

**PEN**

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*The Doran Essay Prizes are awarded to students for outstanding essays. The Prize is in memory of Dr. James P. Doran, former Humanities Department Chair*

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## **A Class Divided**

**by Carol L. Rusk-Tompkins**

*Faculty:  
Julie Aparin*

Each student entering a course has the same opportunity to take the most out of that class, depending on many things such as one's attitude. This is my first semester at college after many years, and I'm surprised at many of my fellow classmates' attitudes. In this class, the attitudes range from very eager, indifferent to lethargic. First, I sit with a group of young ladies who are very energetic and eager for this class on most days. This is a difficult course so when assignments are given, we start them right away. Our homework is completed for the next class, we are prepared for our weekly spelling quiz, and we seem to have our writing assignments done on time. By the close of this semester, I feel that we have maintained a good average. We usually compare our grades, which range from the "90's" to "100" in our spelling tests. But the prized marks are on our writings, which we are proud of, and they range in scores of a "C" to an "A." We look forward to this class, and we keep each other going with a smile or friendly gesture. However, there are some other students who lack some of these qualities. They seem to have been eager in the beginning of the semester, but after a few months, their enthusiasm waned. Some of the homework was done; some handed in projects a day or two late and dropped a grade. Even when a stern warning was given, maybe they would heed the warning and maybe the warning fell on deaf ears. Finally, there are some students who are just wasting their time, money and effort to even be in class. Homework, class participation and writing assignments are rarely considered. I can remember one student who was listening to his walkman radio while a discussion was going on in class. These students never take into consideration the warning given to them by the professor. I think at the end of the semester they think that they will get by with a "C" for a final grade and that will be OK with them; however, some students have succumbed to this well-read professor. They have earned failing grades and will probably be surprised to see their "F's." I feel that if you don't have positive attitude, if you don't participate or are not punctual for the class you have registered for, it makes the semester that much longer and more difficult to deal with the assignments given.

# Language Barrier

*by Scott Barton*

*Faculty:  
Louise Silverman*

Shortly after high school graduation I ran into a language barrier which seemed very hard to overcome. My girlfriend had received a computer as one of her graduation gifts, but she knew nothing about an operating system.

I helped my girlfriend by setting up the computer system and the printer. She had misplaced the books that came with it, so when I asked her a question about the "C.P.U." and the "A.L.U.," not only did she not know the answer, but she was unable to comprehend the terms I was using to describe what I was talking about.

I asked her questions, such as: "How much hard drive space does this computer have? How fast is this microprocessor? How many megs of ram does she have? How much space is available for ram upgrading?" These questions completely confused her, so I tried to explain what I was talking about.

I was able to locate the information I was asking about once I got the computer up and running. Because I was able to retrieve the information, I tried to tell her the answers to the questions that I had previously asked her. I told her that the computer she had bought runs on a 486dx/90mhz Pentium processor, and she has 640k of conventional memory, with 7800k expanded memory running off 8 megs of ram, upgradable to 64 megs of ram. It also contains a 4x4 CD ROM player with three operating systems comprised of Microsoft DOS ver 6.2, Microsoft Windows ver 3.11 (special version), and The Packard Bell Navigator.

Needless to say, she was extremely oblivious to everything that spilled out of my mouth. It took hours to get her to a point where I could explain this information to her in simpler terms.

The language barrier that I ran up against wasn't my own failure to comprehend, but it put forth a challenge to me to try to translate jargon into English that was comprehensible for the person I was talking to. I felt as if I were in another country and trying to communicate with someone who didn't speak my language. Because I have been around computers since I was a child and have also just recently completed three years of training in computer programming, my ignorance led me to believe that there wasn't any problem in discussing computers with anyone else.



## **"A Bungalow for Two"**

**by Linda Johnson**

*Faculty:  
Louise Silverman*

The first place where my husband and I lived when we were married was a small house in Toms River. Now that I think back, it really wasn't much, but at the time, it was the most wonderful place in the world to me because we were together.

The yard we had was an absolute mess. There wasn't a blade of grass to be seen, only rocks which the weeds had managed to grow between. The shrubs housed beneath them many layers of leaves that must have blown there over several seasons. The cement porch was in dire need of repairs. The wrought iron railing had worked itself loose from the cement bed it had been in, and one of the steps had several shaky bricks. However, there was one cheerful aspect to the yard, and that was the delicate little statue of a young girl with rather large pool-like eyes, who held open her arms as if to say "Welcome." Of course, she, too, had seen better days. The weather had faded her paint, but I think that's what made her so special.

As we walked in through the front door, we entered our living room; it was rather odd-shaped, but it was a quaint little room. It was shaped like a railway car, long and narrow, with two windows. During a rain storm, those two windows would leak terribly, filling the sills as if they were two small pools. When we moved, the stains were still there on the stucco walls, where the water ran down from the windows like streams. In this room, we had placed the cozy little hand-me-down couch my mother and father had given to us and an old console television set. From the living room, we entered either the tiny kitchen or the dining room, depending on which way we walked. The kitchen was my favorite room in the house because of its size. It had the most gorgeous, hand-carved, dark wooden cabinets, which seemed to give it character and strength, even though it was tiny. I think that is why I loved it so. All we had to do was to turn one way, and we were at the sink; if we turned another way, we were at the stove. Just above the sink there was the smallest window which I used to look out of as I washed the dishes.

If we walked out the back door, we entered the porch that had been built onto the house. It had jalousie windows that we had to crank open, that is, if the handles weren't missing or the windows opened at all. This room ended up being a storage area for our outside tools.

