicry" as Ariel seeks to assert the undoing of his superiority over Caliban in order to create an equal relationship between the two. This "colonial mimicry" produces within Ariel "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other" (Rice 381) as a result of the "repetitious slippage of difference and desire" (Rice 385) created by colonization. However, this "reformed, recognizable Other" produced by the "slippage" depicts Ariel as desiring to be like Caliban, in part, by trying to construct Caliban's own desire to want Ariel as Ariel wants Caliban. Originally in *The Tempest*, both Ariel and Caliban were subjugated by the authority of Prospero, and his own authority was characterized by a hierarchy in which he was the ultimate superior, Ariel his favorite subject, and Caliban his lowly slave. In the postscript of *The Sea and the Mirror* the "repetitious slippage" of the nature of colonialism has created the need to restructure the hierarchy of authority to fit the new circumstances. The new structure of the power hierarchy has Ariel serving as the oppressor and Caliban as the oppressed in a nontraditional manner. Ariel is not seeking to be Caliban's superior but his equal by showing his (Ariel's) own faults as a way of becoming inferior. This allows Ariel to capitalize on the differences between Caliban and himself in order to impose an identity of the "recognizable Other" onto himself that shows him as being "almost the same but not quite" the same as Caliban, because Ariel may be even more inferior than Caliban. This new hierarchy is conveyed, in part, by the language of the postscript

itself in which Ariel is speaking directly to Caliban, trying to “normalize” their relationship for Ariel's benefit and Caliban's subjugation, through Ariel's creation of a love relationship between himself and Caliban (Rice 381, 385).

The first line of the postscript begins with Ariel's stating to Caliban, “Weep no more but pity me” (Auden 55 line 1). This is a plea or command by Ariel demonstrating the inferiority of Ariel as he directs the behavior of Caliban. Ariel seems to be imposing new norms by asking Caliban to “pity” him. Prior to this, Ariel has been described as a “brave” and powerful spirit that has the ability to make Prospero feel immortal (Auden 5 lines 9-10). It seems that Ariel desires the attention of Caliban by the use of the word *pity*. Ariel is possibly alluding to the sorrow he has experienced in having to carry out the wishes of Prospero, and in having to serve the witch, Sycorax, prior to serving Prospero. Both of these instances could create feelings of sorrow, but fail to compare to the amount of sorrow experienced by Caliban. Caliban experienced the loss of his mother, the loss of his island to Prospero, and his subsequent exploitation as a slave serving Prospero. Ariel's commanding Caliban to “Weep no more” in order to “pity” him shows Ariel to have an egocentric mindset as he establishes his own inferiority over Caliban.

Ariel continues exhibiting his inferiority in the next two lines when he states, “Fleet persistent shadow cast! By your lameness, caught at last” (Auden 55 lines 2-3). The line “Fleet persistent shadow cast” is a noun clause modifying the beginning phrase of “weep no more but pity me.” This phrase seems to be constructing an impossible request since a shadow is inherently inescapable because it is an extension of one's physical body; therefore, it is impossible for a mortal to flee from his own “persistent shadow.” Ariel, however, being an immortal spirit, can escape his own shadow. This creates an ambivalent “difference” between Ariel and Caliban that Ariel constructs to

imply his shared condition with Caliban. Caliban can't escape his literal shadow just as Ariel can't escape his obsession with Caliban. This phrase could also be drawing attention to Caliban's racial identity where the "persistent shadow" is representative of Caliban's black skin serving as a "difference" between Ariel and Caliban. Regardless of what the "persistent shadow" stands for, Ariel is captivated by Caliban's "lameness." By focusing on the disabilities of Caliban, Ariel seems to construct another "difference" between Caliban and himself. If Caliban is different because of his disabilities, then this implies that Ariel is superior because of his perfect abilities.

The next line explains why Ariel is "caught" by Caliban, as he states that he is "Helplessly in love with you" (Auden 55 line 4). Ariel's love for Caliban is what makes him helpless and provides support for the complete undoing of colonial mimicry in the relationship between Ariel and Caliban. Ariel's own "love" for Caliban establishes their relationship as being between two equal individuals rather than portraying a superior versus inferior relationship. This notion of equality is further evidenced by the contrast provided in the next line when Ariel states "Elegance, art, fascination! Fascinated by Drab mortality" (Auden 55 lines 5-7). The words "Elegance, art, fascination" are all nouns that function as descriptors of Ariel who explains that he is "Fascinated by / Drab mortality." The "drab mortality" is a reference to Caliban; however, instead of this demonstrating the relationship of a superior being to an inferior being, this statement shows that the "Elegance, art, fascination" (Ariel) is actually fascinated by the "drab mortality" (Caliban). Therefore, the phrasing of these words creates an illogical relationship where "fascination" becomes inferior by being "fascinated by / Drab mortality."

The undoing of colonial mimicry by the sense of equality between Ariel and Caliban is carried into the next two lines,

where Ariel exclaims, “Spare me a humiliation! / To your faults be true” (Auden 55 lines 8-9). Here, Ariel wishes not to be humiliated by Caliban’s superiority, so he wants Caliban to embrace his own imperfections so that they can each be equal to the other. This idea of equality is a complete contrast to earlier in *The Sea and the Mirror’s* first chapter when Prospero esteems Ariel as being in some ways his superior by his stating, “I am glad I have freed you! / So at last I can really believe I shall die” (Auden 5 lines 9-10). Ariel is such a powerful being that his presence gives Prospero the feeling of immortality, yet, in his speech to Caliban, Ariel does not seem to recognize this power.

The final two lines of the postscript show just how equal Ariel and Caliban have become: “I can sing as you reply /... I” (Auden 55 lines 10-11). This phrase seems to demonstrate a merging of Ariel and Caliban’s identities and relationship as they are able to complete the other, exemplified by the fact that Ariel will sing as Caliban replies “I.” It seems that this “I” is supposed to be Caliban’s response to what Ariel has stated about him up to this point. This “I” is also the echo by the prompter, and it appears that possibly both Ariel and Caliban are to share in saying this word with Ariel singing “I” as Caliban replies “I.” This final line provides the merging of these two different characters and personalities into two equal characters sharing together in their time alone on the island.

The postscript of *The Sea and the Mirror* displays the power relationship between Ariel and Caliban as they merge to become each other’s equal. This equal power relationship demonstrates the “ambivalence” around which post-colonialism constructs its norms and which Homi Bhabha comments on by saying that “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Rice 381). In *The Sea and the Mirror’s* postscript the “mimicry” and “slippage” are created

around a counter “ambivalence” that challenges the traditional notions of post-colonialism. Rather than having Ariel seek to oppress Caliban the way that Prospero did, Ariel seeks to be equal to Caliban by using his “own language” in order to produce “another knowledge of norms” (Rice 381). Ariel is actually the superior being, yet his own use of language tells of his inferiority to Caliban while the latent, unsaid meanings behind his words demonstrate his superiority. This new norm set by Ariel for the sake of my “love” (Auden 55 line 4) of Caliban rearranges the hierarchy of power in such a way that Ariel and Caliban are able to be considered equals.

KEITH E. PECK

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“I WILL NOT PEACE”: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FEMALE VOICES IN SHAKESPEARE’S *HENRIAD*

Amanda Stephens

I

In William Shakespeare’s *Henriad*, power transfers from one man to another. Patriarchal power flows from the mesmerizing but incompetent Richard II to the competent but less mesmerizing Henry IV. The second tetralogy concludes with Henry V, the charismatic Machiavel who engineers a major victory for England by conquering France. And while men clearly function as integral figures, women seem to function as minor figures. Furthermore, when female characters do appear (a rarity in these later history plays), they are usually restricted to domestic settings or to taverns in Eastcheap.

The observation that women in the second tetralogy not only appear infrequently but are also confined to roles such as wives, tavern owners, and prostitutes, has not gone unnoticed by feminist scholars. Phyllis Rackin asserts that “the roles of women are severely limited, both in size and scope” (73). In fact, she observes that, of the four histories that comprise the *Henriad*, “the percentage of words assigned to female characters never reaches ten percent of the script” (76). Similarly, Katherine Eggert notes, “the second tetralogy is remarkable for its near-total relegation of women to marginalized roles” (79). Moreover, in comparing the frequent appearance of politically and militarily influential female characters in Shakespeare’s first tetralogy to the helpless stay-at-home wives and tavern-keepers in the second tetralogy, Levine remarks, “women all but disappear” in the *Henriad* (147). But it is Rackin who provides an insightful explanation for the virtually all-male atmosphere in

the *Henriad*: “The places where history is made—the royal court and the field of battle—are exclusively male preserves, and the business of the main historical plots is conducted entirely by men” (73). In other words, by severely limiting the appearance of female characters, the second tetralogy can be seen to imply that the making of history (not to mention the making of a national epic) represents an endeavor only men can accomplish.

However, in this essay, I argue that women represent important figures in the *Henriad* despite their marginalization. Shakespeare is a writer of highly intricate and complex plays with equally intricate and complex characters. Carolyn Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Neely link the complexity of Shakespeare’s works to Shakespeare himself; they claim that, just like the playwright’s complicated views on “religious affiliation,” politics, and “sexual preference,” his views on women “are equally complex and demand examination” (4). Thus taking Shakespeare’s intricate viewpoint regarding women into consideration, one assumes that female characters in the *Henriad* must appear for some reason other than to display their insignificance, inferiority, and subservience to men.

In this essay, I contend that one way women demonstrate their significance is through the private disputes they have with their husbands. Within these intense conversations and despite their husbands’ attempts to silence them, wives “back talk” their husbands. While women may not exercise authority in the public sphere, within the domestic sphere, the Duchess of York and Lady Percy assertively express their opinions. As a result, the extent to which the Duke of York and Henry Percy become engrossed in their political affairs is highlighted. Both York and Percy overlook dire and sometimes fatal consequences of their actions for the sake of remaining key players in patriarchal politics.

II

Set within the Duke of York's palace, 5.2 of *Richard II* begins with the Duchess of York listening to her husband's account of Henry Bolingbroke's coronation in London: while the crowd cheered for Bolingbroke, no such cheering was heard for Richard as he passed by in Henry IV's captivity. Although the Duke laments the crowd's disrespect for their former king, he vows to "honor" the new king by being a loyal subject (40). Following York's story, their son, Aumerle, enters, and York notices that Aumerle is concealing a letter in his shirt. Aumerle refuses to let York "see the writing," an action which serves only to anger York (57). Soon, York yanks the letter from his son. Immediately after York reads the letter, which reveals that Aumerle has joined a group of rebels who intend to murder Henry IV at Oxford, York flies into a rage, and the dispute between the Duchess and York begins:

YORK: Treason! Foul treason! Villain! Traitor!
Slave!

DUCHESS: What is the matter, my lord?

YORK: [calling offstage]. Ho! Who is within there?

[Enter a Servingman.]

Saddle my horse! God for his mercy, what
treachery is here?

DUCHESS: Why, what is it, my lord?

YORK: [to the Servingman]. Give me my boots, I
say! Saddle my horse!—

[Exit Servingman.]

Now, by mine honor, by my life, my troth, I
will appeach the villain.

DUCHESS: What is the matter?

YORK: Peace, foolish woman.

DUCHESS: I will not peace.

(5.2.72-81)

As this passage illustrates, the Duke's angry response to Aumerle's letter causes the Duchess to express concern. She asks York three times "What is the matter?" Her reaction is understandable because her husband has just screamed "Traitor!" after reading Aumerle's letter, which indicates that their son is the "[t]raitor." And if her son has committed treason, the possibility that Aumerle will be executed comes into play. Unarguably, then, the Duchess's repetitive inquiry—what is wrong?—establishes her role as a mother concerned for her child. Moreover, if one views the quarrel from the Duchess's perspective, the initial impression of the Duchess as a "nagging wife" falls apart. Although her repetitive questioning may make her seem like a nagging wife at first, this stereotype often associated with married women does not ultimately hold when describing the Duchess. The stereotype typically involves a wife who pesters her husband to perform ordinary tasks, and, obviously, this is not the case here. Her son's life is in danger, and as Aumerle's parent, she has a right to know that. So even if she is being a nag, her nagging is justified. Furthermore, because York blatantly ignores her and denies her the information that her son's life is in jeopardy, it is the Duchess one ultimately sympathizes with, not the Duke.

While the Duchess's determination to find out what is going on with Aumerle indicates the value, the importance she places on familial bonds, York's reaction to Aumerle's letter illustrates the opposite. As Molly Smith notes, by repeatedly ignoring his wife and demanding his servant to "[s]addle" his horse and retrieve his boots so that he can "appeach the villain," the Duke demonstrates that he privileges "king over kin" (269). What is

more, the Duke ignores not only his wife but also his son. After reading the letter, York does not speak directly to Aumerle for the rest of 5.2 and throughout 5.3. Instead, the Duke refers to Aumerle in the third-person singular and (not surprisingly) with derogatory names often associated with those who commit treason, including “[t]raitor” and “[v]illain.” In fact, one could argue that York seems to disown his son after he learns that his son is conspiring to kill the king.

Related to the Duke’s apparent dismissal of Aumerle as kin is the Duchess’s remark about the possibility of her own infidelity: “Thou doest suspect / That I have been disloyal to thy bed, / And that he is a bastard, not thy son” (104-6). While it is not explicitly stated, it could be that York traces the betrayal he experiences as a father with a traitorous son all the way back to the woman who bore the traitor; such a possibility may shed light on not only why the issue of Aumerle’s biological father surfaces in 5.2 but also why York ignores both his son and wife. By disowning Aumerle and believing that Aumerle is not his biological son (because it would be harder to accept the reality that his son has committed treason), York is able to dissociate himself from the “[v]illain” and the Duchess. Distancing himself from his immediate family circle—his wife and child—conveniently allows York to disregard his wife’s pleas to “hide the trespass of thine own” (89).

Whether or not the Duchess actually slept with another man is of little importance because it would be nearly impossible to infer whether she did or did not based on these two scenes. Rather, what is important is that the Duchess “cheats” on York emotionally by privileging her love and loyalty for her son over her love and loyalty for her husband. In 5.2, the Duchess stands up to the Duke by verbalizing her discontent with the Duke’s decision to turn Aumerle in, and in 5.3 she persistently pleads to Bolingbroke to pardon her son. In so doing, the Duchess “cheats”

York out of his ideal version of woman in patriarchy—meaning, a woman who readily submits to a man—by declaring “I will not peace.”

Her declaration is remarkably simple (translating into modern-day English as “I will not shut up”) yet revolutionary because it derives from the four history plays after *King John*, in all of which women appear to represent profoundly unimportant characters on account of their marginalization. “I will not peace” establishes her voice, her position in the dispute as equally important to York’s. In addition, while her newfound assertiveness can be largely attributed to her desire to prevent Aumerle from being executed, the Duchess’s statement helps fuel her courage to stand up to York, flee the domestic sphere, and ultimately save her son’s life. Indeed, as soon as she declares “I will not peace,” she performs these three brave acts.

York’s resistance to his wife’s assertiveness suggests that her behavior is not the appropriate behavior for a wife. From the moment he ignores her initial question—“What’s the matter?”—and calls her “foolish” to the instances where he refers to her as a “mad woman” (95) and “unruly” (110) later in the scene, York indicates that the Duchess is acting outside of societal expectations for wives of noblemen. He refers to her in these derogatory ways after she bombards him with a slew of rhetorical questions designed to make York consider the negative consequence (that he could lose his son) of exposing Aumerle’s treachery to the king. The Duchess brings up valid points, including that Aumerle is their only son and that she is past the age of being able to bear children (90-1).

However, the Duke appears incapable of listening to his wife’s perspective. Even when York responds to the Duchess, he answers her with short, quick statements. For example, after she proposes that, instead of turning Aumerle in to Henry IV, they could “keep” him at home, York responds, “Away, fond woman!

Were he twenty times my son / I will appeach him” (100-01). Although the Duchess’s idea to “keep” their son at home does not represent the most practical solution (because York’s house would be the most obvious place for Henry IV to check for Aumerle’s whereabouts should he discover the treachery), York’s short, hot-tempered reaction indicates his inability to reflect upon alternatives to turning Aumerle in to Henry IV. As previously noted, after York reads the “writing,” he appears to dissociate, to distance himself from his family ties. Instead, he engrosses himself in maintaining loyalty to Bolingbroke and, consequently, overlooks or disregards the possibility that his son may be executed as a result of his decision.

The atmosphere in England has been tense since the start of the play. Within a relatively short time period, the Duke of Gloucester is murdered, Richard is deposed, Bolingbroke becomes king, York’s son is demoted from duke to earl as a result of Bolingbroke’s verdict in the trial scene in 4.1, and now York’s son conspires against Henry IV. This is a lot of excitement for any nobleman to deal with within a short time span, let alone an older nobleman like York, who just wants to set an example of how to be a good servant to the king (whether the king is Richard or Bolingbroke), despite the instability of the times.

And while the Duke certainly mistreats his wife, which casts his character in a negative light, the Duchess does not finish the scene with the most favorable characterization either. After York repeatedly refuses to listen to her perspective, the Duchess becomes angry and seems to project her anger toward York onto York’s servant, the one man she can get away with venting her anger to because of his low social-economic standing. The servingman represents the most oppressed individual in 5.2. Unlike the Duchess, his voice is literally not heard; he does not receive any speaking lines. The servingman’s only purpose is to perform the tasks that York asks, all of which involve getting

York ready to go to the king. Clearly, York's servant is not to blame for York's maltreatment of the Duchess although the Duchess seems to think so by ordering Aumerle to "[s]trike him" and by calling the servingman a "villain" (85-6). But the Duchess's command to Aumerle to injure York's servant is also strategic. Harming the servingman would slow down the Duke in his mission to ride to Bolingbroke's castle. Furthermore, in looking at the Duchess's abuse of York's servant, an interesting parallel emerges: just as the servingman is simply carrying out his duty to York as a loyal servant, so perhaps York views himself as simply carrying out his duty to Henry IV by turning in Aumerle.

Nevertheless, by not only sacrificing his son's life but also ignoring his wife's pleas, York goes overboard with his desire to show his undying honor to Bolingbroke, the king who is supposed to turn things around for England by resurrecting the memory of Edward, the Black Prince. Indeed, that Henry IV ultimately sides with the Duchess by pardoning Aumerle as opposed to listening to York's pleas to "[f]orget to pity him, lest thy pity prove / A serpent that will sting thee to the heart" suggests that the king likewise views York's loyalty to the crown as excessive in this instance (5.3.57-8). Halverson even goes so far as to say that the Aumerle incident concludes with York's being reduced to a "comic character" (qtd. in Smith 269). A feasible example of the Duke's transition to a comedic role occurs when he suggests that the king pardon Aumerle in French so that it will not count (5.3.119). Without a doubt, York's childish comment indicates that neither York's loyalty to Bolingbroke nor York himself can be taken seriously any longer. Moreover, as Smith notes, the Duke's reduction to a comedic role "does not necessarily extend to the Duchess" (269). Because 5.3 "ends with York silenced and withdrawn" and with the Duchess's success in getting Henry IV to pardon Aumerle, the

proper conclusion is “that we are to view his contemptuous view of his wife earlier as hasty, if not misguided” (Smith 269). Clearly, York should not have ignored or disregarded the Duchess’s perspective on the Aumerle incident. Rather, the Duke should have listened to her viewpoint instead of becoming consumed by his perceived political obligations.

Certainly, the argument between the Duke and the Duchess raises the question of whether loyalty to the crown or loyalty to family is more important. Although I have ultimately argued that the Duchess “wins” the loyalty to the family versus loyalty to the crown debate, Norman Rabkin’s “Either/Or: Responding to *Henry V*,” sheds light on why both the Duchess’s and York’s contrasting positions are important to understanding not only *Richard II* but also most of Shakespeare’s plays. Rabkin contends that

our experience of the play resembles the experience Gombrich claims for viewers of the trick drawing: “We can switch from one reading to another with increasing rapidity; we will also ‘remember’ the rabbit while we see the duck, but the more closely we watch ourselves, the more certainly we will discover that we cannot experience alternative readings at the same time.” (60)

Although Rabkin refers to the two main readings of *Henry V* (that Henry V can be interpreted as either the perfect monarch or a Machiavellian military leader) in this excerpt, Gombrich’s notion of seeing either the “rabbit” or the “duck” becomes helpful in terms of recognizing and understanding the value of the Duke’s and Duchess’s opposing viewpoints. Because the playwright represents both York’s and the Duchess’s perspectives, the audience is given two choices. The audience can interpret York (the rabbit) as the one who is right, which is to say that loyalty to the crown is the most important. Or the audience

can interpret the Duchess (the duck) as the one who is right, which is to say that loyalty to family supersedes loyalty to the crown. And these viewpoints are not only oppositional but also equally important.

Whether one sides with the Duke or the Duchess, one can appreciate that such a significant question, which is as relevant now in politics as it was during the English Renaissance, can be interpreted from a woman's perspective in the *Henriad*—history plays in which men seem to have the final say on everything by virtue of being the dominant group. What is more, that her point of view presents an argument equal to York's in strength demonstrates the importance that the Duchess plays in 5.2 and 5.3. Without her, the opposing viewpoint (the duck) would be absent. Without her, one of Shakespeare's trademark literary techniques—the ability to invite interpretation of his plays from at least two perspectives—would be absent.

III

In 2.3 of *1 Henry IV*, the argument between Henry Percy and Lady Percy begins much as the argument between the Duke and Duchess begins. Like York, Percy fails to listen to and answer his wife when she questions him about his strange behavior:

LADY PERCY: What is it [that] carries you away?

HOTSPUR.: Why, my horse, my love, my horse.

LADY PERCY: Out, you mad-headed ape!

A weasel hath not such a deal of spleen

As you are tossed with.

(2.3.75-9)

In the exchange, Lady Percy expresses her to desire to know what “carries” Hotspur away, revealing her concern about her husband's well-being. According to David Bevington's footnote

for “carries you away,” the phrase refers to something that “carries you beyond the bounds of reason and judgment” (799). By employing this phrase, Kate implies that “some heavy business” is on Hotspur’s mind, some affair that has been affecting his behavior to such an extent that he can no longer exercise logical reasoning skills or good judgment (63). Of course, the audience has known since 1.3 of the “heavy business” on Hotspur’s mind—overthrowing Bolingbroke.

Because Hotspur and the Percy family believe that Henry IV did not show enough gratitude toward them for aiding him to the throne, Hotspur and his family decide to overthrow Henry IV and make Mortimer, Hotspur’s brother-in-law and the heir to the throne proclaimed by Richard II, their king. And in 2.3, Hotspur is preparing to journey to Owen Glendower’s residence in order to meet up with his family of rebels (e.g., Glendower, Lord Mortimer, and the Earl of Worcester). Thus, when Hotspur puns on *carries*, using the verb in its literal meaning, Hotspur means only that he is about to ride on his horse and refuses to disclose to his wife where he is going and why. In addition, even though Lady Percy seems to lose her temper and overreact to Hotspur’s pun, referring to him as a “mad-headed ape” and “a weasel,” one must consider what happens earlier in the scene to discern if this is actually the case.

Kate’s question—“What is it [that] carries you away?”—refers back to early in 2.3 when she remarks about the numerous ways in which Hotspur has been acting strange lately on account of “some heavy business.” To illustrate, she says that Percy has “banished” (39) her from his bed for a “fortnight” (38), that he has been experiencing losses in appetite and sleep (41), that she has heard him “murmur tales of iron wars” in his sleep (48), and that he has been depriving her of his private thoughts and opinions—one of the privileges she “treasures” most as his wife (45). She phrases these observations regarding Hotspur’s

behavior in questions. Like the Duchess, Kate wants to know “[w]hat is the matter?” and why her husband is not acting like his “normal” self, which apparently means the opposite of the behaviors she lists to describe Percy in 2.3. For example, the implication is that the “normal” Hotspur would sleep well, have an appetite, and share with Kate what is on his mind.

Nonetheless, even after Kate’s 33-line speech, in which she expresses concern over Percy’s detrimental changes in behavior, he still cannot answer her question. It could be that Hotspur fails to listen to Kate’s list of worries because he is focused on his plot to overthrow Bolingbroke. But, even so, the notion that Kate overreacts to Hotspur’s pun on *carries* does not hold. Her angry response is justified.

Kate’s catalogue of Hotspur’s recent behaviors demonstrates the extent to which Hotspur has become consumed by his objective to overthrow Bolingbroke; he overlooks the emotional and physical toll that his rebellious plot has had on his well-being. In his introduction to *1 Henry IV*, Bevington astutely points out that Kate “understands him [i.e., Hotspur] better than he understands himself” (786). Indeed, not only does Percy fail to recognize the unfavorable consequences that his plot has had on his mind and body (why else would Kate have to inform him about it?), but he also fails to recognize that going up against Bolingbroke may not be the best idea.

The beginning of 2.3 shows Hotspur reading a letter from a nobleman in which he learns about the nobleman’s decision not to join in the overthrow of Henry IV. The nobleman views Hotspur’s “friends” as “uncertain” and “the plot too light / for the counterpoise of so great an opposition,” meaning that Hotspur’s fellow conspirators (e.g., Mortimer and the Earl of Northumberland) are unreliable and that the rebels are ill-equipped to defeat the king and his men (11-13). Nonetheless, instead of viewing any of nobleman’s points as valid or as worth

considering, Percy refers to him as a “lack-brain” (15) and arrogantly (not to mention naively and mistakenly) assumes that his plan represents “a good plot as / ever was laid” with “friends [who are] true and constant” (15-17). Indubitably, Percy convinces himself, beyond all reason and evidence that suggests otherwise, that his plan is perfect.

Kate, like the nobleman in Hotspur’s letter, appears to disapprove of Hotspur’s plot to conspire against Bolingbroke. Aside from listing the harmful effects that Percy’s plot has had on him both mentally and physically, which indicates her dislike of whatever it is that makes him act and feel this way, she also expresses her “fear” about what she thinks Percy’s “heavy business” is: “I fear my brother Mortimer doth stir / About his title, and hath sent for you / To line his enterprise” (81-3). Of course, Kate rightly guesses Hotspur’s plan, and the fact that she seems afraid of it (because Hotspur’s life will be put in jeopardy) illustrates that she does not approve of her husband’s taking part in helping Mortimer claim “his title.” But whereas the nobleman in the letter disapproves of the rebellion for practical and concrete reasons, Lady Percy disapproves of Percy’s plot because she is Hotspur’s wife. She loves him. She does not want him to die. They represent a young married couple who appear very much in love. As much as Percy demeans her by refusing to tell her of his treacherous plan because he “believe[s]” that she, by virtue of her female sex, “wilt not utter what thou dost not know,” Percy also praises her (110-11). He calls her “wise” (107) and refers to her in endearing ways by calling her “love” (84) and “gentle Kate” (112).

Without Kate’s telling of how Percy’s plan to overthrow Bolingbroke has begun to impact him negatively, the audience would not be able to view this vulnerable side of Hotspur. Often he is characterized as a fierce, hot-tempered young warrior and a favorite of Henry IV. However, in 2.3, Kate reveals a “softer side”

of Hotspur, a Hotspur who is susceptible to mental and bodily weaknesses like everyone else. In addition, Percy's vulnerability is reinforced by his expression of love for Kate.

Undoubtedly, one can also apply Rabkin's concept of the "either/or" to Kate's and Percy's dispute with the main question being: Is revenge worth it? If one agrees with Percy, then the answer is yes; revenge is worth it, especially if honor can somehow be restored. From Hotspur's point of view, his honor was taken away when Bolingbroke failed to show the amount of gratitude that he feels the king should have showed him. Therefore, by defeating Bolingbroke, Hotspur can restore the honor he lost when Bolingbroke "disrespected" him and his family. On the other hand, if one agrees with Kate, then answer is no; revenge is not worth it, especially if attaining revenge puts one's life in jeopardy. For her, then, honor is not the most important thing. Being alive and in love represent the most important things in life to Lady Percy. What is more, because Hotspur's friends betray him on the day of battle and Hotspur dies, the play implies that Kate's view is righter: Hotspur should have rethought his decision to rebel against Henry IV. As Falstaff points out, honor is not worth dying for.

IV

In analyzing these husband and wife pairs from the *Henriad*, in which both York and Hotspur refuse to inform the Duchess and Lady Percy of matters that affect the women's lives as much as the men's, I have come to some conclusions. Clearly, York and Hotspur opt not to tell their wives about their political aims because the Duchess and Kate are women; they represent a disenfranchised group in the second tetralogy. (I say women represent a disenfranchised group because certainly there are other subordinate groups in the *Henriad*. York's servingman and

the tavern employees in Eastcheap represent another subordinate group—those of the lower class). Consequently, the Duchess’s and Kate’s feelings and opinions are rendered inconsequential and “inarticulate” (Kramarae 20). From York’s and Hotspur’s viewpoint, which stems from their position of male privilege, women’s perspectives, especially when it comes to politics, are deemed unimportant because women are excluded from the political game in the *Henriad*. By virtue of their biological sex, the Duchess and Kate are not worthy of knowing “What is the matter?” or “What is it [that] carries you away?”

But to Shakespeare’s credit, the playwright seems to interrogate not only York’s and Hotspur’s extreme commitment to their political agendas but also their views of women as insignificant. Both the Duke and Percy suffer the consequences of their political games, and the Duchess and Lady Percy end up gaining the upper hand in the arguments they have with their husbands. Because the Duke does not value the Duchess’s opinion that they should stand by Aumerle despite his treachery, the Duke ends up looking foolish in front of Henry IV. Similarly, because Hotspur does not share with Kate his plan to conspire against Bolingbroke, he dies.

Both Percy and York appear to share a similar view of honor, which is honor in this form. Because honor in its medieval classical form supersedes family and one’s own life, it would be interesting to explore the relationship between York’s and Hotspur’s view of honor and their treatment (and mistreatment) of their wives. Indeed, Bolingbroke and his son, Prince Hal, who both seem to view honor more as a commodity than an absolute value, seem more willing to take women’s opinions into consideration. Bolingbroke privileges the Duchess’s opinion over York’s. In the conclusion of *Henry V*, Henry V takes Princess Katherine of France’s needs and wants into consideration by attempting to woo her.

Although much remains to be explored on the topic of women in the *Henriad*, I hope I have made a small contribution to the notion that women's roles in the second tetralogy matter despite the feminist criticism that suggests otherwise. Because even though the Duchess and Kate are relegated to the domestic sphere, they do "not peace." Their female voices are heard. And in these intense moments in which they quarrel with their husbands, the power shifts enough to illustrate to the audience an alternative to killing and being killed for the sake of saving face in the name of male-conceptualized and male-dominated politics.

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A REFORMED KING?

Austin McIntire

Early in the text of Shakespeare's *The Life of King Henry the Fifth*, the Archbishop of Canterbury describes the namesake of the play as a transformed man, a man who unlooses the Gordian knot of every obstacle he encounters. Indeed, whether Henry is skillfully manipulating the Church to secure funding and moral justification for his foreign wars or converting traitors such as the Earl of Cambridge, Lord Scroop, and Sir Thomas into men who unanimously welcome the defeat of their plot, Henry's rhetorical skills cannot be denied. Henry's ability to, as David Bevington writes, display "piety, learning, administrative sagacity, political cunning, and military intrepidity" through the arts of language guides the action of the play (849). Yet, while much has been written regarding Henry's strengths as a master politician and soldier, less discussion surrounds his moments of weakness. In this paper I will argue that Henry's order to execute all French prisoners represents a glaring lapse of self-control and, moreover, reflects the remnants of his unreformed past and his overwhelming desire to banish the lingering ghosts of his father's usurpation at any cost. Of course, the above supposition invites an obvious question—Is Henry's order to have every prisoner killed in the midst of a battle not yet won truly unreasonable?

Gower's circumspect justification of the order, Shakespeare's interpretation of contemporary historical accounts, and the sheer difficulty of killing thousands of French soldiers renders Henry's sudden order to kill the prisoners hasty and unreasonable. Restricting the scope of the argument to the text alone, the tremulous connection, proposed by Gower, between Henry's order to execute the prisoners and the French attack on the English baggage train quickly falls apart. The Boy, after

translating on Pistol's behalf, offers the only allusion to the impending attack on the luggage when he states, "The French might have a good prey of / us, if he knew of it, for there is none to guard it but / boys" (4.4.77-8). The next scene takes place in the battlefield proper, where the French nobles and the Dauphin, who realize the day is lost, follow Bourbon's cry of "I'll to the throng. / Let life be short, else shame will be too long" and charge the field (4.5.23-4).

In the general confusion of the next scene, Exeter relates the last moments of York and Suffolk to the King. Only moments later, a teary-eyed Henry, observing that "The French have reinforced their scattered men," orders "every soldier [to] kill his prisoners!" (4.6.36-7). Assuming the play stopped here, a virgin audience member might construct three possible conclusions regarding the *Alarum* that leads Henry to order the executions:

1. An attack, predicted by the Boy and unrelated to the nobles' bonsai attack, occurred at the baggage train.
2. The nobles' valiant charge on the field of battle was actually a raid on the baggage train.
3. The reinforcement of men Henry witnessed was indeed the nobles' last ditch effort to establish order among their remaining men and "smother up the English in our throngs" (4.5.21).