The bathroom was small, but quaint. We almost had to back into it. It could get a

little crowded with two people in there at one time.

Our bedroom was something of a conversation piece, and I was not particularly fond of it because of the mirrors that had been placed on the ceiling above the bed, which was built on a platform as if it were a sacrificial table. There was something eerie about waking up during the night, opening our eyes, and seeing our images staring back at us. A few times, I almost let out a scream. (To shed a little light on why it was this way, the owner of the house was a bachelor.) There was a sliding glass door at the foot end of the bed, which was a nice touch. That sliding door let in many cool and refreshing breezes on those hot, balmy summer nights. Then we finally acquired an Emerson Quiet Cool window air conditioner that had fallen out of a window three stories high and hit the pavement. (Believe it or not, that air conditioner was still quiet after the fall.) Then we had THE CLOSET. What can I say about the closet, other than it was the only one in the entire house? It contained all of our belongings that had not found a place anywhere else. It was packed from floor to ceiling. Needless to say, I learned to pack things neatly and compactly.

Even though it had many faults, it still was the best house ever because I was there with the love of my life!

# **My Aunts Yolanda and Silvia**

**by Clarissa Marin**

*Faculty:  
Louise Silverman*

There are two people who have been very important in my life. My Aunt Yolanda and my Aunt Silvia occupy a very special place in my heart. Now that my parents aren't in this physical world anymore, Yolanda and Silvia have provided me with their love and guardianship. Even though they both differ in many aspects, such as cultural background, physical appearance, and financial status, I love them both unconditionally.

Both of my aunts are Hispanic, but they come from different cultural backgrounds. Yolanda, my mother's sister, has roots in Puerto Rico where her parents were born. Although Yolanda's blood is from "La Tierra de Borinquen" (a nickname for the island of Puerto Rico), she was born in Brooklyn, New York. She grew up in a Spanish community, where she learned the traditions of the Puerto Rican culture. For example, on Christmas, the family gathers together and Yolanda roasts a pig, and they enjoy an authentic Puerto Rican meal. My Aunt Silvia, on the other hand, is my father's sister. She was born and raised in Mexico City, where she currently resides. Her traditions revolve around her Mexican upbringing. In contrast to how Yolanda celebrates Christmas, she has a Mexican meal with chorizo (Mexican sausage) and atole (a Mexican beverage). Even though Yolanda and Silvia live in two different cultures, they both share the same Hispanic roots.

The physical appearance of my aunts contrasts in many different ways. Yolanda has black, straight hair and dark eyes. Although she has gained some weight over the past few years, especially last summer because she was pregnant, Yolanda still looks the same way as she did when she was twenty-five. She rarely dresses up during the week. She is more inclined to wear casual, comfortable clothing, such as sweat pants and t-shirts. Other than having black hair, Silvia's appearance is very different. She hides her beautiful dark eyes behind green colored contact lenses. She is very thin and has maintained her appearance with plastic surgery. Her style of clothing is very elegant. She likes to wear clothes from Europe, especially from Spain, where she buys suede boots, leather coats and cashmere sweaters. While Yolanda hasn't been too concerned about a perfect physical appearance, Silvia has an uncontrollable obsession with beauty that has left Liz Taylor far behind.

Yolanda's and Silvia's lifestyles have been affected differently by their financial status. Yolanda has struggled most of her life. She and her husband both have to

work hard in order to support a family of four. Therefore, they can't enjoy luxuries, such as having a maid or going on trips. Instead, my aunt has to clean her house during the weekends. This leaves her with little time to do things for herself, such as going to the beauty salon or reading a book. On the contrary, Silvia enjoys the benefits of a profitable business owned by her husband. My Aunt Silvia and her husband often go away on vacation, mainly to Acapulco, where they own a house on the beach. She doesn't need to work or clean her house because she has maids that can do it for her. Because of her financial status, Silvia has the privilege of dedicating time for herself. She goes to the beauty salon and spends hundreds of dollars to color her hair and paint her nails. She also visits a dermatologist every week for her facial laser treatments.

People's differences are what make each one of them special. Helen Steiner Rice said, "Each snowflake like each human being is special and has its own individual characteristics."\* Even though my Aunt Yolanda and my Aunt Silvia have differences, they still have a very unique way of expressing their personalities. I have always said I have three mothers, my mother who passed away, my Aunt and Godmother Yolanda, and my Aunt Silvia. I love them all!

\* Helen Steiner Rice. "Daily Devotional Calendar" 1992 Gibson Greetings Inc. Ohio 16

# Alternative Housing of the Future

*by Kyle Mosteller*

*Faculty:  
Janet Hubbs*

During the Reagan and Bush administrations, America's ecological stability was damaged severely. The result is that America must now deal with its environmental issues. One of the primary concerns is the depletion of natural resources, such as lumber, coal, and oil, that are needed to construct and run houses of the twentieth century. America is being forced to seek out alternative housing systems different from those of conventional homes. Unfortunately, the problem is finding materials that are more energy-efficient and less destructive to the planet. Luckily, engineers and architects have anticipated these dilemmas, and "ecologically correct" homes have been designed. Homes such as Earthships, Earth Shelters, EcoVillages, and the "2020 House" will soon replace the conventional home of the nineties.