Regarding the first possibility, no matter how one reads "The French have reinforced their scattered men," it seems impossible to interpret it as a reference to a French raid on the baggage train, especially when the statement is juxtaposed with the French nobles' hopes of accomplishing the very deed Henry describes: "We are enough yet living in the field.... If any order might be thought upon" (4.5.20-22). The second possibility, while rather humorous and in line with knavish behavior of the French nobles, makes little sense given that some of the nobles

and the Dauphin are listed among the battlefield dead. This leaves the third possibility as the only reasonable justification for Henry's order to execute the prisoners. Faced with the possibility of a desperate attack by the French army, Henry quickly orders every soldier to kill his prisoner(s). This being true, our imaginary audience member might guess the Boy survived the war after all. His or her hopes, and the foundations of the aforementioned argument, crumble under the revelatory events of the following scene.

The next scene takes place among the destruction of the recently raided baggage train. His sense of martial justice overwhelmed, Fluellen declares, "Kill the boys and the luggage? 'Tis expressly / against the law of arms" (4.7.1-2). In response, Captain Gower, notes "Tis certain there's not a boy left alive... wherefore the / King most worthily hath caused every soldier to cut / his prisoner's throat. O, 'tis a gallant king!" (4.7.5-11). Astonishingly, in only a matter of a few lines, Henry's order to execute all prisoners changes from an attempt to resist the recently reconnoitered French forces to an act of reprisal for killing the boys guarding the baggage train. Although I find Norman Rabkin's interpretation of *Henry the Fifth* as a gestalt rabbit-duck convincing, these conclusions are most definitely mutually exclusive. The context and content of Fluellen's and Gower's conversation provides possible answers to this glaring problem. As John Sutherland and Cedric Watts note in *Henry V, War Criminal*, the conversation between the two captains quickly veers off in a strange direction:

The two soldiers proceed to argue—at inordinate length—whether Henry is Welsh or not, and which region of their country can claim him. We have to imagine them holding this comic-chauvinist dispute among the still-smoking corpses of the "boys," including

Pistol's young friend of whom we have grown rather fond. (113)

The nature of the argument (is Macedon a geographical reflection of Monmouth?) and the comedic, although dark, aspect of arguing over the corpses of English boys lends Gower's earlier statement "O, 'tis a gallant King!" a rather sarcastic tone.

Scholar Theodore Meron, in debating the martial legality of the French attack on the baggage train, touches upon Shakespeare's mind regarding the executions:

Perhaps Shakespeare himself was not quite persuaded that Fluellen's version of the law sufficiently justified the order to kill the prisoners. The sarcasm in Gower's response appears to be aimed both at the Welshman Fluellen and at the King. Indeed, the real Henry may later have been embarrassed by the order. (36)

Although Meron discusses Henry's order under the assumption that murder of the baggage boys was indeed the impetus for the execution order, he acknowledges that, at the very least, Shakespeare may not wholly endorse Henry's execution order. Continuing Meron's line of thought, Gower acts as though he is privy to insider information, perhaps a mutual agreement among the captains in the English army that Henry "reasonably" ordered every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat in valiant reprisal against the despicable French, not in reaction to a desperate attack by scattered French forces. Although the remainder of the conversation appears inane, the soldiers deliver a subtle, if unintentional, defense and condemnation of Henry's order.

After Gower's sarcastic retort, the two men turn to a discussion of similarities between the lives of "Alexander the Pig" and Henry. Fluellen, astutely notes that "If you mark Alexander's

life well, Harry / of Monmouth's life is come after it indifferent well" (4.7.31-2). Following this statement, Fluellen proceeds to describe how Alexander, in an intoxicated fury, murdered his best friend Cleitus. If there are "figures in all things," as noted by Fluellen, this divergence lends the conversation a darker, if still comedic, tone (4.7.33). Why does Fluellen abandon discussing the similarity of the two great men to note what the audience will soon realize is a dissimilarity? Gower, logically assuming that Fluellen is expanding upon the similarities of the two figures, intercedes that "Our King is not like him in that. He never killed / any of his friends" (4.7.39-40). Assuming the sarcasm present in Gower's previous affirmation, "'tis a gallant king!" inundates this statement as well, it seems natural to append "... he only killed the French." Although a parallel appears to exist between both figures' disobedient passions, Fluellen disagrees with this claim. He clarifies that the drunken Alexander's decision to murder Cleitus *contrasts* with wise Harry Monmouth's decision to banish Falstaff from his life. Fluellen's retelling of Cleitus' murder at the hands of Alexander, juxtaposed with Gower's response, emerges as a pseudo defense of (whom else but Henry?) the King's rash, hot-headed order. Though his statement is not direct, Fluellen seems to suggest that Henry's order to kill thousands of prisoners is somehow softened by his sensible decision to banish Falstaff from his life.

Moving beyond a purely textual analysis, Shakespeare's reading of contemporary historical accounts of the battle provides further evidence of the illegitimacy of the execution order. Shakespeare's particular interpretation of the events at Agincourt has its roots in two principal texts, the chronicles of Raphael Holinshed and Edward Hall (Meron 1). Of these texts, *Holinshed's Chronicles* more often guided and inspired Shakespeare in the construction of the history plays (Hosley 72). Holinshed's description, heavily paraphrased here, relates the

attack of some six hundred French knights on the lightly guarded baggage train. When Henry hears the “outcrie of the lackies and the boies” he, “contrarie to his accustomed gentleness,” commands that every soldier should “incontinentlie slaie his prisoner” (Hosley 38). Shakespeare’s offered impetus for the order presents the first delineation from Holinshed’s text. The playwright inserts the last charge of the French forces, not the killing of the baggage attendants, as the catalyst for Henry’s order. Watts and Sutherland stress the impossibility of Gower’s assertion:

As Shakespeare has portrayed [Henry’s order] on stage, Henry cannot have known at the point that he ordered the massacre of prisoners that the French cavalry were acting simultaneously in such an unchivalrous fashion miles to his rear. (113)

The other glaring inconsistency between Holinshed’s and Shakespeare’s recreation of the battle of Agincourt relates to chronology of the encounter.

In the *Chronicles*, Holinshed clearly places the raiding of the baggage train before the command to kill; yet, in Shakespeare’s depiction of the battle, the ransacking of the rear camp occurs alongside the last French attack. As numerous critics have pointed out, Shakespeare mangles the unambiguous sequence of events depicted in the chronicle. This intentional mangling likewise confuses Henry’s justification for killing thousands of French soldiers, enough so that Gower sarcastically lauds Henry for his oversight. Shakespeare’s interpretation of Holinshed’s accounts enables the captains’ sardonic conversation to take place and, likewise, portrays Henry’s order as circumspect. The sheer difficulty and the potential loss of profit resulting from the execution of thousands of French prisoners renders Henry’s order only more foolhardy.

Indeed, the sheer numbers of prisoners reported alive reveals the ill-advised nature of Henry's command. When asked by Henry how many "prisoners of good sort are taken, uncle?" Exeter reports the capture of several royal persons, 1500 barons, knights and squires, and an undefined number of common men. In the context of French dead, roughly ten thousand, 1500 notable prisoners is a small army. As Watts and Sutherland note, these men surely did not surrender after the one of two times Henry orders his army to cut the throats of their prisoners; to do so would have been suicide. The seemingly huge number of prisoners still present suggests two possibilities: There was not enough time to follow Henry's order. Or, the soldiers under Henry's command, faced with the possibility of killing thousands of Frenchmen who may have provided high ransoms, ignored their sovereign's hasty order.¹ All of these events, the false connection between the baggage train and the execution order, Gower's sardonic critique of Henry, and the sheer difficulty of killing, potentially, thousands of French prisoners, fully reveal the irrational nature of Henry's lethal command. Other scholars have reached the same conclusion. Rabkin describes the first order as illegitimate and others, such as Meron, agree. Yet these same scholars do not discuss what an illegitimate order given by Henry V communicates in the larger context of the play. The opening of the play offers an explanation of how the "mirror of all Christian kings" could commit such a dreadful oversight (2.0.6).

During Canterbury's and Ely's conversation concerning the King's threatened seizure of church property, the Archbishop

¹ Shakespeare's familiarity with the practice of ransoming noteworthy enemy combatants is displayed during Pistol's confrontation with Monsieur Le Fer.

reasons that the remarkable reformation of the King must follow Ely's logic that by keeping company with "fruit of baser quality" the prince grew to his proper stature more quickly because, "miracles are ceased. / And therefore we must needs admit the means / How things are perfected" (1.1.63-70). Canterbury's earlier statements, however, reveal that both men's perception of the King is only a reflection of the King's public mythology. The archbishop states, "The breath not sooner left his father's body / But that his wildness, mortified in him, / Seemed to die too" (1.1.26-8). Of course, discerning readers will remember that this scene played out quite differently in *Henry IV Part II*. Hal, too eagerly assuming his father's death, removes the crown and hastens his demise. These details are notably absent in Canterbury's description of angelic exorcism. In light of the clergyman's evident naiveté, his previous statement becomes more complex. The way things are perfected, i.e., how Henry achieves perfection, is through the manipulation of the public and the fostering of his image. This is only one of other numerous indicators that the king's "grace" and "fair regard" is not absolute (1.1.23).

Though other events, Henry's zealous ultimatum to Harfleur and his threat to execute more prisoners², illustrate that Henry may not be as composed as Canterbury suggests, his decision to execute thousands of prisoners of war represents his most

² I do not approach this order (4.7) in the context of the earlier command due to the fact that the future tense of the statement—If they *will* not fight us we *will* cut the throats of those prisoners we have—suggests that Henry, though obviously enraged, is only threatening the French with the consequences of their continued resistance. This stands in contrast to Henry's earlier command to have every soldier immediately kill his prisoners.

egregious loss of control. What pushes Henry to declare the order? Cedric and Watts, while acknowledging the flawed chronology and the difficulty of executing so many prisoners, argue that it was only “motives of military reprisal” that led the king to give the order (113). This conclusion, however, overlooks the complexities both scholars hint at within Gower’s and Fluellen’s conversation among the ruins of the baggage train. The scenes immediately preceding the battle of Agincourt reveal the greater impetus behind Henry’s rash order.

At first glance, the scene in which the disguised Henry converses with three members of his army appears only to enforce Canterbury’s earlier declarations of Henry’s rhetorical skills. Henry masterfully counters William’s argument that if the war goes poorly “it will / be a black matter for the King” by constructing an analogy detailing the relationship between master and subject (4.1.145). Even Williams, who still holds reservations regarding Henry’s ambitions, admits that “’Tis certain, every man that dies ill, the ill / upon his own head, the King is not to answer it” (4.1.186-9). After the soldiers exit, this façade of composure collapses. Prodded by his soldiers’ questioning, the King questions the very concepts that separate him from common men. Derek Traversi, in an article simply titled “Henry the Fifth,” notes that the arguments of his followers “lead Henry to question his own authority... force him to reflect deeply upon the weaknesses which even kings cannot overcome” (62). Though Traversi presents the exchange as a precursor of the “the [tragic] spirit of the later plays,” the argument also triggers a greater outburst of weakness (62).

Following the conversation, the King falls on his knees and pleads, “Not today, O lord / O, not today, think not upon the fault / My father made in compassing the crown!” (4.1.290-92). Janet Spencer, in “Princes, Pirates, and Pigs: Criminalizing Wars of Conquest in *Henry V*” observes that within the prayer, “Henry

confesses his dangerous knowledge of his true source of power” (168). This knowledge overpowers his composure. Plainly, the sins of Henry’s father still rest on his head, and he has gone to great lengths to absolve himself of his father’s usurpation of Richard II. He has “bestowed contrite tears” on Richards’s body and charged two chantries of monks with the task of singing for Richard’s soul (4.1.294). The King is here arguably at his most vulnerable point in the play. It is not coincidence that this moment comes shortly before what can accurately be described as one of Henry’s grimmer mistakes.

For Henry, a victory over France will not only reassure him that the sins of his father have been cleansed from his soul but will allow him to complete the plan he pronounced in the beginning of *Henry IV Part I*. While one may argue that Henry’s plans ultimately conclude with his banishment of Falstaff, the King’s acceptance of his father’s advice to busy giddy minds with war and his continued fostering of his public image, noted earlier, illustrate that his ascendance from the foul and ugly mists is not quite complete. The debt of kingship referred to by Henry V includes the lingering ghost of Richard II’s usurpation. All of these burdens, the sins of his father, the eternal ramifications of an immoral war, and the overwhelming desire finally to complete his fashioned miraculous change press upon Henry’s mind as he realizes that the battle is almost won. Faced with the possibility of losing the conflict that will absolve his sin and cement his image as the “mirror of all Christian kings,” Henry overreacts to a last-ditch effort (as shown by Gower) and hastily orders the execution of thousands of prisoners.

One should not be surprised that Henry commits such an error. This is the same man that prematurely relieved his father of the crown and threatened the French town of Harfleur with infanticide and rape. Henry is capable of losing composure. That Henry commands the execution, however, does not necessarily

validate George Bernard Shaw's well-known criticism of Henry as a priggish and complacent warmonger and imperialist (Bevington 849). There is a marked difference between a Machiavellian and a desperate man who immaturely delivers a cruel and unnecessary command. Likewise, Henry's presumed lack of malicious intent does not necessarily render the man a noble and just king. The complexity of Henry's actions often seems to be overlooked in the critical pursuit of the answer for Henry's dichotomous behavior. As scholar Karl P. Wentersdorf describes, for some critics, "The play presents a story of an ideal monarch and glorifies his achievements.... For others, the protagonist is a Machiavellian militarist" (265). Both camps, however, often overlook the inherent naiveté in Canterbury's appraisal of the King and treat Henry as the ideal ruler or the master manipulator firmly in control of his destiny. Henry's rash decision to order the execution of the prisoners exposes this line of thinking as simplistic. In order to discuss the possible weaknesses of Henry, critics must restrain themselves from treating Henry V as the proverbial superman of the history plays. Henry understands that only ceremony separates commoners from Kings, and so must we.

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THE DOUBLE BIND OF “THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS”

Estee Beck

Introduction

Burrowed within the pages of Jorge Luis Borges' short story "The Garden of Forking Paths" is contamination of fiction and fact. The apparent question is how the oppositions work against each other and ultimately disrupt the structure of the text. In order to come up with an answer to this question, it seems necessary to answer another question: what common traits do both oppositions share, if any? In the following pages, I will explore characteristics of Borges' short story with the hope of finding answers to these questions.

I will be working with, primarily, the method of deconstruction to explore how the oppositions behave within the text. It seems natural to use this theory since Borges plays with oppositions throughout the story. The two narrative levels in "The Garden of Forking Paths" work in opposition to each other. The first narrative level is simple; the second is complex. The former narrative is linear; the latter is a metaphysical narrative that opens up discussion about infinity. There are meditations on finite versus infinite, space and time, history versus fiction, among other ideas.

I hope through examination of the story I will find areas where meaning slips and becomes unstable. This will be especially tricky to work out. I anticipate that I will end up in a double bind while trying to assign a determinate meaning to the instability: since determinacy and instability are paradoxical in literary texts, how can instability have definite limits if its nature is unpredictable? I believe that the story itself produces a double

bind, and, in some ways, I will be mimicking the bind. Within the narrative of Yu Tsun, there is a frame-tale for the labyrinth of Ts'ui Pen. At the meta-level, Pen's *Garden of Forking Paths* opens up multiple paths, sequences, and dimensions. The suggestion is that the multiplicity can operate at multiple levels, simultaneously. What becomes problematic, however, is that the theoretical suggestion appears in a closed system, i.e., a print-based, 2D-environment. The theoretical suggestion is paradoxical. There are limits to infinite possibilities through finite spaces, or, as Robert L. Chibka argues:

No single version of “The Garden of Forking Paths” bears any structural similarities whatsoever to Ts'ui's *Garden of Forking Paths*. Borges' plot does not pretend to enact infinity; it contains within it a discussion of infinity, but its shape *enforces* temporal finitude [emphasis added]. Even Ts'ui Pen's work makes only the most transparent pretence of enacting infinity, merely alluding indirectly to the idea—just as a couple oft-(re)quoted sentences can deftly establish the idea of Pierre Menard's (re)writing of the Quixote by gesturing toward it, not (re)presenting it. (116)

While “The Garden of Forking Paths” does open up theoretical discussions about infinity, it “merely alludes to the idea.” Since the presence appears in print-based form, Chibka rightfully claims that the form of Borges' story does not try to go beyond its limits, but the content plays with the idea of infinity. Since Borges' story works on a meta-level with the frame tale, and the labyrinth, there are two divergent story lines that work with form and content in very different ways. This is reminiscent of the postmodern hypertext theory developed by Stuart Moulthrop in the early 1990s. He thinks about and understands hypertext as a way to create multiple forms of communication,

yet by writing about the practice in a linear print-based¹ form he ironically creates a paradox. *Borges'* short story is guilty of the same paradox. I have to acknowledge, however, that the ability to create multiplicity in 1941 (the year of publication for “The Garden of Forking Paths”) was not a reality. Besides this is a theoretical discussion, not a practical one.

I anticipate that I will unearth other thematic issues in the text while investigating these ideas, such as how narrativity functions, metaphysical rudiments, and the roles of time and space. While these ideas may stray from the overall main idea, they are, nevertheless, secondary ideas for consideration. Many complex issues in the story weave in and out of the frame-tale and the secondary narrative. In some ways, there is seepage from the secondary level to the frame-tale. Take the title of *Borges'* story for instance; it seeps from Stephen Albert's discussion with Yu Tsun about Ts'ui Pen's work as the name of the overall story. The title of the story describes the subject and contents of the text. But Pen's novel *The Garden of Forking Paths* is metaphysical while *Borges'* story works with historical time in a simple narrative and includes the metaphysical with a complex narrative.

Background

The primary linear narrative is a detective-style, murder mystery-plot that follows the protagonist, Yu Tsun. He must send a message to Berlin regarding the whereabouts of an artillery park. Facing death, he travels to the home of Stephen Albert to transmit his message. Upon arrival, however, Tsun

¹ Moulthrop's hypertextual theory first appeared in Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher's collection *Evolving Perspectives on Computers and Composition Studies* in 1990, a print-based book.

realizes that Albert has been solving a riddle of Tsun's grandfather, Ts'ui Pen. The riddle is about a non-existent temporal novel, *The Garden of Forking Paths*. The primary linear narrative seems to pause while Albert and Tsun discuss Pen's novel. In these moments, a secondary metaphysical narrative develops, and it invites readers to consider multiplicity.

In "The Garden of Forking Paths," there are two solutions in the drama. The first is within the primary narrative where Tsun must send out a message (which he ultimately does). The second is Pen's novel that opens up a discussion about infinity. The reader of "The Garden of Forking Paths" must consider why Borges chose to interrupt the primary narrative with a more complex discussion. Stephen Rudy offers some conclusions:

The use of two plots of a murder mystery and a metaphysical mystery which runs imperceptibly parallel and counter to it is motivated by Borges' desire to upset any notion of plot understood as simple chronological causality, as well as the conception of reality which underlies such a notion. (140)

This analysis explains Borges' intention. We broadly understand plot as a sequence of events. Borges intentionally disrupts the plot. Malva E. Filer says,

... the destruction of chronological time means a negation of personal identity. Individual identity becomes illusory without the accumulation of recollections of past experiences that serve to support the self. If continuity is illusory, then what we have are "moments of man," not a man himself. (216)

Filer proposes that linearity is a false impression that we create. The implication, then, is that we confuse linearity and temporality; we mistake a characteristic of time as being linear.

Fiction and Fact

Fiction — often connected with novels and short stories—is an imaginative production. Fiction is the telling of stories that are not real. One of many memorable characters that follow this vein is the man from La Mancha, who attacks windmills and battles sheep. Don Quixote is something fabulous and legendary, but fictitious nonetheless. Yet Miguel de Cervantes reflects on fiction and fact in Part 2. An omniscient narrator records Quixote's adventures in Part I. After Cervantes finished Part I, a sequel appeared written by Alonso Fernandez de Avellaneda (See Riley I). Enraged by the perpetrator, Cervantes wrote a scathing response in Part 2 of *Don Quixote*. What is unique, however, about Part 2 is how Cervantes has Quixote learn of the recording of his adventures and has him reflect on those records. The fictional character becomes a historical narrative within another novel, read by the protagonist of the first novel. This is interesting when we consider that the first novel reflects on the way fictions apply to external reality. As scholar E. C. Riley comments in an introduction to *Don Quixote*:

The confrontation is between two kinds of fiction, one highly romantic, and the other relatively realistic. As such, the latter is certainly not authentic biography or history such as is accepted as recording life. But this is just what Cervantes' fiction pretends to do, and in a fairly elaborate way. There is talk of historians, annals, and archives. We find that the text reaches instability in trying to contain fiction from fact (ix). Borges is not the first writer to reflect how fiction and fact intertwine. He does

so by introducing a metaphysical plot into the historical actions of Yu Tsun, Richard Madden, and Liddell Hart. Stephen Rudy claims this is to disrupt the reading of the two plot-lines, the detective and the metaphysical (135).

Certainly, it disrupts our causal reading process, especially, when we read a text for the first time. Usually, we think of fiction and fact in terms of two oppositional poles. We define fiction as imagination and fact as actuality. With our imagination, we perceive something not fully recognizable to the senses or a conjuring of a mental image never perceived in reality. The term *fact* generally applies to information that has an objective reality. We usually think of imagination as the internal or immaterial and fact as the external and material. When we engage in the internal, there are nebulous thoughts, impressions, and experiences that do not have a sense of order, structure, or chronology. And, to a certain degree, when we connect with the external, there still is no sense of linearity. We perceive the internal and external without any constructions and place structures on our collective nebulous occurrences. When we sit to write or tell a story, we use the structure of language to order a singular narrative to convey intonation. In this conveyance, we use writing and speaking to impose order on the fluxes of thoughts, impressions, and experiences. We can say that the act of writing thus limits immateriality because we bring the immaterial into the material using language. In applying this to the oppositional poles of fiction and fact in a text, we find commonality. Precisely, it is through material acts that we impose order on the immaterial. Both fiction and fact share an element, which is a sense of order that comes from narrative writing.

Narrativity and Multiplicity

The method of fictional production is narrative writing. A narrative is an account of events. There are two varieties of narrative: “simple narrative, which recites events chronologically, as in a newspaper account; and narrative with plot, which is less often chronological and more often arranged according to a principle determined by the nature of the plot and the type of story intended” (Hannon 340). We find both examples in Borges’ “The Garden of Forking Paths.” Within the narratives, we find a major point that Borges reflects upon: the inability to stabilize meaning in a text. Borges has commented on the narrative path in his work: “In all fictions, whenever several solutions present themselves, men choose one and eliminate all the others; in the fiction of the almost inextricable Ts’ui Pen they are all chosen simultaneously” (qtd. in Macherey 81). However, this does not give us a rich explanation about the effects we feel while reading the story.

The metaphysical narrative in “The Garden of Forking Paths” mirrors the act of reading. A labyrinth is a complex maze full of blind alleys and intricate passageways. The symbol of a labyrinth can be a state of bewilderment, or, as critic Ethan Weed remarks, a prison. The idea of a prison, then, is as a place of confinement. As Weed remarks,

But the image of a prison which is a labyrinth is much more symbolically charged, probably because the experience of being lost, of moving without a clear direction, is one which we all recognize, and which is a powerful metaphor for our experience of our mortal lives ... To move through a labyrinth is to explore an unknown space. (162)

Relating to “Garden,” this idea is akin to reading. When we sit down with a book for the first time, it is unknown; we explore

the world of the text. It is new and we feel uncertain; however, there is an escort within the text. As Weed goes on to say, “In general, a narrative text acts as a guide to itself. It helps the reader move along its paths, discover its secrets” (162). In this fashion, the labyrinth is the guide in Borges’ “Garden.” It acts to move the reader along the detective plot to eventually open up multiple possibilities. The simple narrative runs along a thread, and, at any moment, that thread can shoot into multiple threads. What is significant about this idea, especially, is that the reader can visualize this at any given point in the text. Ralph Yarrow comments:

... there are points in a text (any point, by implication) where the reader, like the writer, may seize not only upon the self-perpetuating inventiveness of narrative and decide to draw on any particular [sic] association or link to give the text a new twist, but the reader or writer is also aware at that moment of holding within his grasp (in his imaginative or magical power) the secret or possibility of all future developments of that text. He is at the point where the paths fork. (77-8)

Applied to “Garden,” critics have responded to the idea of multiplicity as evidence of its existence or denial in a text. The reader may be able to conjure up all possible futures, yet does the text actually contain those futures, or does it distinguish the other strands in favor of one? This is relevant to consider as the concept of infinity functions as a theory. Writing about infinity functions as a theory, but playing with infinity in a meta-level text becomes problematic as, while there multiple ways the paths can fork (a single narrative versus multiple narratives), the form of the narrative still appears in a closed, finite system.

“The Garden of Forking Paths”

The title of Borges' work is an important part of the story as it *suggests* continuity, an uninterrupted connection along space and especially time, within the materiality of language. The continuity resides within the title through the relationship the words create, as well as the text itself in an intricate design of the “labyrinth.” The nouns and verb have multiple meanings separately, but linked together form a unifying meaning. First, *garden* can mean a plot of ground or a well-cultivated region. A garden is a foundation for other objects, which are plants. As plants grow, they fork into many stalks or branches. If nothing interrupts the continuity of the plant's growth, it theoretically continues forking infinitely. Second, *forking* means the division into two or more branches or confluence. The preceding definition of *forking* is most evident in the image of the plant growing into many stalks. Also, the definition of *forking* is the coming together of two streams to a place of meeting. Third, *path* means a course or route—a continuous series of configurations that we assume to be in motion or in the process of changing by moving. The *path* can be a literal path like a walkway or metaphorical like a direction or course of human existence. In the dialogue between Dr. Stephen Albert and Yu Tsun, Albert says, “I imagined as well a Platonic. [sic] hereditary work. transmitted [sic] from father to son, in which each new individual adds a chapter or corrects with pious care the pages of his elders (Borges 7). The paths of the “the garden of forking paths” written by Tstui Pen are metaphorical paths along the course of human existences from father to son. This implies an infinite path through generations. In the end, the title suggests an infinite number of paths that continually change or move; however, it is this suggestion that leaves us questioning the stability of the title because of the materiality of language.

Language tries to express the immaterial using material structures. If *The Garden of Forking Paths* contemplates an infinite work, we use the title to express the immaterial (infinite) using the material (bounded by words). For now, we accept that there is a foundation for growth into many infinite directions although contrary to the boundaries of physical edges.

Using materiality to describe the immaterial is difficult because we never understand *whole* to mean only a part or *fragment* of that meaning. Meaning is a significant quality of some object whether hidden or unbidden. The second paragraph points to fragmentary meaning of what is left unwritten or unsaid, with “the first two pages of the document are missing” (Borges 1). The document is Dr. Yu Tsun’s personal account of his actions on one day in 1916. His account is singular; it works by ordering specific events along a timeline to create a linear narrative.

The precision of Tsun’s account prompts us to consider if he did experience the events in a linear way. The narrative account exists solely to comment on how we order our experiences in a chronological, highly structured way. In a novel, for instance, there is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Novels have material limits in their physical existence, but in the existence of the narrative, specifically the text of Ts’ui Pen, we question infinity in time of an infinite narrative (not in space because of the physical boundary of the text). Borges explores these oppositions within his text, especially within this second paragraph, with linearity/non-linearity.

The presentation of Tsun’s linear account supports the idea of linear narratives, such as historical, written, and verbal stories. The arrangement of linearity occurs in a highly structured way by ordering events along a singular timeline to convey information to an audience. Borges, on the other hand, plays with the idea of the fragment of Tsun’s account to suggest that

the boundaries we create in a linear fashion are not very strong because we are missing the whole account. When we convey information, we tell fragments of our nebulous occurrences in a singular, chronological manner. We are never able to convey the whole meaning because it is immaterial and beyond our reach. Furthermore, narrative tells relevant information and leaves out the irrelevant. The more specific and detailed the narrative, the better the story. Borges specifically meditates on these ideas. **Since Borges left off two pages of Tsun's account**, we initially understand that the first two pages are irrelevant, especially as **the rest of Tsun's account is highly specific and detailed**. Yet in the beginning Tsun's account is a fragment of a much larger whole. Thus, we consider the meaning of the fragment as having greater immaterial significance. The fragmentary nature of Tsun's account is analogous to a simple narrative in the way it orders events along a timeline because it leaves out the greater whole.

We find a simple narrative in Tsun's statement. The ordering of events looks something like: recognition of the voice of Captain Richard Maddan, Tsun's potential death, knowing the location of the new British artillery park, getting the message to his superior, traveling to Dr. Stephen Albert's house, discussing "the garden of forking paths," and killing Dr. Albert. Within this timeline, Tsun does not recount any alternative paths. Indeed Tsun's statement is a linear, or simple, narrative. Conversely, we find a narrative with plot during Tsun's conversation with Dr. Albert. The principle of this narrative is to illuminate the work of Ts'ui Pen. Embedded within **Tsun's** chronological narrative is a space that interrupts that narrative. In this space, Albert reflects upon the idea that spatial existences are contrary to Ts'ui Pen's thoughts on how the universe of the narrative spreads out and keeps going infinitely. This gives us a new narrative to consider, not a simple narrative or narrative with plot, but an exploration

into the inability to stabilize meaning within narrative because of the interruption of the simple narrative.

The lack of instability of fiction and fact occurs in other levels of **Borges'** text, specifically the opening paragraph. The frame of the story begins with **Borges'** paraphrasing historiography in the opening paragraph. Merriam-Webster defines *historiography* as “the writing of history based on the critical examinations of sources, the selection of particulars from the authentic materials, and the synthesis of particulars into a narrative that will stand the test of critical methods.” Historiography has a different meaning than history. Generally, history means a story or a chronological record of events. Historiography, specifically, is the writing of history, instead of the mere recording of events. In effect, **Borges'** rewriting of Liddell Hart's *History of World War I* gives us a new voice to consider. This voice creates a new path for us to follow, in effect creating another meaning of Hart's original text. Consider:

On page 22 of Liddell Hart's *History of World War I* you will read that an attack against the Serre-Montauban line by thirteen British divisions (supported by 1,400 artillery pieces), planned for the 24th of July, 1916, had to be postponed until the morning of the 29th. (**Borges** 1)

Borges' act of paraphrasing Hart's text is branching from Hart's historiography. We must then consider **Borges'** narrative as a new path. This implication reaches far into a theoretical infinite process. An example to help illustrate this process is an image of an object between two facing mirrors. The object, positioned correctly, will appear to replicate its form and mirror image to—in theory—infinity. If another reader/writer of **Borges'** first paragraph paraphrases **Borges'** narrative, the new path jumbles into a theoretical infinite path. Follow this example: There is another reader of **Borges'** narrative who writes a new narrative

based on Borges' narrative. Borges' narrative is a new narrative of Hart's narrative based on the writing of events that Hart originally experiences immaterially and then orders in a material, chronological manner.

Another way to approach this idea is through the scholarship of Daniel Balderston, who does comment on how Borges' writing creates new paths. He says, "So, for example, in his poem "El otro tigre" Borges suggests that the writer's attempt to refer to something is an endless, and constantly frustrated, process. Borges evokes the images of tigers in books, describes tigers he remembers, imagines tigers in the jungle. Yet the tiger is irreducibly other: there is always "*El otro tigre, el que no esta en el verso*" (347). Borges uses historical segments in many of his writings, and, in doing so, he alters history into a fictional account. History becomes contaminated with fiction, and fiction is contaminated with history. Stephen Rudy explores this pollution further by quoting Ronald Christ's *The Narrow Act*. Christ writes, "One the one hand Borges taints the reality which his sources describe; on the other he corrupts the authenticity of those sources themselves; in both cases the motive is to penetrate the metaphysical world which lies beyond fact and substance..." (qtd. in Rudy 134).

Moreover, the Liddell Hart passage removes us from the fiction of the story into our reality. Ethan Weed observes this phenomenon by writing:

In fact, the reference to Liddell Hart is problematic, starting with the fact the [sic] Hart's own words do not appear in the story. Liddell Hart is a real, historical person, who has written various books on European wars, but apparently none of them are called *Historia de la Guerra en Europa* ... Another problem: the story "The Garden of Forking Paths" has also been published several times, with

different page numbers in the reference to Liddell Hart. ... But the seed of doubt is already present in the text, when an allusion is made to a real book calling it by a similar but fallacious name.... So Christ is right when he says that the fiction of “The Garden of Forking Paths” is grafted onto history, but the writer who tries to find page 242 of *Historia de la Guerra en Europa* is justified in asking himself what sort of “history” this is.... “The Garden of Forking Paths” appropriates Hart’s book, and creates a new book, written by another “Liddell Hart,” which is parallel, but distinct. (165, 167)

Borges’ false allusion to Liddell Hart’s history book is a prime example of the contamination of fiction and reality. Borges alludes to a title of a book that is not accurate and references a paragraph on a page number that is inaccurate. Unless readers take the time to look up Liddell Hart’s work, then the full effect of the contamination does not happen for them. It is only when readers do take the time to look up the reference and reflect upon fact and fiction that the stability of Borges’ text begins to weaken.