The Earthship is one type of low-cost home being introduced to the public today. Designed by architect Mike Reynolds, this unique home is praised for its supreme energy efficiency and use of recycled materials. Bill Donahue describes the Earthship in his article written in the New Mexico Magazine, "Energy-Saving Homes Rise From Trash Heap." The walls and foundations of the structure are made from dirt-filled automobile tires and crushed beverage cans. The tires are effective in insulation and help to eliminate the need for heating. A mean temperature of sixty-five to seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit is maintained throughout the year. This is without outside heating or cooling systems! Another amazing aspect of the Earthship is that it can be inhabited "free from any dependence on the power grid" (Knipe2). Solar electric panels above the windows draw power to fuel household electrical needs. By using recycled water, even the plumbing systems are environmentally considerate. A complete Earthship can be constructed by unskilled builders for as little as fifteen-thousand dollars, substantially inexpensive compared to conventional homes. Reynolds is determined to "change our concept of housing." In his opinion, we must "stop thinking of homes as boxes that we pump energy into and start thinking of them as units that can generate their own heat and electricity. In other words, we just need to start applying a little common sense" (Donahue5). Perhaps he is right.

Next, there is the Earth Shelter, which relies less on the use of recycled materials and more on the use of the earth to sustain it. As its name implies, the domicile is sheltered by the earth, with at least half of its body set into a hill or mountain. This style of building effectively uses the earth to maintain a comfortable, low-cost

climate year-round. As Jim Eggert tells us in his book Low Cost Earth Shelters, the most complained-about aspects of living in an Earth Shelter include "living in the dark," lack of ventilation, and excess moisture. Actually, the homes can be made moisture resistant, with both natural lighting and ventilation. In addition, Eggert's book offers other important features of the Earth shelter which include:

protection from the wind, ease of heating in cool weather, natural cooling in warm weather, economy, low noise level, fire resistance, and energy efficiency.

To demonstrate the Earth Shelter's economic worthiness, a house of this type could be constructed for as little as eight-thousand dollars in 1982; this is substantially less expensive than the average American home.

The third type of house can be found in the EcoVillage, which focuses, along with "earth friendliness," on the conservation of living space. Its creator, Liz Walker, believes "the project is the cornerstone of a new vision of more responsible living" (DiChristina 1). Every aspect of her invention, including the toilets, has been designed to cater to our sensitive environment. Co-housing, which is popular in Denmark, was Walker's inspiration for the EcoVillage. Compared to typical suburban living, EcoVillages preserve substantial amounts of land due to multi-family duplexes and the sharing of facilities. Walker tells us that "while the houses have their own bedrooms, baths, and kitchens, families regularly dine together at a common house. Residents share meal preparation, child care, tools, lawn mowers, and laundry facilities" (DiChristina1). Fulfilling its goal of environmental soundness, the airtight double 2x6 walls and south-facing windows reduce energy consumption considerably. The glass panes of the windows are filled with argon, which is "an inert gas that provides four times the insulation of air" (DiChristina3). Overall, the development will consume just 1/5 to 1/8 of the energy needed to run the conventional homes of today. The price of one of these units runs anywhere from \$80,000 to \$133,000. However, this figure includes the use of up to 150 acres of land and facilities. Perhaps this is the reason why interest in this type of living is growing in America. In fact, about 150 groups have established EcoVillages nationwide.

The final alternative type of housing is the "2020 House," which is actually a hypothetical structure based on the predictions of several professionals from around the United States. Basically, the "2020 House" is unique because it is prefabricated and focuses on efficient use of space. The components of the house, composed of either plywood or plywood-like synthetic materials, will be manufactured within the confines of one location, thus minimizing the costs. Once constructed, they will be assembled on site by use of a "panelized" formation. This technique ensures that future renovations will be less complicated. Furthermore, panelized homes, says Fred Fisher, are "more energy-efficient than traditionally built homes" (Eaton1), due

to an insulated core and interior dry-wall finish. Since space is the object, "yards will be tiny" (Eaton1). As David Engle, foreign-competition program manager for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, says, "Large lots with single-family homes will be dinosaurs in the next twenty years" (Eaton1).

The economical and ecological benefits of living in alternative homes, such as the Earthship, Earth Shelter, EcoVillage, and "2020 House" are obvious. With housing systems of this type now available in America, it is time to take advantage of them. The biggest step towards their utilization, however, is educating the public. Once this is accomplished, the needless depletion of our resources for the use of homes will decrease, resulting in a sound and cooperative relationship with the environment.

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## **The Old Hat Box**

***by June Aireza***

*Faculty*  
*Mary Ellen Byrne*

When you are born the third youngest of nine children and the child of a tenant farmer, you learn real fast that there is no Santa Claus. You also learn that when your family is dysfunctional, you don't hope for things to change because you know they will not. I learned all of these rules as we moved from place to place, sometimes twice a year. Family traditions and rituals were just not part of our lives. The Christmas gifts and often our Christmas dinner were donated by our church. Yet one constant in my life was the Christmas tree; it was free. You could just walk into the woods, choose one, and cut it down. The tree was something we could always count on.

When the tree was set up in the living room, Mother would go to her closet and bring down the old hat box. This old hat box would sit on the shelf in Mother's closet all year as though it were waiting for a special day to share the treasures it held and to bring some beauty into our dreary lives. Mother would untie the ribbons, now faded with age, and with great care take from the box the most beautiful Christmas balls. There were balls of glass with scenes of Christmas and the Nativity, stained glass balls from Germany, balls tied with gold-colored string, and a beautiful clear glass one with an angel floating inside. The old hat box became a treasure chest; at least it seemed that way to me and the other children as we watched as each ball took its place on the tree. Each ornament was more beautiful than the one before. When my father took me out of school at age fifteen when he found me a job, I put childish things away and the old hat box was lost to memory.