Boundaries and Boundlessness

The very definition of *infinity* is an unlimited extent of time, space, or quantity: boundlessness. However, the example of a theoretical infinite image of an object between two facing mirrors and the theoretical infinite act of paraphrasing a paraphrase of a paraphrase (and so on) is contradictory to the definition of infinity. It is contradictory because both examples have containment issues. They are both bounded by the edges of the mirrors (the image only replicates inside the edges of the mirror, thus violating the “space” aspect of the definition of infinity), and bounded by the materiality of language (by using language to describe the immaterial, thus violating space and

quantity) and the edges of the bound book (again, in this case violating space). Dr. Albert meditates upon this contradictory idea in his dialogue:

Before unearthing this letter, I had questioned myself about the ways in which a book can be infinite. I could think of nothing other than a cyclic volume, a circular one. A book whose last page was identical with the first, a book which had the possibility of continuing indefinitely. (Borges 7)

He thinks a book can potentially be infinite: a cyclic volume that continually loops the last page to the first page, which is similar to the object between two facing mirrors continuing forever, even if the mirrors are, nonetheless, bounded by physical edges. He goes on to say:

I remembered too that night which is at the middle of the *Thousand and One Nights* when Scheherazade (through a magical oversight of the copyist) begins to relate word for word the story of the *Thousand and One Nights*, establishing the risk of coming once again to the night when she must repeat it, and thus on to infinity. (Borges 7)

Although Scheherazade must repeat the story and the story loops from the last story to the first, there are boundaries of the telling of the story, the quantity of stories, and time. Any element that is not a part of these boundaries will break the seemingly infinite loop because it has boundaries after all. However, Albert confronts this instability by suggesting Pen's novel is "chaotic" and "forking in time, not space." Ultimately, this final statement confirms that Pen's novel is finite since it violates space. Therefore, we consider that the novel operates in multiplicity. Albert says, "in the fiction of Ts'ui Pen, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them" (Borges 7). There are multiple

narratives and multiple meanings to Pen's novel. This multiplicity resides in opposition to the singular, linear narrative.

What is unique about history is it provides original documentation, primary and secondary sources, in the order of occurrence. It is unique because history acts to provide multiple sources, but inevitably orders the sources along a timeline, which becomes a singular narrative. This singular narrative suppresses other narratives, other alternatives. Albert reflects upon the choices in fiction: "In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others..." (Borges 7). Since history and fiction share a commonality—narrative—and seek to order events along a timeline, we are able to say that a historian or historiographer, confronted with several historical accounts about events, chooses one and eliminates the others to create a singular narrative.

Conclusion

In "The Garden of Forking Paths," the structures of fiction and fact fall apart. Borges specifically writes about multiplicity in meaning to question the assumptions of structures. By exploring the instability of the supporting characteristics of fiction and fact, we find much opposition: linearity and non-linearity, fragment and whole, and boundlessness and boundaries. By examining binary oppositions in the text, we are able to challenge the logic of the structures within the text. These oppositions allow us to confront the containment of meaning within any structure. The organization of the text becomes chaotic, where the meaning becomes ambiguous, multiple, and impossible to pin down. We find that the binary oppositions collapse, and contaminate each other. Ultimately, the underlying structures collapse in the wake of challenges to its structures. This implies that we cannot

contain meaning, ambiguity, and multiplicity within any structure, because their very natures resist containment.

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SUFFOCATING

Cory Jackson

My friends, Mark Mechanic, Nick Hunter and Jeremy Stafford stood serenely next to me at the edge of the earth-walled grave. I was counting the seconds, as I'm sure they were, trying to calculate the proper time of stoic, public mourning necessary to convey the solemn, grieving look I was going for. It was hot underneath the dark suit I'd borrowed from my father and I could feel the sweat pooling in the creases of my pants and undershirt.

"God damn it," I thought. "Why couldn't he have died in January?" I imagined the air crisp and cold around me, clouds of breath emitting from my mouth and the mouths of my friends. The miserable, biting chill of the weather would do wonders for my demeanor. I could see us all around the grave, huddling our heads between our shoulders to shield our red cheeks from frostbite. That's the way mourning should look. Instead, I could feel my nose starting to burn and peel, that hot spit in the back of my throat and small, successive drops of sweat beading down the line of my spine.

I closed my eyes and dreamed of burying this poor son of a bitch in the winter. There's nothing more unsettling and depressing than a funeral in June, when there's still fun to be had – girls trying to hold onto bikinis at the swimming pool, late nights spent playing inane video games, pick-up basketball games and the smell of sand and concessions from the baseball field hanging in your nostrils. But I suppose we should've thought about all that before we killed him.

Suicide has lost all of its charm and mystery in the Information Age; everything's traceable and easily reconstructed thanks to gossip and social networking. Back in the good old

days, if you didn't leave a note, all the police and your loved ones had to go on was speculation. There's a kind of immortality in their perpetual, unending questions. Wondering what prevented them from diagnosing your desire and then putting it away in a drawer with all their other heartaches.

We all knew, however, why David Quinn had hurled himself headfirst off the library roof, even if we all collectively and wordlessly decided to pretend that we didn't. It was the same reason my friends kept searching each other's faces for a clue about how to look or a hint at how to feel.

The reason we stood marinating between layers of clothes that particular Sunday morning in June and the reason David lay dead and bloated with embalming fluid, forever painted up and polished to look like a fallen angel six feet below us, were the same. Her name was Maria Sparkman.

As far as any of us knew, Maria Sparkman wasn't Hispanic, but she was Catholic in that perfunctory, hand-me-down kind of way. I don't think she ever went to Mass, which I could relate to; I hadn't been to Temple since my Bar Mitzvah four years ago, when my parents stopped making me go. The most Catholic thing Maria did, aside from haunting our boyhood dreams in a plaid skirt and white button-up, was occasionally wearing a rosary made of polished bone looped around her wrist. While the beads reminded her to meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life, we meditated only on the mysteries of her soft flesh.

We'd known Maria since grade school and had carefully watched with a kind of feigned, quiet disinterest as she courted her newfound sexuality clumsily, packing her new breasts and hips into childhood blouses and jeans and unwittingly leaving slack-jawed adolescent boys in her wake. I was in her first-period class in ninth grade the day she began wearing blush and lip-gloss and rushed to report it to the guys. Mark swore he'd seen a quarter-inch of her white cotton panties when she leaned

forward to pick up a dropped pencil a year and a half ago. We weren't sure whether to believe him or not.

Yet her allure was contained in a small environment and failed to translate into attention from the seniors of our high school. For them, her awkward steps and inadvertent beauty were considered alluring, but also inexperienced, and, more important, jailbait. With the underclassmen too intimidated to pounce on her and the seniors successfully corralled by fear, we juniors were alone in our careful observation and, unbelievably, Maria appeared to be untouched.

The same can be said for the rest of the girls in our class. They were blossoming with equal verve and regularity, but their transformations were less magnificent, or so it seemed to us, since we'd watched Maria change from a six-year-old, frizzy-haired, skinny tomboy into a sixteen-year-old curvaceous, raven-haired goddess with piercing eyes and cleavage that threatened to burst through her top and reduce us all to worshipping sycophants.

The changes in Maria and the other girls around us frustrated our hopes and made us grow to disdain our own bodies' stubborn resistance to change; we carefully scoured our chests, upper lips and jaw lines for hair, our hands for the rough patches our fathers had grown and our souls for the wisdom that grows like a slow burning fire—any sign that we were no longer boys, but had become entirely new creatures, creatures with beards and calluses that feared only layoffs and tax season, but we remained the same, suffocating in a skin we were unable to cast off.

Maybe if we'd lived in some ancient civilization or in some forgotten part of the world, this wouldn't have happened. Instead of finding themselves mired in adolescent ambiguity, boys in those cultures are taken from their mothers at the age my friends and I were learning long division. Those boys are then

circumcised or scarred, beaten and mangled by the men of the society. They're inducted into this pantheon of myth, which encompasses all of life, death, and, most important, sex. When these boys return home, they look at their bodies—burned, maimed and broken—and know that these are not the bodies of the children they were. These bodies could belong only to the men that they had become.

Nature still accomplishes this task for women, letting the menstrual cycle guide a girl's transformation. The second the first drop of blood and genetic material touches her panties, there is a fundamental change in the body, mind and soul of a woman that makes her trade in her Barbies and baby dolls for lipstick and blush. Meanwhile, my friends and I still looked at our erections like new toys without an operations manual. There was nothing and no one to tell us to grow up and so we never did.

I'm not one for making excuses or apologies, really. I hate it when people hide behind faith, duty or society, but that's exactly what I'm going to do because it's the only way to make sense of all this. If I had to say why we did it, why we poisoned Maria and drove David to suicide, I have to admit that it must have had something to do with the desire to grow up.

The verse that the pastor read as we did our best to look sorry enough seems to reinforce my thoughts. Standing there among the other two hundred or so students from our high school, my friends and I looked up to his face for the first time during the service and he seemed to be looking straight at us.

“David was a passionate child who would have made a daring and courageous young man. Already, he was showing his capacity for such things in his studies, his hobbies and aspirations. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians, ‘when I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things.’ David can

serve as a model and a guide for the other young souls here today. The bell is tolling on your youth; adulthood is nearing.”

I didn’t recognize the verse then, but it’s burned in my brain now. I remember thinking, “Great. Even God is telling us all to grow up, but no one is telling us how.” At the beginning, we all felt compelled by a force we could not name to fulfill some rite or ritual, but we didn’t know what to do; we just knew we had to do something. Then, if we survived, we would be men.

David’s infatuation with Maria must have mirrored our own, but my friends and I were too focused on our own observation to notice we were not alone in our admiration. I can recall now glimpses of David’s brown hair and tortoise-shell glasses disappearing behind corners or ducking below textbooks while Nick, Mark, Jeremy and I crowded around Maria, but I can’t be positive that I haven’t simply invented these instances to make sense of everything that happened afterward. The relationship between David and Maria seems to have been isolated to symbiotic Spanish conjugation rehearsals. Those who sat near them report David struggling over basic phrases.

“*¿Tu tienes gusto de ir para una caminata?*” he would ask frequently. Another favorite of his—“*¿Vayamos a las películas?*”—was met with similar casual indifference by Maria, who always responded in the affirmative, but only in the context of their practice session. It is also likely that Maria simply did not know how to respond negatively in Spanish; she literally did not know how to say *no*.

I imagine David suffering the anxiety of asking her out over and over again, only never to see Maria’s acceptance of the invitations materialize, and I think about what Maria was likely doing while she was inadvertently standing him up at the park or the movies. Who was she sleeping with instead of keeping her promises to David? Nick? Mark?

Was David somewhere waiting for her the afternoon Maria and I went upstairs to Nick's bedroom?

Nick had picked me up only about five minutes after I'd stepped off the bus in front of my house. I'd had time to drop my books in front of the stairs, the one place my mom asked me not to drop them, and pull a button-up collared shirt over my t-shirt before I heard his horn sounding from the driveway. I had looked in the full-length mirror at the bottom of the stairs before closing the door behind me and jumping off the porch. My glasses had not been crooked for once and my acne was still in remission thankfully. All I could do is shrug at my unmanageable loosely curled brown hair; it had an agenda of its own and seldom consulted me.

On the way across the lawn, I had tried not to think about Maria or what was supposed to happen that day. Instead, I tried to laugh about the wildly exaggerated stories Nick had shared with us about his sex life with Maria. That's how this had all been set in motion, with Nick finally managing to utter a few words in her presence.

Luckily for him, those words were not entirely reprehensible or at least not to Maria. The way Nick tells it, he had been in third-period English, trying not to let Mrs. Hager's regurgitation of anecdotes about Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* get in the way of his daily nap. When the class had been forced to pair up and discuss a particular scene, the Fates smiled on him and Nick was paired with Maria.

Instead of ruminating on the themes of Renaissance drama, Nick had taken the opportunity to apprise Maria of the latest revision to his planned sleeve of tattoos, his recent acquisition of a certain rock-and-roll album and his desire to start a garage band. That Maria had not simply recoiled from his presence and conversation made Nick confident enough to invite her to sit with us at lunch.

Soon after that, Nick had started forgoing long-established friendship duties in favor of spending time with Maria and, though they had not become what was called “official,” the extent of their relationship had become pretty evident.

“Last night, guys, she had fourteen orgasms,” he would tell us, with the number always hovering between nine and nineteen. “I was just doing my best to hold on. That girl’s crazy; she sucked my dick and swallowed and everything.”

Mark, Jeremy and I had begun exchanging sideways glances when presented with a particularly specious account of the previous night’s proceedings. The Maria we knew didn’t even like it when her food touched, always grimacing and picking the corn from her mashed potatoes when it spilled over its allotted indent in the cafeteria tray.

It had been a Tuesday morning in May when Nick showed us the smudged Polaroids he’d taken of Maria. The lighting was yellowish from the flash and, consequently, her naked body burned with a bright red luminosity in the photographs. It had seemed different than seeing a celebrity or a porn star without clothes because those type of people were rarely dressed, whereas Maria’s body had evolved in a vacuum that seemed, until recently, to be unreachable by man. To be honest, the sight of her bare breasts had excited me, as did the curve of her alabaster hips, but I had also felt disenchanted. Maria was more entrancing clothed, in the same way the Kennedys are more handsome and intimidating in black and white; in color, they just seem bloated, red-faced and squinty. Looking at her naked had felt like I was seeing her out of context.

Not long after that, Nick began to suggest that we all involve Maria more. At first, Mark, Jeremy and I had been uniform in our displeasure, coughing “Yoko” in unison whenever she would show up uninvited. But it was only a matter of time before the ranks were divided. Nick had confronted Mark about our

treatment of Maria and Mark had explained logically that we had no obligation to tolerate or include Maria. We weren't fucking her, Nick was.

I think that right around this point is when Nick began feeling alone on the other side of the line, on the borderlands that surrounded manhood. I suspect he felt lonely without his friends because three days later Mark had sex with Maria and the two initiated members of our league began talking in odd ways that included lot of snickering and elbowing each other. Nick had not been jealous; in fact, he had facilitated the entire ordeal, offering up his bed and experienced advice.

"Bring her leg up over her head, man," he told Mark. "She'll go apeshit."

And then it had been my turn. I shivered a little on the way to the car. We had been suffering an unusual chilly spell that week, as if the seasons hadn't quite made up their mind to change. I had grasped the door handle of Nick's '95 Honda Civic and slid into the passenger seat. Nick had been wearing the same Nirvana hoodie he'd had since freshman year and had the hood pulled up, covering his spiked hair, held firmly in place by the careful application of countless sprays, gels and mousses.

"Sorry it's still kinda cold in here," he had said, turning to face me. His skin was pitted with the scarred tissue of a preteen bout with acne that had attacked with the vigor of the plague and had similar effects. "The car hasn't had time to warm up yet."

He paused for a second. "You ready?"

I just nodded. It didn't matter if I was or not; it had to happen.

As weird as it sounds, I wasn't even looking forward to the sex with Maria. I had just wanted to get it over with so there might be some equilibrium among the four of us again, instead of Nick and Mark always talking over our heads and spelling things out like Jeremy and I were in kindergarten. It was my turn

to cross the threshold. Our friendship hierarchy, long ago established in lunch lines and Little League batting lineups, had dictated that I was up next. Just as it had always been John, Paul, George and Ringo, it had been and would always have to be Nick, Mark, Jude and Jeremy.

“Are you sure Maria’s up for this?” I had asked.

“Are you kidding, man?” he answered. “Definitely.”

Nick was my best friend, but that didn’t make me blind to his faults. Even back then, I knew that Nick had never let the truth interfere with what he believed or wanted you to think. Although most of the time his lies had not been an issue, serving only as a vehicle for his own self-aggrandizement, I worried about this particular situation, but questioning him would not have yielded any new information, only more wildly spun tales verifying his initial statement.

Before picking Maria up in front of her palatial colonial-style house, Nick honked the horn in the parking lot of Mark’s apartment building. Mark peaked his head over the balcony and came down the stairs, discarding his cigarette and exhaling a puff of smoke before opening the door and motioning for me to move to the back.

“When did you start smoking?” I asked him as I climbed over the armrests and into the cramped back seat.

Mark zipped up his brown imitation leather jacket before ducking into the car.

“I’m trying to look older,” he said.

If anyone had cause to attempt this, it was Mark, with his baby face and dirty blonde hair. Last summer, he could still get into the pool for children’s admission prices if he combed his hair straight down into his face. By this time, however, he’d taken to parting it on the right and letting the rest slant downward over his forehead.

“You’re not going to pussy out on us, are you, Jude?” he asked me.

“He’ll be fine,” Nick answered for me.

A few minutes later, after we scraped the curb in front of her house, she slid wordlessly past me and dropped into the back seat.

“Hands to yourself back there, you two,” Mark said.

But the rest of the car ride was silent. I kept watching Maria, waiting for her to wink or smile at me, but she did neither. Instead, she just stared out the window at nothing in particular. Here I was, perhaps minutes away from losing my virginity and I felt positive I had never known less about women, specifically the one that sat next to me with her curly auburn hair falling in ringlets around her green-and-yellow sweater as she nonchalantly blew bubbles with her gum that smelled like strawberries.

Nick pulled into the driveway, allowing the car to slow to a stop before easing the transmission into neutral and setting the parking brake. I waited for Mark to pull himself up out of the car and then clambered back out into the sunlight. I should have offered Maria my hand instead of looking up at the basketball hoop that had hosted countless games of two on two because when she climbed out of the car, her foot got caught on the seatbelt and she nearly fell into the garden surrounding Nick’s porch before she steadied herself against Mark’s shoulder. Then she quickly retracted her arm from him.

When we walked through Nick’s front door, I looked at the staircase I’d bounded up a million times and didn’t recognize it. Nick motioned ostentatiously to it.

“Right this way,” he said.

I had been getting increasingly irritated with the way they were patronizing me, but I put that aside for the moment and focused on the mind-numbing anxiety that was consuming me.

“Aren’t you guys coming up?” I asked them.

They looked at me, puzzled.

“No,” Nick said. Then he whispered into my ear so Maria couldn’t hear. “We’re going to go pick up Jeremy and maybe today will be his lucky day too.”

“You guys’ll be fine on your own, right?” Mark asked, smiling.

Neither Maria nor I answered him. As they opened the front door to leave, Maria squeezed past me and headed up the stairs, running her hand along the wood banister. I followed her up with my hands at my sides, staring at the back of her jeans before she disappeared into Nick’s bedroom.

I was only thinking about how it wasn’t happening right. In movies and on television, couples always disappeared together into a room amid a flurry of kisses, arched backs and breathy whispers. When I entered Nick’s room, Maria was already sitting on his twin bed, pushing her tennis shoes off with her feet while gritting her teeth from the effort.

I counted the steps it would take to reach her and measured them carefully, letting out equally timed breaths as I made my way to her. I leaned down and kissed her with my hand on her shoulder. Her lips were rigid and dry against mine, but I still remember feeling excited. I pulled back and opened my eyes to find hers had been open the whole time, staring at me.

“Okay,” she said and lifted her top over her head.

I put my hand on her shoulder to stop her.

“Wait. Shouldn’t we be undressing each other?” Here was the rookie telling the MVP how to play the game.

“I guess,” she said.

I celebrated the small victory quietly in my head. This was more in line with the sex I’d seen commercialized and sold for years on television—passionate tousling and the agonizingly slow undressing of one another before the man climbs on top of the

woman and she arches her back and sighs. But then I couldn't get Maria's bra off and struggled again pulling her jeans past her ankles. In the end, she undressed both of us and told me to wait while she got comfortable on the bed. She coiled her bone white rosary into a small pile on the nightstand.

The mystery was gone.

"Okay," she said, smoothing out the bedspread under her. "Now, you can come here."

"Finally," I remember thinking. I had felt exponentially dumber and more embarrassed every second I'd stood there at the foot of the bed, naked with an erection and staring at her. Her breasts seemed smaller than I remembered from the pictures and my imagination and I could see the bones in her ribcage pushing into her skin. She seemed so fragile I was afraid I'd break her. She had her legs pulled close together, showing only a small patch of light brown pubic hair. I traced the line of her body out at her chest and back inward past her hips, down her legs to her feet, which still looked small and delicate, like a child's. She seemed to be looking past me, but she motioned for me to get on the bed with her.

She had not noticed my concave chest or skinny arms, my **bony hips, hadn't** even taken an interest in an essential element for what was about to transpire – my penis. But she did notice that I still had my socks on.

"Christ, take your socks off," she said laughing.

I had to laugh to cover my embarrassment, suddenly more self-conscious about my socks than my naked body, and then I obeyed.

I climbed on top of her and felt her breathing against my chest. She felt warm underneath me, with her pubic hair brushing against mine and her nipples making tiny indentions in my chest I can still feel. I looked up to her face to kiss her again, but she was looking away from me, toward the window. I kissed

her neck instead and, for a second, she moved, almost imperceptibly under me and moaned. There was a smell in the air like baby powder and slowly wilting flowers.

“Are you ready?” I whispered to her, barely able to control my breathing. I could feel the heat from her body on my groin.

“Yes.”

But I wasn't. I looked down to find I had suddenly lost my erection. I ran my hand across my body and felt the cold dampness of my humiliation. When I fumbled awkwardly to stand up and escape from between her legs, my knee touched the wet spot on the sheet. I pushed Maria from the center of the bed over to the side and pulled the blankets up to cover our naked bodies. I still felt cold under the blankets and I could feel Maria, unsatisfied, wondering what had happened, lying next to me.

“What's wrong?” she asked.

“Nothing,” I said. I could feel the blood on my cheeks pooling, making me blush. I was so ashamed and angry I had to fight back tears.

“I don't want to do this. Right now. With you.”

I had turned onto my side and was looking her in the eye for what must've been the first time and I could see that she understood. I wanted to die.

“I'm sorry,” I said, with a tear breaching my eye duct. “I wanted to. I just...” I looked down to her breasts and her soft, inviting body and hated myself even more.

“It's okay,” Maria said in a girlish voice and pushed one of my curls out of my face. And I've never been in love with any girl like I was with Maria Sparkman for those few stolen seconds when we were like children again, naked and innocent in a world made for us.

Then I thought about Nick and Mark downstairs, waiting on their newest recruit to saunter into the living room, and Jeremy, probably waiting on the bottom step, with his feet tapping

nervously on the floor. I did not think of David, who, at that very moment, might have been waiting for Maria at the park or the movies, always climbing higher and higher on foreign promises and feelings he could only begin to understand.

“Maria,” I said. “You have to tell them we did it.”

She just looked at me for a second and then turned away, moving to the edge of the bed where our bodies wouldn’t touch.

“I’m serious,” I said, with my voice cracking. “You have to tell them that we had sex and that it was good—as good as it was with Nick or Mark and as good as it will be with Jeremy, okay? Okay, Maria?”

“Whatever,” she mumbled. “I’ll tell them. Just go.”

She was looking out the window again and that warm feeling was gone. My stomach felt sick and there was bile in my throat. When I left the room, I looked back to the bed and she was still facing away. Her naked back was visible down to her shoulder blades and she was shaking like she might be crying. As far as I know, that’s how Jeremy found her when he entered the room thirty seconds later.

Nick, Mark and I waited in mostly silence after the requisite congratulations and high fives were exhausted. The television was on, but I wasn’t paying attention, thinking instead of how Jeremy was upstairs accomplishing what I could not.

Jeremy was the black sheep of the group, who, though undeniably our friend, served mostly to direct our insults and derision away from one another. He was somewhat overweight and wore clothes from the thrift store because his dad had been laid off from the Toyota plant last year. Now, his dad mostly stayed partially drunk in the recliner while his mother worked nights as a cleaning woman.

“He probably won’t be able to do it,” Nick said.

“Probably?” Mark asked in feigned disbelief. “He’ll come in his pants before he makes it to the bed.”

Just then, there was a loud thud and the unmistakable creak of bed springs.

Nick and Mark laughed and I shuddered, feeling the cold dampness underneath my clothes.

Their predictions were not unfounded. Before that day, Jeremy's experience with women was limited to a Canadian girlfriend we strongly suspected did not exist. He had insisted he'd met her while at Niagara Falls back when his family could still afford vacations. In the real world, all indications were that Jeremy had never even held a girl's hand.

But when Jeremy came back down the stairs a few minutes later, it was with a confidence we'd never seen in him before.

"Damn you, Jude," he said, punching me hard in the shoulder. Too hard for it to be playful. "You tired her all out; she didn't want to at first. I had to convince her," he laughed. Nick and Mark started laughing too, but I was facing the stairs and saw Maria step gingerly onto the landing.

She wasn't gliding down like she had when she'd ascended the stairs what seemed like just a few minutes ago. The others followed my gaze and stopped laughing. We all watched as she took each step slowly, leaning all of her weight against the railing. From where we were, we could see that she had a black eye and some bruises on her arms and neck. Her whole body shook each time she put weight on her left leg.

Jeremy made a quick escape, saying that he would walk home and Mark had his mom pick him up. Maria, Nick and I sat on the porch and waited for Mark to get into the car before we got into Nick's Civic. No one had asked Maria about the bruises and she hadn't said anything about them. Actually, she didn't say anything at all. The next and last time I heard her speak was when she told David to leave her alone in the hallway at school.

Even after Maria stepped out of the car and slowly made her way up the porch stairs, Nick didn't pull off. He waited until she

was inside before he grabbed my collar and pulled me toward him.

“What the fuck, man? I told you to fuck her, not to beat her to hell.”

“Are you serious?” I asked him with my voice breaking again. “I didn’t touch her. I didn’t do a god damn thing!”

He let go of my shirt and jerked the car into gear. When Nick pulled into my driveway, he told me to get the fuck out, that we were all going to be in deep shit because of me.

I knew why he didn’t believe me. Jeremy was an ineffectual nothing chump, barely capable of finishing a sentence around a girl. How could this same guy deliver such a beating on Maria? Nick and Mark didn’t believe that he could. But I saw the capability in his need for acceptance and reassurance. He would take what he needed.

It didn’t matter though. Maria never told anyone about my impotency or Jeremy’s abuse. How she appeased her parents or kept them from knowing I never knew. After that night, Nick ended his relationship with her by allowing it to atrophy into oblivion, which thereby ended all of our relationships with her. Nick and Mark went on believing I had beaten Maria so viciously and that Jeremy simply hadn’t noticed because of the low light. Jeremy kept letting them think that. I withdrew from them almost as fast as they excommunicated me.

The next time we were all in the same room was the day David killed himself by plummeting four stories off the new library roof and onto the cracked concrete that circled the practice fields. This was twelve days after the episode at Nick’s and one day after Maria pushed David away for the last time.

“Just leave me alone!” she’d shouted. It was heard through the entire eastern wing of the school and soon, a crowd had gathered. “I don’t care how you ask me—in Spanish or English—

I'm not going out with you. I can't go out with anyone, especially not you, David."

David was back against the lockers, as if the verbal assault had paralyzed him. The crowd was growing and Maria kept it up.

"Do you get it?" she asked. "I do not like you. *No tengo gusto de usted. ¿Comprende? Now, leave me alone!*"

No one knows what David said to her to set her off, but from her rant it's believed that he must have asked her out again, perhaps this time more directly. Maybe even in English. Perhaps seeing her with Nick had finally motivated him to mount a serious strike for fear he might not have another chance. It's hard to say now. All that's certain is that the next day he climbed the stairs to the fourth floor of the library and then up the rungs of the utility ladder, surveyed the ground below and then dove headfirst into the only thing more permanent and terrifying than sex—death.

The principal had ordered the entire school to the auditorium when he learned there was the smudge of a former student outside the library, adjacent to the field where the girls practiced softball and the parking lot the visiting parents and substitute teachers used. We were there, ostensibly, for grief management, but it was really to prevent students from gawking at what used to be David Quinn.

The next day, we were shuffled in and out of the makeshift offices in the foyer occupied by hastily drafted grief counselors, all of whom told us that David had been troubled for some time, that it had not been our fault, and it was a tragedy we would eventually recover from.

But David's dejection was unknown and alien to us all until after he was already dead. It was only after we had effectively ended our "relationship" with Maria that we, and the rest of the school, became aware of his unspoken devotion to her. And the tiny rejections rang indecipherably like a foreign language in his

ears next to the loud denial voiced in clear English from Maria herself almost two weeks after Nick, Mark and Jeremy started pretending not to recognize her in the hallway.

I, for one, saw Maria clearly during that week and a half. More so than I wanted. I knew her intimately now and she had seen me at my most vulnerable. Every time we passed in the hallway, our eyes met and I could feel the draft of the icy breeze she pushed in front of her blow right through me. My cheeks would redden and I would try to smile at her. She didn't smile back.

As far as any of us knew at the time or know even now, David's intentions were modest and pure—so much so that they could be voiced in a language he did not speak. His requests for her to spend time with him were easily expressed in his limited grasp of first-year Spanish because his desires were good and innocent, like those of school children, while our desires were such that we could not speak of them in a language we'd known our entire lives.

Instead, we used euphemisms and crude hand signals to hide our inexperience and guilt. We viewed Maria as merely a vehicle by which we might explore and exorcise our frustrations and demons—the intangible itches and compulsions that demand attention but have no resolutions.

As for the blame, I never wondered if it had all somehow been my fault. I knew it was. And the recovery the counselors spoke of that day was a pipe dream that promised a warm forgetfulness, but left you only to wake up cold and hungry somewhere you didn't know with your guilt as the only thing you could recognize.

I became a man, unwittingly and unwillingly, on the day David killed himself. A few days later, as I stood next to my former friends Nick, Mark and Jeremy around his grave, I could barely recognize them. Not because they'd changed, but because

I had, like when you move out of your parents' house and then come back to visit later; everything's shrunk and become distorted and the room where you spent eighteen years looks alien and unfamiliar because you've outgrown it.

I looked at my body, remembering the sticky, moist feeling from the afternoon with Maria, the bruise Jeremy's punch left on my arm and Nick's hands on my collar. I knew then that I had changed and that my friends remained the same. Children. I could see it then in the way they kept darting glances to and from one another and how their shoulders still sat level, totally unburdened by the terrible thing we'd done.

I knew then and still believe that being a man doesn't mean losing your virginity; it means being afraid. I used to think being a man meant only being scared of losing things—your job, your family, the World Series, your home and maybe your hair. But after David and Maria and all of this, I know that these things are just the daily headaches men focus on to distract themselves from what they really fear—that men are mostly just scared of themselves, the things of which they're capable and their inability to forgive themselves.

KITTENS

Jennifer Pritchard

I was pregnant. Or at least, judging by the three home pregnancy tests I took last week, I was. In general, I tried not to think about it.

I mostly babysat for my spending money. I lived way out in the sticks, but there were still several houses within walking distance that were willing to pay a nice young girl to sit their kids. The Handleys lived farthest away and also paid the least, but I still trudged the long mile and a half from the mouth of the hollow where my mother's house was situated to the Handleys' two-story white farm house, which was almost in the head of the hollow. The Handleys' two daughters, Kaitlyn and Alyssa, were relatively easy to handle. Kaitlyn, the pudgy, dark-haired nine-year-old, tended to spend most of her time reading *Harry Potter* or playing Nintendo games. Alyssa was three, going on four, and a blonde sweetheart, liable to say "I love you" to any stranger.

I also liked the Handleys because they scored only a six on my redneck scale. I was privately obsessed with rating everyone in terms of how redneck-ish they were. My dearest dream was to move to a place where most of the population wasn't at least a seven on the redneck scale. The Handleys both had full-time jobs and didn't have any rusted-out pick-up trucks in the yard or Confederate flags in their windows, so they rated lower than many of their neighbors.

I wasn't quite old enough to drive yet, but the walk didn't bother me so much. West Virginia in summertime can get pretty humid, but the Handleys usually wanted me to come over in the morning before the heat settled. I was actually enjoying the walk, admiring the morning glories and brown-eyed Susans that grew

along the side of the road. It was getting hot, but wasn't yet unpleasant.

It was a Saturday, so naturally the redneck neighbor boys were riding four-wheelers up and down the road. I could hear them coming before I saw them, a chorus of obnoxious engines revving and sputtering. I hated four-wheelers. Owning a four-wheeler automatically added two points to a person's redneck score. I moved to the side of the road to let them pass, but I heard them slow down as they came up behind me.

"Sara! Sara. Hey, Sara." A voice that I recognized as belonging to Richie Nelson called my name. I kept walking. "Aw, come on, Sara," he said.

I turned around. "What?"

His buddies, five or six other boys, each on their own four-wheelers, laughed at my sharp tone. It didn't seem to bother Richie. "When are you going to let me take you out again, huh?" He spat chewing tobacco on the ground and I rolled my eyes. I'd decided that Richie was about a twelve on my ten-point redneck scale.

"How's never?" I said, wishing that I could come up with a more original reply.

I turned around and started walking again. "Whatever," he said before he and his buddies sped past me. I put my hand over my stomach.

Richie was the father.

I had agreed to go out with Richie just one time. I didn't have a crush on him, didn't even particularly like him, but after months of him asking, I, in a moment of weakness, said that I would. He drove me into town in his black Chevy truck with the red door and we watched some horror movie. During the movie, I let him hold my hand. Afterwards, he didn't take me straight home, but drove us up in the head of a hollow—not my own. We parked at the foot of a hill. At the top of the hill, there was a

cemetery, but that didn't stop us from making out. I don't know what, exactly, I was thinking. I suppose that Richie was sort of handsome, in spite of the goofy grin and the mullet, but I had never been particularly attracted to him before that night. I had wanted to lose my virginity for some time because most of the girls in my class had. I didn't really have any romantic notions about this, I just wanted it over with. Richie may have been a redneck, but he was at least safe, non-threatening. I'd known him since we were little kids. We used a condom, but it broke. Knowing Richie, he'd probably been carrying the thing in his back pocket since he was twelve.