Then a few years after I was married, we went to visit my sister in Philadelphia. Recently she had cleaned her attic and had found Mother's box. When Mother had died many years before, this box was one of the things my sister retrieved from our mother's house. This reunion with the old hat box was a happy-sad moment for my sister and me. It conjured up such sadness for us, but the beautiful ornaments seemed to have been waiting to give us back some quiet, happy memories of our childhoods. My sister was gracious and kind enough to share the ornaments with me.

Eventually I became the mother of four children, two sons and two daughters, and I decided to create a tradition of my own. The old Christmas ornaments from my



mother's hat box became a lovely foundation for my family ritual. Consequently, ever since my children were born, we have decorated our tree on Christmas Eve. In the early years, we did this to preserve the Santa Claus myth; now we do it for family sharing; now I retrieve the old hat box from its resting place.

Christmas Eve starts very early in the morning at our house. All the gifts are already wrapped and hidden under beds, behind doors, and in closets, waiting to be placed under the tree that stands empty in the corner of the living room, awaiting its transformation. My daughters Zena and Lisa have inherited the job of making the pumpkin bread. I will make dozens and dozens of cookies, and do as many things as I can, in preparation for our Christmas dinner. Some of pumpkin bread will be wrapped in green and red cellophane; some of the cookies will go into beautiful Christmas tins to be given to friends and neighbors on our Christmas Day visits. At last all the preparations that can be done are done.

When my sons, the oldest Adrian and the youngest Josef, have arrived, they will assume their roles in our family ritual by stringing the tree with many strands of white lights as the old hat box sits waiting. Then it is time for the ornaments that we have collected over the years, some very ordinary, some very special, like the one Josef made in kindergarten, which is now over twenty years old. Our own ornaments have become a small tradition of their own, not as old as the ones in the box, but a treasure for us nonetheless. The box sits waiting.

Then it is time to open the box, a special time for me and for all of us. Memories are now created, and memories are recalled. Each special ornament is given to one of my children to place on the tree in a spot each has chosen. Perhaps it will be in the same spot as last year, or maybe a new spot had been chosen. Next the balls with the Christmas scenes are placed strategically so the tree lights can shine on them; they seem to come to life. Then we hang the ones made of lavender glass, glass as thin as egg shells, with the pink ribbons, faded now but beautiful nonetheless. On and on it will go until every one of the ornaments occupies a perfect place.

At last the Christmas angel will take her place at the top of the tree. Her satin robe is yellowed with age; the candles in her hands have not been lighted for a long time; her hair has been replaced with artificial angel hair, but she is so special to us. Still I think I will have to replace her soon. The tree ceremony is over; we admire the job we have done; the tree has truly been transformed.

Although our family ritual is still young, it means so much to us as a family. Hopefully each of my children will take a share of the treasures of the old hat box and form a family ritual of his/her own. Then the treasures from Mother's box will continue to bring love and happiness to my loved ones.

As long as I can remember, the ornaments from the old hat box have given special meaning to my life. I had forgotten the old hat box until my sister found it and shared the ornaments with me. Now I share them with my family in a ritual jointly created to live on in their lives.

# Generation X vs Baby Boomers

*by Amy Bertone*

*Faculty:  
Peggy Boese*

"Generation X" is undergoing major criticism, and the "Baby Boomers" generation is bothering itself trying to find out what makes us tick. The "Boomers" have our generation under a fine microscope and are analyzing our every move. They have determined that the previous generations had it hard, but now Generation X is being pampered and spoiled. Yet, in a way, all generations have been going through the same things. The young ones want new things are spoiled because the Boomers hand them all the things that they had to learn themselves in their youth. As a result, this generation gap is being filled with jealousy and lack of respect. The previous generation does not understand the "Xers" due to the fact that the Boomers are set in their ways and do not want to change. They do not understand why "the leaders of tomorrow" won't do things the "old way." Therefore, there needs to be an understanding of principles, ideas, and upbringings between the Baby Boom generation and Generation X in order for both groups to coexist peacefully.

The Boomers experienced many new things as they grew up. Television, movie improvements, inflation, and wars affected the generation. They had to learn how to improve technology so they broadened the entertainment horizon by creating special effects for movies, television, and Broadway, and they created home entertainment such as VCR's and Nintendo. All of these products were created to enhance variety in everyday life and to make their children (Generation X) happier. Thirty years ago, it was a special all-day affair to go to the movies. Today, it is something to do if there is nothing else.

The Boomers are still doing the inventing, the teaching, and the scolding. They are waiting for their descendants to come and take over their jobs so they can retire. The Boomers are hoping to leave the country in good hands, but their outlook on the way the generation following them is growing up in dampening their bright ideas for the future. They are viewing the Xers' easy going lifestyles as lazy. Xers are seen as young people with no ambition.

Young people are living their lives trying to get ahead by "beating the system." Xers, though overwhelmingly intelligent and full of potential, are sitting back and waiting until the last possible second before jumping into the "real world." They are living at home instead of moving out, getting married, and raising a family, as their parents had done because their parents allow them do so. The "twentysomethings"

are basically big children coasting through life on the things handed to them by the previous generation.

History repeats itself. Adults look at youths with their purple hair and pierced noses and ask, "Why must they rebel?" But thirty years ago they themselves were donning love beads, smoking "peace pipes," or sneaking out in the middle of the night. Every generation has rebelled, and each has done it in different ways. By the time we come along, the older generation is set in its ways and does not want to change. Through the years, one forgets what it is like to "hang around" on the street, not necessarily doing anything wrong. Now the same "rebels" who "hungout" at the Quickie Mart are calling the police about the "rebels" who are there now--thirty years later.