When I arrived at the Handleys' house to sit for the girls, I found that Mrs. Handley was late. She said a quick goodbye to me and the girls before heading out the door. I found Kaitlyn and Alyssa in the living room, watching *The Lion King*. Kaitlyn had a book with rats in medieval costumes printed on the cover and she glanced into it every now and then as if to pretend she didn't really care about the movie. Alyssa was sitting very close to the television screen and was singing a garbled version of "Hakuna Matata." I shrugged and walked into the kitchen. Mrs. Handley always left a list of light chores on the refrigerator and I usually preferred to get them done early.

Feed the cats, I read, at the top of the list. I sighed. The Handleys always kept no fewer than four skinny cats on the porch (okay, so maybe they were a seven on the redneck scale) and I hated how the yowling creatures would try to rush inside the house whenever I opened the door and I'd have to shoo them out. Mrs. Handley didn't allow animals in the house. Once, out of boredom and sympathy, I closed the door with a big black tom still inside. He'd paced around restlessly for about two minutes before he began scratching on the door, crying to be let back out.

I took two cups of dry cat food out of the big bag at the bottom of the pantry and went to the door. As soon as I stepped

outside, I was surrounded by a sea of fur. I always suspected that the cats could hear when someone took food out of the pantry. The one-eyed calico had four kittens at the moment and they were just getting big enough to follow her around or to scamper off on their own, both of which made that old mama sour. I dumped the cat food into three piles on the sidewalk and watched them for a minute or two. The kittens were cute at this age, though doubtless they'd grow up to be bitter, complaining creatures like all the rest. There were two little nearly identical calicos, one fluffy white and one striped orange. The white one was pretty. The Handleys would probably be able to give it away, especially if it was a boy.

I went back inside to check on the girls. The movie was a few minutes away from ending so I went into the kitchen to make them some lunch. I wasn't in the mood for any cooking, so I just slathered peanut butter onto white bread and cut off the crusts for Alyssa. Then I grabbed them a couple of Cokes out of the fridge and took the food into the living room. The girls ate in silence, watching as the monkey shaman held up the new lion cub for the whole kingdom of animals to observe.

On some level, I knew that I needed to think about the pregnancy, the baby. Avoiding your problems won't make them go away and all that. But most of the time, it was easy to not think about it. I didn't look pregnant and I didn't really feel much different. Even when I did think about it, I wouldn't use the word *pregnant* to myself. I preferred "in a delicate condition" or "in a family way" or even "bun in the oven."

But it was hard to keep from thinking about it when I babysat. I'd always look at the kids and feel a bit sick, knowing that I might have one in a few months. I tried to imagine myself going through high school with a baby and then I'd laugh, but when I tried to imagine myself getting an abortion, it seemed equally impossible.

Sometimes, when I babysat for the Handleys, I thought that I wouldn't mind keeping the baby, if only it could be sweet and quiet like the girls. But, of course, there was no guarantee. My baby could end up a rotten little brat like Kyle Cutler, a ten-year-old I sat for who seemed to be determined to burn down his house. When I tried to picture what my baby might be like in ten years, all I could imagine was a miniature Richie—curling orange mullet, crooked teeth, wearing camouflage to school and talking only of four-wheelers, deer killing and professional wrestling. I couldn't stand the thought of having a redneck baby.

"Sara, I'm bored," Kaitlyn said, as the credits of the movie rolled. These were words I always dreaded hearing when I babysat.

"How about you girls go play in the sprinkler?" I said. It was the first suggestion that popped into my mind.

Alyssa immediately latched onto the notion. "Sprinkler, sprinkler, sprinkler, please, please, please," she chanted, holding onto my legs and looking up at me with big blue eyes. I was somewhat sorry I'd suggested it since I didn't really want to go back out with the heat and the cats again, but I could see that Alyssa would be pretty disappointed if I called it off now.

"Okay. Go put your swimsuits on," I said.

Kaitlyn crossed her arms. "I don't like playing outside," she said.

"Just go put on your swimsuit."

Alyssa shrieked in delight and both girls went to their room. Once they were dressed in their bright pink frilly swimsuits (Mrs. Handley's taste in children's clothing was often silly), I rubbed sunscreen on their bodies and we went outside.

I saw the red sprinkler lying in the front yard, just waiting to be turned on, but that wouldn't work. Richie and his friends would no doubt ride by on their four-wheelers in a few minutes (they rode up and down the same three-mile stretch all day) and

I didn't want them making lewd remarks to me in front of the girls. Alyssa was impatient as I picked the sprinkler up and moved it behind the house, but as soon as I got the thing working, they were both laughing and shrieking. Kaitlyn seemed to have forgotten that she didn't like playing outside.

I got one of Mrs. Handley's lawn chairs and sat outside to watch them. The old mama cat jumped into my lap, well out of reach of both children and sprinkler, and glared at her kittens as they tried to climb up my blue jeans. Mothers are often like that. Always wanting just a moment of peace, just a moment. The orange kitten made it almost to the knee of my pants and then clung to me as if his life depended on it. He was the runt and I felt a bit sorry for him, but instead of putting him in my lap with his mama, I gently detached him and placed him on the grass. His orange fur reminded me of Richie's hair.

After only a few minutes, the sun and the heat began to give me a headache. Mothers were hard to think about as well. My own mother would probably kill me if she knew I was pregnant, but then again, how much could she really say? She'd had my brother when she was seventeen. My headache was only becoming worse and the sound of Richie and his friends driving by, whooping loudly, didn't help things any.

After that one date, Richie, of course, asked me out again. The next day at school, he yelled at me across the hall, "Hey, Sara! You going to game with me on Friday?" I took more pleasure than I should have in crushing him. He had been so sure of himself, so convinced that because we had a good time, I must be in love with him or something. I knew he'd told his friends that he'd slept with me. It didn't upset me so much that people knew I'd had sex (I had a reputation as a prude that I wanted to get rid of). It just upset me that they knew I'd had sex with Richie.

"Time to go inside, girls," I called, as soon as the four-wheelers passed. I was greeted with disappointed sighs.

“But we’ve barely been outside any,” Alyssa said.

“I know, but I’m really tired today. Sorry.”

Kaitlyn looked over at the sprinkler. Even she didn’t seem to want to go inside. “You could go in and watch us from the window,” she said.

It sounded tempting, but Mrs. Handley might be upset. She generally watched her kids like a hawk. “Well. I don’t know,” I said.

“Please, Sara,” Alyssa said, jumping up and down. “Pretty please with sugar and whipped cream and chocolate and a cherry—”

“Alright, alright,” I said. I thought that nine was old enough to be trusted to watch your sister for a few minutes. “Kaitlyn, you look after Alyssa, okay? And don’t you two get into the road or the creek.”

“Okay, okay,” they both agreed.

I went inside and sat down in Mrs. Handley’s office which had the best view of the backyard. I always felt a bit uncomfortable coming into this room, but Mrs. Handley had assured me that I was welcome to come in and use the family’s one computer if I needed it. The office didn’t seem much used, anyway. It was neat and tidy just like the rest of the house and there weren’t papers in any of the drawers. I looked out the window and saw that the girls were still happily running through the sprinkler.

Bored, I signed onto the Internet, tapping my fingers impatiently as the dial-up connection buzzed. Once I was online, my fingers hovered over the keys for a few minutes before I typed “pregnancy” into AOL’s search engine. I clicked on a link. I think that was the first time I had really faced my pregnancy. What it could do to my body, the swelling, the sickness—women died from having babies. *Abortion*. That forbidden word came to my mind and it wasn’t the first time. I claimed to be pro-choice,

mostly because I had once heard one of my teachers refer to pro-life protestors at the local clinic as “dumb hicks,” but, really, the idea of it sickened me. Would they suck the baby out with a vacuum? Would I be able to see it, perhaps covered in blood, perhaps still moving? Would it hurt?

I heard the front door slam and then the patter of the girls’ wet feet on the hardwood flooring. “You two coming in?” I called.

“Nope,” Kaitlyn appeared at the door to the office holding a big cardboard box full of Halloween costumes and Mrs. Handley’s old hats, jewelry and handbags. “We’re going to play dress-up outside, okay?”

“Okay,” I said, looking back at the computer screen. “Just be sure to stay where I can see you.”

“Sure.”

I typed *abortion* into the search engine and clicked on the first link on the list. My eyes were immediately drawn to the section on pain. Apparently, an abortion would hurt, but not very much. I found that hard to believe. Wouldn’t they basically be sucking out my insides? Birth must hurt a lot more, of course, but the idea of it seemed so much more natural, so much more appealing to me. Half-heartedly, I typed in “West Virginia abortions.” My best friend had a car and I’d been saving my cash from babysitting and birthdays for a long time. That gave me money and transportation.

I didn’t think that I’d be a horrible mother. After all, I babysat often and having kids is just the same thing, only all the time, right? But if I had the baby, then I knew I’d end up at least an eight on the redneck scale. Girls who got pregnant in high school ended up one of two ways. Either they married young and had four or five redneck babies with their husbands by the time they were twenty-five or else they didn’t get married and they had a bunch of redneck babies by a bunch of different guys. In either

case, they always worked at 7-11 or Dollar Tree while they went to night school to learn how to be beauticians.

The sound of the four-wheelers speeding by jolted me out of my thoughts. I glanced out the window and saw Alyssa, dressed in a pink tutu and a wide-brimmed straw hat, standing on the creek bank with her mother's old leather purse raised over her head. Kaitlyn was nowhere in sight. I swore as Alyssa tossed the purse into the creek.

I ran outside. "What are you doing?" I asked Alyssa, as I approached. "You know you shouldn't play in the creek and you shouldn't throw things—"

I stopped talking when I heard the dreadful, high-pitched mewling sounds coming from the big black purse currently sinking into the water. I saw that it was zipped closed and that there were movements coming from inside. I jumped into the creek, ruining my shoes and my blue jeans. I fished the purse out and climbed onto the bank. When I opened it, wet kittens ran in every direction, clawing me in the process.

I turned to Alyssa, who was standing nearby, giggling. "What were you thinking?" I asked. "Were you trying to drown your kitties?"

"No. I was just playing with them," she said. Then she frowned and tears welled up in her eyes. "I didn't hurt them, did I?"

I looked around and saw only the white kitten shivering near the girls' tire swing. I couldn't really blame Alyssa. She didn't know what she was doing and she was too young to be trusted to look after living creatures. It was my fault for not taking better care of her. "No. But you're lucky. We'd better go find them."

We managed to find only two of the kittens (the white and the orange), but we did find Kaitlyn lying on the grass on the other side of the house, reading a book. I barely had the heart to scold her when she was being so quiet. I got a dishtowel and

dried off the kittens as well as I could. While I was doing this, Alyssa kept kissing them on their little foreheads “to make it all better.” I then ordered the girls into the house. I felt a bit betrayed by them—I had trusted them to be good.

Kaitlyn immediately went to her room to finish her book and I popped a Barney video into the VCR for Alyssa. Then I went into the kitchen to make the girls a snack. I was peeling apples when I heard Alyssa shrieking in the living room. I dropped the knife and ran to her, sure that she’d cracked her head or busted her lip. I found her jumping up and down, still shrieking and crying.

“What is it? Where does it hurt?” I asked her.

“They killed him!” she yelled. “They killed him!”

“What? Who killed who?”

“Them mean boys,” she said, wiping tears from her face. “They runned over my kitty.” I looked outside and saw the little orange kitten, lying crushed on the road. By now, Kaitlyn had come out of her room and was also wailing.

“Okay, okay,” I said. “I’m going to go get him off the road. You two stay in here.” I ran outside and grabbed a shovel from the porch. Even as I scraped the kitten off the road, I couldn’t really bring myself to think about what I was doing. It isn’t any use to think of some bad things, because they can never be fixed. I did notice that the kitten looked like he’d been more than just hit—he’d been run over several times. Just a mess of red with occasional strips of orange fur. I dumped his little body onto the front lawn and looked back to the house to see both the girls staring out the window with tear-filled eyes.

I stood by the road and waited. Sure enough, after a few minutes, six four-wheelers came zooming toward me. Richie stopped when he saw me. “Hey, Sara,” he said. “What’re you doing?”

“You’re a real bastard, you know that?” I said.

“What’re you—”

“That kitten was a little girl’s pet, you know. I know that doesn’t mean much to you and the rest of these rednecks, but could you please try to think of something other than yourself for once?”

Richie scratched the back of his head, clearly uncomfortable. “Aw, come on, honey. I didn’t mean to run over him. I wouldn’t do it on purpose.”

“Yeah, well, you could have stopped and told me,” I said. He reached out to touch my arm, but I jerked away. “Don’t touch me,” I said. “We’re not going out. We’re not even friends.” I turned and walked away. He called out to me, but I didn’t go to him and eventually he drove away.

It seemed wrong just to leave the kitten lying in the yard where the girls would have to look at it, where the Handleys would see it when they drove up, where the neighbors’ dogs might carry the carcass away. I wrapped the bloody little body in a black trash bag and took it a short way up the hillside to bury it. I took the girls with me because I didn’t want to leave them alone in the house for so long.

Some of the cats followed us up the hill, already yowling to be fed again. The mama cat glared at me as I dug the hole. “Shoo, you kitties,” Alyssa said, throwing leaves at the cats. “This isn’t your dinner.”

“It’s okay, Alyssa,” Kaitlyn said. “Maybe they’re coming to his funeral.” I looked at her gratefully.

The girls latched onto the funeral idea. Alyssa picked brown-eyed Susans that were growing nearby and put them on top of the loose dirt that I used to fill in the hole. Kaitlyn wanted me to say a few words, as if I were a preacher.

“What was his name?” I asked.

Kaitlyn looked at me and shrugged. The Handleys tended not to name their cats until they were grown. Some of the cats were

half-wild, raised in the hills, and they often disappeared or got killed. I stood there and tried to say something about the kitten, but all I could think about was that his orange fur reminded me of Richie. Soon I was crying so hard that I couldn't speak. The girls didn't seem to mind. Kaitlyn took my hand and Alyssa hugged me around the legs. I picked her up. "Don't worry, Sara," she whispered, her wet mouth touching my ear. "He's in heaven now."

I just cried harder.

SHIRLEY HOLMES, F.B.I.

Joy N. McComas

Who on earth would've ever thought I'd end up following in my namesake's footsteps? When my parents named me over 25 years ago, their friends all thought it was cute and clever: Dad loved Sherlock Holmes' novels, and Shirley was actually the name of my great-great-grandma. Growing up, teachers would always smile when they saw my name on the class roll the first day. Then, when I graduated high school and decided to major in criminal justice, everyone else thought it was this hilarious coincidence—I just knew I loved Law & Order. It wasn't until my first case—five years ago, actually—that even I acknowledged how alike ole Sherlock and I really were...

* * * * *

“How're those case briefs coming, hun?”

Shirley looked up from the floor and rolled her eyes in frustration. Her boyfriend, James, was on the bed watching football, and even his crystal blue eyes couldn't stop her sighs.

“It's November—I've been doing case briefs for three months straight, it seems. I love theory and our mock trials and all, but, honestly, I wish Dr. Drown wasn't such a stickler sometimes.” James leaned over and tousled her long, blond hair. “You're doing fine, baby. You know Dr. Drown loves you. Besides, you've never made less than an A in your life.”

“Maybe so, but that doesn't mean I have to like homework.”

“I think you just need a break.” He reached down, put his hands under her arms, and pulled her up onto the bed with hardly any visible strain; it still amazed her how strong he was. “Now, just sit here and watch TV with me for a bit. Those case briefs can wait awhile.”

Shirley sighed and closed her eyes, letting herself relax for a minute. *Maybe a little nap won't kill me...*

Suddenly, the door burst open with a loud thud. A girl of about 19 came in, her normally perfectly styled brown curls completely disheveled, hands wringing; a look of pure panic was on her face.

“Shirley, you have to help me! They’re talking about failing me—I don’t know how she got it—my parents will kill me—I don’t know what to do!” The girl’s words came out in a frenzied jumble, tumbling all over each other in her haste.

Shirley jumped up and grabbed the girl’s arm. “Megan, what are you talking about? You’ve got to calm down; I can’t understand you at all.” Shutting the door, Shirley led Megan to the desk chair and sat on the bed across from her, holding Megan’s trembling hands in her own. John sat up and watched, not knowing what to do or say and wondering what had happened.

Megan looked at Shirley with tears in her eyes. “My paper—they think I plagiarized my own paper! Shirley, you’ve got to help me!”

“Megan, who are you talking about? What paper? You need to start at the beginning.”

Megan closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and muttered—somewhat to herself. “Where do I start?” Then she looked up at Shirley and began.

“It all started yesterday. My English lit professor e-mailed me, asking me to come by her office regarding my Chaucer paper. That was all it said; I didn’t even really think twice about it. Well, the earliest I could go was this morning—I had class all day yesterday until 9:00. So I went, and it seemed that the entire English department was in her office! I asked what was going on, and all my professor could say was that I was being investigated for plagiarism!”

“What!? You? They have to know better!” Shirley stood so fast she almost fell over. “Who are they saying you plagiarized?”

“That’s the crazy part—Elizabeth McCain.”

“Beth?” James finally was able to speak. “They think YOU copied off of BETH? What was it, an elementary school paper?” Beth had gone to school with James, and she definitely wasn’t what you would consider a brilliant mind; most of her work was done by whichever boy in her class was trying to date her at the moment.

Megan rummaged through her bag and then pulled out a yellow folder. “Here’s the paper.” She handed it to Shirley.

Shirley sat back down, and she and James began to skim through Megan’s paper, which analyzed Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*. It was clearly an excellent paper. How could they possibly think this is Beth’s? thought Shirley.

While they were reading, Megan paced back and forth, seeming to search for answers from thin air. “How could she? How could she have stolen my paper?”

“Megan, that’s just what I’m wondering: how could Beth have stolen your paper?”

“I don’t have any idea. The paper was due Friday; I finished it on Wednesday. It was all typed out on my computer by Wednesday night around 9:30. I left then to go to the bathroom. I hadn’t saved it yet, but I was only going to be gone about 20 minutes. I remember not being able to find my notes when I got back, and I’d had them on the desk by the computer, but the paper was done so I didn’t worry. But you know how I work, Shirley—I don’t put my page numbers or name on my work until the very end. I didn’t get to turn it in Thursday because I had class all day, so I turned it in around noon on Friday. Apparently, Beth turned her paper in Thursday, so it was assumed that I stole. Also, Beth made up some story that I was trying to get help from her in the library the other day about the paper and that I

was trying to look at her paper on her laptop. She got some of her Delta Theta friends to back her up. I have no proof, and the professor said that if I can't come up with a defense in the next week, they'll give me a zero and report me to Academic Affairs. I could get kicked out of school." With that, Megan almost burst into tears again, but before she could James spoke up.

"Delta Theta? Shirley, isn't Victoria a Delta Theta?" He gave Shirley a knowing look.

"I'm way ahead of you, James." Victoria Croft was Megan's RA on the floor right below Shirley, and someone Shirley did not get along with.

Megan looked back and forth, completely confused. "What are you two talking about?"

Shirley turned to Megan, the wheels turning rapidly in her mind. "Megan, was Victoria on-duty last Wednesday night?"

"I don't know—probably. She usually is during the week."

"Who was student security that night?"

"Um, I'm not sure. I think it's that guy from the science lab—the tall, lanky one. Why? What's going on?"

The possibilities were coming fast in Shirley's mind. She needed to find out what Victoria had done that night—but how?

* * * * *

"Sounds like you have a big task ahead of you, Ms. Holmes. Where do you think you should start?"

Shirley sat with her head in her hands. She'd come to talk to Dr. Samuels immediately with her thoughts. Dr. Samuels was Shirley's advisor in the criminal justice department, and by far her favorite professor. He always had a way of clearing up her thoughts and pointing her in the right direction. Hopefully, he could give her what she needed.

"I really don't know. I need to find out what Victoria did that night, but I have no way of getting that information. I know in

my gut that Victoria and Beth somehow got into Megan's room while Megan was in the bathroom, but I don't have any idea of how to go about proving it."

"Well, of course, there are records to show if someone used their key card to get into any room—but you have to have security clearance, and without any solid proof there's no way they'd give a student clearance. However, I could pull a few strings with the English department to let you look at Beth's paper; I can tell them that you're investigating this with Megan and that you need to look at it."

"Is that even allowed?"

"Of course. In any case like this, the student has to the right to put together some type of investigation, and other students are allowed to help under certain guidelines. I should be able to get you access to Beth's paper."

"But what will that do?"

"Well, now, that I'm going to have to let you figure out on your own. But here—let me give you some information I have about investigating documents. I'm sure you'll be able to figure out where to go from there."

"And if I get solid proof, is there a way I can get into the security records for the key cards?"

"Let's just say if you come up with solid proof, they won't be able to keep me away from those records. But you'd better get started—you have only six days to put Megan's defense together, and there's a lot to be done."

Shirley stood up and gathered her things, excited about the case but with no idea of how to proceed. "Thank you, Dr. Samuels."

"Good luck, Ms. Holmes. I'm sure you'll get to the bottom of this."

As she walked out of the office, she turned and gave her professor a big smile. “Why, this is all just elementary, my dear Samuels.” That was indeed their favorite joke.

* * * * *

Questioned Document Analysis, handwriting, ink—how is any of this going to help me?

Shirley sat on her bed amidst piles of paper. Beth’s paper was in a folder on her desk. Dr. Samuel’s information was sprawled out around her, highlighter marks all over where Shirley saw any information that might be useful. So far, the answer hadn’t hit her yet, and she’d been at this for nearly six hours.

A soft knock at the door interrupted her for a moment. “Can I come in, sweetie?”

Shirley got up and let James in. He carried a bag of KFC in one hand and a big bottle of Diet Pepsi in the other. “I figured you hadn’t eaten, and I thought you could use maybe a little bit of a break.”

Shirley reached up and kissed him, smiling for just a moment. “That’s why you’re wonderful.”

“So how’s the investigation going?” Both were lying on the floor, eating their food and watching TV.

Shirley just rolled her eyes. “Honestly, I have no idea what to do. Every time I see something that might be useful, I realize I don’t have the equipment or the time to do the tests necessary. I can’t find anything that will help Megan in the next six days. I’m beginning to think it’s hopeless.”

“It’s never hopeless. Maybe you just need to talk it out, you know, look at this from a fresh perspective. Tell me what you know, and then we’ll figure out a way to get to the truth.”

“Unfortunately, I don’t know a lot. I know Megan’s story. I know about when she went to the bathroom. I know that Beth

turned in her paper before Megan. After that, everything else is speculation.”

“Alright, we’ve got what you know—what do you have?”

“Again, not a lot. I have Megan’s paper, I have Beth’s paper, I have Dr. Samuel’s information on questioned documents.” Shirley handed all of this to James. “After that, I’m really at a loss.”

“Well, what’s your theory?”

“My theory is that Victoria let Beth into Megan’s room while Megan went to the bathroom. While in Megan’s room, Beth printed out Megan’s paper, destroyed Megan’s notes, and then left to make a cover sheet to make the paper look like her own.”

James looked up from the papers, a broad smile on his face. “Shirley, the answers right in front of you.”

“What do you mean?”

“Look at this section you highlighted.”

Shirley took the questioned document packet from James and studied the section he was referring to. “Watermarks. What can this do...” Shirley’s eyes suddenly got as big as saucers.

“I’ve got to get to Dr. Samuels! I need to see if these two papers match!”

* * * * *

“Shirley, I think you may have made a breakthrough. Unfortunately, this isn’t quite enough evidence to get access to the keycard records.”

Shirley’s enthusiasm dimmed a little. After she ran to Dr. Samuels, he’d taken her to the school’s forensics lab. One of the technicians there was a friend of Dr. Samuels and agreed to help them with the watermark test. After holding the paper under UV light, it was clear that the papers were identical. Shirley had thought to get samples of the paper from the school’s library to test it against, but that paper hadn’t been a match. It seemed

clear to all three that the papers had been printed from the same computer.

The technician had even gone one step farther. When Shirley had explained the case, the technician immediately asked if she would be allowed to do an ink test, to determine if the inks had come from the same printer. Again, the tests had shown that the papers were an exact match for each other.

“I thought I’d really done it. What else can I possibly find?”

Dr. Samuels sat down beside Shirley, a confused look on his face. “I really don’t know. These tests are pretty convincing, but all Beth has to do is prove that she printed it off on a computer similar to Megan’s. That printer isn’t all that unique, you know. Also, it’s not that difficult to assume that the two girls bought the same kind of paper. What we need is something that implicates Beth more, but short of a confession, I’m not sure what that is.”

“A confession?” Shirley looked at Dr. Samuels with an amused look that he wasn’t really sure how to interpret. “Well, now, that shouldn’t be too hard to get, should it?”

* * * * *

How much longer am I going to have to sit in this bathroom? Shirley had been cramped in a bathroom stall for more than five hours, waiting for Beth and Victoria to enter. She knew from talking to Megan that the two girls usually went in to shower and get ready at the same time in the morning, but that the times could vary depending on the girls’ schedules. Unfortunately, Megan wasn’t much help on the schedules; she’d only seen them on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and had absolutely no idea what their Mondays were like. *If they don’t come in soon, I’m going to have to completely give up hope.*

However, at that exact moment, Shirley heard a very familiar voice. “What do you think of this new purse, Vicky? Mom got it for me just yesterday.”

Jackpot! Shirley reached over and hit the button on her tape recorder. It wasn't anything fancy—just something small that she could take to record lectures when she needed to—but she'd never been so grateful to have such technology in her possession.

“I love it, Beth. I'm going to have to get one myself.”

Shirley could hear the girls setting up their curling irons and hair strengtheners, and through the crack in the bathroom door, she could see them getting out their makeup bags. *Please, please, say something about the paper...*

“So are you nervous about the meeting on Wednesday?”

“Not really. I mean, I've already convinced Dr. McDaniels that Megan stole the paper. There's not any way to trace it back to me. I can't see what else Megan could do to try and prove her innocence. I'm just going to go in, retell my story, bat my eyes, and then walk out of there with that A. Lucky for me we heard her going to the bathroom last week. I don't think we ever could have planned it so perfectly!”

Shirley's face turned red in anger at how blunt Beth was being. *How could she do this to Megan? How could she be so selfish?*

“Well, after Wednesday, you won't have to worry about it anymore.”

Beth smiled at her reflection in the mirror. “I've completely gotten away with this.”

Don't be so sure of that, thought Shirley. She picked up the recorder and pressed stop. *I'd say this will be plenty for Dr. Samuels.*

* * * * *

Megan sat in fear, holding Shirley's hand so tight that there were marks from her fingers. “I feel like I'm going to faint. What if this doesn't work?”

“Relax, Megan. I've got this all under control.”

Shirley hadn't gotten a chance to report everything to Megan; what with the investigation and putting the case together with Dr. Samuels, there hadn't been any time to talk to her. Megan knew absolutely nothing about what was about to be revealed. But Shirley knew without a doubt that her case was strong. Dr. Samuels had been completely confident—especially after looking at the keycard records.

At that moment, the door opened, and Dr. McDaniels and the rest of the English Department came in. Beth was right behind them, a smug look on her face. When she saw Shirley, she looked a little confused, but nevertheless sat down with a smile, completely sure that there was no way she'd get caught.

Shirley laughed to herself. *She probably thinks I'm just here for moral support. Wait until she sees just how much support I've got!*

Dr. McDaniels looked at Megan. "Well, Ms. Adams, you've had a week. Do you still maintain your innocence?"

"And do you have a defense prepared?"

Megan looked worriedly at Shirley. "Well, I—I mean, we—"

Shirley stood up. "Dr. McDaniels, I'm Shirley Holmes, Megan's friend and a criminal justice major here at the University. I've been assisting Megan with her defense, and, with your permission, I'd like to present what I've found."

Dr. McDaniels smiled a little. "Shirley Holmes? As in—"

"Yes, as in Sherlock Holmes. My parents named me after him."

"Well, this should be quite interesting." Dr. McDaniels sat back with an amused expression while the rest of the English Department looked rather intrigued. "Please proceed, Ms. Holmes."

For the next half-hour, Shirley laid out her case—how Megan had informed her of what had happened, her meetings with Dr. Samuels and his guidance, her investigations and testing that

revealed the matching papers and ink. The professors nodded, and Dr. McDaniels looked particularly impressed.

“I’m rather amazed at the forensic evidence you’ve prepared, Ms. Holmes. However, all of this is somewhat circumstantial. Do you have anything else to prove Ms. Adams’ innocence?”

“Actually, I do. Here is a copy of the security records for the keycards in Ms. Adams and Ms. McCain’s dormitory. As you can see, it shows that at 9:33 pm last Wednesday, entry was made into Ms. Adams’ room by someone using the RA key. That key was signed out 10 minutes earlier by Ms. Victoria Croft, the RA on the floor.”

Beth had begun to look very uncomfortable, and at this revelation she jumped up. “That proves nothing! You can’t prove that I went in there with Victoria! For all you know, Vicky went in there to do a room check or something.”

Shirley smiled. “Maybe so, but I also have another piece of evidence.” Shirley pulled the small tape recorder from her bag and laid it on the table. She hit play, and Beth and Victoria’s conversation from two days prior was replayed for everyone in the room. Beth’s face became so pale she looked like a ghost.

Dr. McDaniels stood. “I believe we’ve heard enough.” She turned to Beth. “Ms. McCain, you hereby receive an *F* for my class and will be reported to Academic Affairs, where you will be charged with plagiarism and may be expelled from this university. Leave my office immediately.”

Beth walked out, tears pouring down and anger etched all over her face.

Dr. McDaniels then smiled at Megan. “Ms. Adams, you are cleared of all suspicion. I apologize to you for the strain you have been put under with this. You will receive an *A* for the work, and I congratulate you for maintaining your integrity.”

Dr. McDaniels then turned to Shirley. “As for you, Ms. Holmes, I commend you for the fine investigation you have

conducted. I will be sending a note to your dean, informing him of the work you've done. And, if you don't mind my saying so, I think you are a definite credit to your namesake."

Shirley beamed with pride. "Thank you so much, Dr. McDaniels. I just wanted to help out a friend." She smiled down at Megan and squeezed her hand.

"If you don't mind my asking—how did you figure out what was going on? Even we had no inclination of the truth."

Shirley winked at Megan before answering. "Well, it was all rather elementary, if I may say so."

* * * * *

And there you have it—my very first case. The dean sent me a letter commending me for my thorough investigation. Dr. Samuels was credited for his guidance in helping me with the case. In the next few years, I worked as an intern at the local police department, graduated with honors, received my master's in criminal justice, and then took a job as a detective with the FBI. And it can all be traced back to my namesake, Sherlock Holmes. People still make jokes about it, including my superiors and my husband, James. But when they do, I simply laugh—it is all rather "elementary."

HALLOWEEN NIGHT, 3:00 AM

Richard Pitaniello

Streetlights burn and so does she, waiting
by the door, face white as cobweb.
A tear breaks loose and curls underneath her chin.
She wipes it away, watching her wet hand
shimmer. “A drop of a ghost,” she whispers.
She slaps her face with both hands.

Her son is late, five hours late, maybe dying in the dirt.
She’s called his friends—no luck.
She’s called the cops—no help.
Outside, streetlights are haloed, orange as pumpkin eyes,
like the one they’d carved earlier and set on the porch.
 She shivers.
 She waits.

 Then, the knob clicks, the door opens:
a sheeted costume enters, clean of dirt, of blood,
back from tricks and treats, wherever else he was.
They stare into each other’s eyes.

Then,
as fast as you tear off a mask, she changes red,
the color of demons, the color of confrontations, one
that needs no rehearsal to haunt them both for ages.

AT WORSHIP

Jennifer Pritchard

pentecostals fall out
in the aisles, slain
in the spirit
seizure writhing on cheap carpet
bodies arch backwards as if in pain
faces streaked with tears kissed
by tongues of fire

i sit in the back, near the door
timid in the midst of screamers and barkers
clutching my purse, checking my watch

afterwards they pant in their pews
seeing things differently
if you ask them what it was like, they look confused
say, oh, you know
like a bolt of lightning, like a loving kiss
God cradles them
or something like that.

sometimes, I wish that I could feel
like that or feel anything

20 WAYS TO CALL THE SHERIFF

Sandra Williams

The moon follows me like the eyes in a good portrait.
I have taken out a restraining order.
It is a fat naked man in the night sky.
Steamed earth invades with loamy musk.
Shriek, crick, click, creak, chirp—night bugs.
Hot, sultry night-sweat dripping down my nose.
The salt of me excites my tongue.
I smelled the redness of the setting sun.
Anna waits in Atlanta.
I welcome him into my arms.
I push him, hard away.
The moon only shines when I open my eyes.
Mama I love chips. I need them. I'm so hungry.
The shiny camera of gluttony snapped the shot.
The moon is like a hooking nun,
always swinging his hips and hiking his skirt.
Little Bit came along for the ride.
Now and then and later he'll be sorry.
Long before the onerous tsetse flies.
His only hope for salvation is a teaspoon of sugar.
Comote llamas? No se señor.
The trees applaud the tragic scene.
When I open my eyes, the moon shines.

Inside Back Cover



LIBERAL ARTS