When Boomers were in high school, they wanted to wear Levis to school, but weren't allowed to do so. Now, everyone wears jeans all the time. If a teen asked to borrow the family car thirty years ago, the answer would probably be, "No!" Today, the answer would probably be "Yes, you may borrow the car--or better yet, let's buy you your own!" Generation X has much more freedom than the Boomers had. The reason for this is that the Boomers, now parents of Xers, remember all that they went through growing up and swore never to torment their children as they felt they had been tormented by their parents. The Xers, however, use this freedom far too much and end up taking it for granted. This is where the lack of respect from the Xers comes into effects and where the jealousy from the Boomers takes root. Generation critics have labeled the Boomers as "A Rebel Without a Cause" and Xers wit "A Rebel Without a Clue." This is how Boomers perceive our generation.

Every generation has its share of drugs, teen pregnancies, domestic violence, gangs, traffic violations, and such. Every generation handles these problems differently and in accordance with the present moments in time. The Baby Boom Generation and Generation X both need to compromise. The Boomers need to understand that the Xers are just living in the "90s," just as the Boomers wanted their parents to realize they were living in the "60s." The Xers need to realize how the Boomers feel. This is a rite of passage, so to speak. Time can make one forget the detailed emotions of being young. If each generation makes an effort to give a little, then maybe, just maybe, there will be peace filling the generation gap.

# **The Differences Between Men and Women**

**by Mollie M. Blake**

*Faculty:  
Randy Monroe*

There are decided differences between men and women. Some deal with physical strength in which men, of course, excel, but the more interesting distinctions which have continued to baffle both sexes through the ages are of a more psychological nature. Men may excel physically, but women prevail in handling the everyday nuances of life.

For instance, circumstances sometimes crop up when one must subordinate himself in order to reach his desired goal. The asking of directions is just one example of this point. Men are incapable of asking for directions. They will drive to Sacramento instead of Savannah, knowing that they are utterly and completely lost, but they can not ask assistance from any of the 2,342 gas stations that they pass. When lost, they avoid any uniformed person as though he or she were a cyclops.

A woman, on the other hand, will sometimes double-check directions at a service station or corner a policeman even if she feels certain she is on the right path. The subtlest hint that she might be in error will nudge her into seeking aid. She may not know where she is going, but she will get there without getting angry, frustrated, or asking anyone else in the car if he/she wants to drive.

Occasionally, there are special events where one must dress rather uncomfortably in order to make a successful impression. A man cannot tolerate anything woolly, scratchy, stiff, or potentially itchy on his skin, regardless of how marvelous he may look in it. It is an impossibility to get him to wear an item of clothing that is not smooth to the touch. Like a flea-bitten dog, he will yelp, scratch, dig, or tear to be free of the feel of heavily textured cloth or coarse wool. A woman, on the other hand, would wear a gown of barbed wire if she felt that she would look good in it or it was featured in the pages of a fashion magazine. No stranger to whalebone corsets or constricting Calvins, a woman will assess what is flattering on her and will survive whatever is required for her to make an effective impression. Women through the centuries have endured pain and evidenced a flexibility toward fashion that is totally unknown and mysterious to the male gender.

Another harsh reality of everyday life is that one must sometimes face the peskiness of tiny tasks which must be finished, even when they are bothersome and annoying. The most extraordinarily astute and capable man is unable to wrap a package.

Men's brains turn to jello, their hands into paws when confronted with wrapping paper, Scotch tape, and ribbon. They are unwilling to learn how to wrap up the most rudimentary gift box. They will walk miles to a gift-wrap counter in a department store and pay exorbitant amounts to have a box beautified, or they will nonchalantly visit Aunt Gertrude with their shopping bag casually tucked under an arm in hopes that she will offer to do the job without the humiliation of a formal request. Women, on the other hand, realize the necessity of learning this elementary task. They excel in this craft, often topping a package they have creatively bound with flourishes of origami, silk flowers, unique bows, or other fascinating embellishments.

Men are usually physically stronger than women, but from the evidence of history and at present writing, it appears that reason, capacity for discomfort, and flexibility elude them. Thus, it is clear that women surpass them in the ability to handle the nuances of everyday life.

## Wonder Women

*by Janeen Fritz*

*Faculty:  
Elizabeth Mitchell*

I had to be four or five years old when I sat on our rusty-colored shag carpet in front of our nineteen-inch colored television. I would always get dressed in the proper apparel that consisted of red, gold, and navy blue underpants and undershirt that supposedly resembled Wonder Woman. I would even wrap aluminum foil around each of my wrists and a band around my forehead, and pretend to have her super powers. Although I didn't own a pair of red high-heeled boots, I would pretend that my brown waterproof snow boots were just as glamorous. The golden lasso of truth was my favorite. Whenever Wonder Woman captured a bad guy with her lasso, there was no way he could resist her questions. She was my idol.

She could single-handedly lift two cars over her head, jump out of a fifty-story building wearing high heels, and still land on her feet. She could even ricochet bullets with her wrist guards. She was my hero and she was a girl. She was faster than Batman, stronger than Superman and just as brave as Spiderman, but she was Wonder Woman. When she wasn't Wonder Woman, she was Diana Prince, an agent for the government. She was even a hero outside of her costume.

One exciting part of the show came when she turned from Diana Prince into Wonder Woman. As long as nobody was watching, she would spin herself around a few times with her arms straight out, her work clothes would magically disappear, and she was ready to meet her challenge in her costume with her lasso. Another equally exciting part was her power to use her headband as a boomerang to knock out the bad guy she was chasing.

Although Wonder Woman is a television show from the early eighties, Channel FX 69 airs it seven days a week, at four o'clock. I'm still a devoted and enthusiastic fan, but I refrain from dressing up in a costume to watch the show.

## Purple Menace to Society or Thirty Years in the Hole

by J. M. Furlong

*Faculty:*  
*Rob Furstoss*

Politicians all over the country are winning elections by emphasizing their support for a return to American family values. Advertisers are selling millions of products with slogans like "Back to basics," "The good old days," and "old-fashioned goodness." Even the fashion and music industries, historically vanguards of change, are dominated by retrospective products. We have become a society that is scared to death of the future. Americans are not striving toward a better tomorrow. They are frantically clawing their way back into the comfortingly familiar hole of yesterday.

The fear of the vast and rapid changes occurring in our world has led to wide-spread regression. It affects all aspects of our society, and the most potentially disastrous area to which this epidemic has spread is the education of our children. Alvin Toffler wrote, "All education springs from some image of the future. If the image of the future held by a society is grossly inaccurate, its education system will betray its youth" (3). School reform is obviously an issue that needs addressing, but more important is the education that children receive before they ever enter a classroom. The retrogressive plague has infiltrated public television programming, and it is the success of shows like Barney & Friends that threatens the future of America's next generation.

In 1969, Sesame Street emerged from the vast wasteland of educational television as an innovative program dedicated to the education of pre-schoolers. It enjoyed universal approval from parents, teachers, and, most importantly, the children themselves. Employing the fast-paced, punchy style of commercials, it encouraged its young viewers to come away from the television humming the alphabet song and singing a jingle about colors or shapes (Palmer 8). In addition, Sesame Street incorporates cartoons, live action skits, documentary film, and even music videos, using all aspects of the television medium (Greenfield 17). Although its effectiveness has been well documented, Sesame Street's kaleidoscope format has been constantly criticized (Palmer 97).

Many producers have attempted, in recent years, to reproduce the quality and success of Sesame Street while incorporating an old-fashioned format (Palmer 9). They disapprove of the flashy sound-byte style, and instead opt for the basic linear structure now found in almost all of new children's programs. This is a blatant example of retrospective thinking.



Programs developed within the last ten years have become more and more choreographed. It is apparent that the children who appear on Sesame Street are not trained actors. They interact with the wondrous make-believe environment of the program as any normal child would. Their actions and reactions are genuine and consistent with the real world. Barney and Friends, along with the numerous programs of a similar nature, have generated a whole new job-market: the occupation of "professional child." The kids who appear on the Barney show are unmistakable thespians. Their dialogue is rehearsed, their dancing is choreographed, and they sing as if they were auditioning for the lead of a Broadway musical. This leads me to wonder about my child's sense of reality. Will this leave my son with a feeling of inferiority or inadequacy? Will it inhibit participation in group activities, once he discovers that the world is not choreographed?

It is universally accepted that parental supervision and participation greatly enhance the benefits of education programs. Sesame Street promotes this by keeping the parent in mind. The Muppet characters often make references, or utter quick one-liners, that do not detract from the child's enjoyment, but make Mommy and Daddy laugh out loud. Parodies of adult programs--Monsterpiece Theater, Sally Messy Yuckael, and various game show spoofs are employed to present lessons to the child while entertaining the parent. Many of the music videos are send-ups of modern songs--changing the words of the Beatles' "Let It Be" to "Letter B." There are also daily guest appearances by celebrities. Robin Williams, Jim Carrey, Susan Sarandon, and Marisa Tomei have all recently participated. These people are not familiar to the children, but they are engaging to the parent. All of these aspects are integrated for the adults' entertainment and encourage family viewing. Barney & Friends has none of these qualities. Consequently, there are very few parents who can sit through thirty seconds of the show.

The Muppet characters of Sesame Street, Big Bird, Telly, Elmo, etc., are all portrayed as children. They play, cry, and behave as any five-year-old child. Whenever a problem arises, the make-believe characters as well as the children on the show turn to the human adult characters for guidance. On Barney and Friends, there are no adults. The authority figure and source of guidance is a six-foot purple dinosaur.

There has been a chronic shortage of funding and commitment in this country to create high-quality programming for our children. The Parliament of Great Britain appropriates \$2 billion per year for the BBC--approximately \$122 per household. In Japan, the figure is \$294. Sadly, the United States Congress sets aside a pathetic sum of \$3 per household for public television (Chen 77). Unless we as parents do something to change this, PBS will become increasingly dependent upon corporations and pressure groups.

A big problem with American public television, which does not exist in other countries, is the fact that contributors--be they corporations, foundations, or government agencies--have the ability to earmark their funds for specific programs. This amounts to enormous control by those in power--those fearful of losing their power with the coming of a world they cannot comprehend--over the content of our children's educational programming (Palmer 64).

If we do not get our heads out of the sand, public television will be forced to bow to the financial influence of these tyrants and their demands for sanitized, apathetic, and "good old-fashioned" programming. Inspirational and thought provoking television will become as difficult to present on public television as it has on commercial tv.

Thirty years ago, Marshall McLuhan wrote about the television child who is attuned to up-to-the-minute information and is bewildered when he enters the nineteenth-century environment that characterizes the educational establishment (18). Ten years ago, Thomas Armstrong told us that kids "today" are processing information in a very different way. He theorized that children were evolving, due to the volume and diversity of information entering their lives on a daily basis. Their world had made it impossible for them to learn by the traditional methods of linear, step-by-step classification (169). His theory is that much more compelling today. Time has become the enemy. A learning style based on quick, multisensory scanning strategies is what has become necessary. This is what today's children have adapted to, and this is what we must give them.

Ironically, when the reports emerged in the early seventies stating that Sesame Street was ahead of its time, they underestimated just how far ahead it was (Chen 41). Unfortunately, because of fear and greed, the controlling powers in this country are using their superior strength to hold our children back as they struggle to climb out of the hole.

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# Instituting the Japanese Work in America

*by Jennifer Hyres*

*Faculty:  
Elizabeth Mitchell*

John Bradley, my fifth grade teacher, used to choose articles from the Asbury Park Press that would illustrate the universal idea of education, in particular its relationship to, and impact on, society. In his class, I remember reading Japanese business success stories and hoping that one day I would be as dedicated as these people. Even at this young age, I recognized the correlation between schooling and job placement in Japan, and, eventually, their values in the workplace.

Both the United States and Japan differ in many areas, but most obvious, and even a bit frustrating, is the economical aspect. In the 1980's, obvious differences evolved in these two countries: trade deficits, an increasing budget, and complacent attitudes hindered the United States while product quality and discipline enhanced Japan (Powell 274-275). Because of America's poor economy at this time, Japan was able to exploit this weakness through intimidation. America became humbled in its perception of performance (Wolferen 341). Japan appeared to prove that life can be organized communally and that their concerns are "collective" in nature (3). Modeling the Japanese work ethic and value system in America would prove beneficial to both the cultural and economical aspects of our society.

"In the United States, a management consultant once said, 'The customer is always right.' In Japan he could say, 'The customer is God'" (Powell 276). American businessmen have been described as part of a "brick wall." In an American company, management hires a "perfect" employee for the job that is predesigned. If this potential employee is under or over qualified, he doesn't fit. On the other hand, Japanese companies tend to function as a "stone wall." Employees are hired without predetermined job standards and are often sorted by their talents and abilities. A worker's adaptability is expected to play a part in the success of the company (Buruma 262).

According to Bacarr, some of the characteristics of American businessmen include brashness, impatience, generosity, and sociability (70-71). I agree with this summation because everyday American activities, such as grocery shopping, are deluged with any or all of these traits. For example, cashiers at a food store demonstrate particular social behaviors according to their customer's attitudes: a friendly smile by a patron will be rewarded with plastic bags instead of paper.

Bacarr adds that Japanese businessmen are perceived as polite, persevering, and business inclined (70-71). It is in these qualities that the Japanese work ethic is defined.

Work is a beauty form in the sense that it does not matter *what* a person does, but, rather, *how* it is done (Buruma 246). So, according to this description, one of the main characteristics involved in the Japanese approach to work is that of discipline. Also included are the theories of consensus and company loyalty, which will be further discussed (247). As an employee in the American workforce, I find it difficult to relate to the Japanese efforts of discipline. As people, the Japanese pride themselves on two qualities--hard work and skill (255). To acquire these, they follow a set of work aesthetics based on cultivated intuition and perfected by repetition. Most of the Japanese population believe that by emptying the mind of superfluous thoughts, an individual is better capable of concentrating on the idea at hand (248).

Once these requirements are fulfilled, the decision making process in a company can be invoked. Company achievements are based on worker participation in the form of quality control. This process of constant checking and improving the quality of products and production efficiency is based on the suggestions and criticisms of workers at weekly quality control meetings (247-248).

Only as a representative of working America can I comment on this approach to worker participation. The group home I work for employs a managerial staff who, on a bimonthly schedule, suggest but do not mandate attendance at a staff meeting. Discussions erupt over proper procedure, policy, and even decisions regarding our clients, but none of our suggestions are further evolved, or even involved, in the final say. Business in Japan is based on tradition, and this tradition includes the worker as more than a stepping stone to the head of a company.

Although men and women are both eligible for employment in Japan, certain guidelines are set between the genders. Vital to Japanese work are both etiquette and ritual. Businessmen feel women are better at the decorative forms (i.e., serving tea or bowing to clients), yet the traditional form of consensus for men is built on human relations (Buruma 252). Women are encouraged to marry by the age of thirty, and their bosses participate in the search for a husband (Bacarr 158-159).

In present American society, the "battle of the sexes" is typified in some companies dominated by men. Some female applicants and workers feel unappreciated, namely in the role of secretary, or on a different scale of respect from the male employees. What is created in this atmosphere is tension between employees and a possible reflection of discord to the client.

In the Japanese workplace, the organization of team effort is essential. For the Japanese, working toward a common goal requires knowing the boss's and coworkers' needs (197). In our American mindset, the Japanese women's role is viewed as subordinate when in all actuality, it is as respected, granted on different terms, as men's roles in the company. The Japanese culture is based on tradition and respect. For them, any kind of work is considered honorable (Morita 258).

Besides the work ethic of Japan, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of their society is the loyalty the Japanese businessman feels to his company. Compared to the West, Japan's family function has distinctly separated from the work unit whereas the Westerner's work function has distinctly separated from the family unit. This illustrates Japan's idea of work units as sociological building blocks (Wolferen 166-167). As a United States citizen, I was raised with the belief that work was just a sort of income and the establishing of friendships was optional; the *family* was the unit of life. In Japan, the business is the family and the family function is subordinate to that of any business relationship. In most cases, Japanese workers are willing to learn new skills; this could perhaps explain their national unemployment rate of only 3% (Morita 258). Also, job satisfaction and company patriotism are just as important as money to the Japanese (260).

Communication between business associates in Japan is widely based on the selective sorting of people as students. These contacts are with former classmates who could benefit the company (Wolderen 89). Employees of Japanese companies are not really concerned with the type of company with which they are employed; they are mostly concerned with its ranking because this determines their social status (192).

In America, speaking from experience, students feel admission into an elite secondary institution will grant them passage to the most monetarily stable careers in the most desired fields, such as medicine, law, or engineering. This whole system consecrates my theory of loyalty for the American people to the pursuit of money. Americans view business as an enterprise--a means for economic success. Many Japanese look at it as a war and set up strategies for success--all for the benefit of the company (Bacarr 189).

Everything about the Japanese company, including employees, methods, and policies, are relative to the goal of performance and product improvement (61). The Japanese have a desire to preserve harmony at all cost. They view the company as a circle, devoid of breaks in rhythm or ways out (38).

In my experience, American companies are tight bureaucracies, quick to institute disciplinary action for any wrong move made by an employee. In Japan, verbal reprimanding by management is rare (197). Management's responsibility is to

provide each employee challenging, important work that is satisfying (Morita 262). When times are tough, Japanese ethic dictates managers to work longer hours and makes them ineligible for overtime (Powell 278). In return, *kaisha ningen*, or the company man, and his wife do what the company wants, including moving to different areas (277). What is created is a working friendship/business relationship where ties to a company are similar to family ties by American standards.

To remake the American economy, workers need to show adaptability. A combination of both Japanese and American business characteristics may best embody the most successful: some sense of corporate loyalty and the ability to take risks (Powell 282-283). The qualities of tradition and respect, if implemented in the United States, would create a more productive work ethic. Loyalty to people, instead of solely the pursuit of money, would benefit the relationship of business to society. Following the Japanese example would allow for a common goal to transcend the individual achievement into a more promising and stable future in America.

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## **Altobello and the Findings Within**

**by Kelly Konczal**

*Faculty:  
Rob Furstoss*

It was rumored that doctors would suffocate patients with severe cases to keep down costs at Altobello. Apparently, Altobello was an old, abandoned state mental hospital that was closed down in the 1950's. I was fourteen when I overheard some of my classmates talking about it; from the way they spoke, it seemed quite different from the sterility and order present in the institution in "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest." So, naturally, I was intrigued.

Timidly asking one of the boys I had overheard for directions was not easy. Woody Allen once said, "I would never join a club that would have me as a member." That phrase, in a sense, was a metaphor for my formative years as a product of a broken home and emotional abuse; from that stemmed my inability to socialize with others as a healthy, well-adjusted child.

An introvert by nature, I often took to wandering off alone, as I never had any friends to speak of. Other children took my withdrawn attitude as indifference. But the memories I today hold sacred are all my own. From as far back as I can remember, my mind was my church and the places I visited did not take long to become my holy gardens.

So, because of my lack of social skills, it took me a whole week to acquire directions. That very day after school, I set out on my twenty mile quest to the neighboring town, Meriden, on my rusty ten-speed.

I coasted downhill most of the way. But when I reached the bottom of the long, winding driveway that led to my destination, trembling overcame me while my legs began to turn to Jello. I straddled my bike for a moment before I got off and pushed. As I grew closer to the immense brick building that stood hauntingly solid before me, I took comfort the scattered beer bottles, broken windows, and graffiti around me. It took away some of the eerie vibes the structure projected by showing familiar signs of life.

When I stepped up to the huge rounded medieval-like doorway, I had no idea that that was the first of countless times I would visit Altobello. The intimidating double doors appeared to have been boarded up at one time; rusty nails stuck out of rotting two-by-fours like demon teeth.



I took a deep breath and kicked open the doors.

The small amount of light coming in from the drowsy afternoon outside revealed what appeared to be a reception area. My eyes widened in fear upon the sight of two tattered steel cages about waist-high off to the right. The overpowering stench of stale urine mixed with wet dog was nauseating. Steadily, I unzipped my backpack and took out my flashlight.

Clicking it to the "on" position, I began forward, kicking aside torn newspapers, toys, and soggy old-fashioned dolls, some decapitated. I shone the light on the cages as my heart raced. They were cages, all right... but cages for what? Just past the cages was the only hallway there was off the reception area. Shuffling along, I got the feeling that whoever was inside the building when it closed down had left in a frenzy. Upon entering the hallway, I suddenly lost grip of my flashlight at the sight of the blood-spattered walls.

When I finally regained my previous curiosity, I began forward again. Off that narrow hallway was a wider one with thick doors lining it. Although it was May, it was chilly inside. Even stranger than that was the fact that I kept walking through these icy patches that stung my eyes and froze my soul. Ghosts, I thought to myself.

Shining a light into a grate-covered window of one of the doors, I saw only shadows. With shaking hands, I turned the L-shaped handle and stepped inside, using my backpack to keep the door from closing behind me.

A naked bulb hung in the center of the room. A thin, stained mattress sat in one corner; three cages identical to the ones I saw in the reception area were lined neatly against the far wall. The first two were empty, but the third held a tattered doll, an old-fashioned baby bottle and a frayed, faded blanket. Instantly, tears sprang to my eyes. Kneeling in front of this "crib," I visualized an undersized little retarded girl, sobbing and pleading with her dolly pressed tight against her unbathed body. Her matted hair stuck out in odd places around her malformed head, bobbing about as the insane wails of patients left shivering and hungry formed a circus around her.

With that, I had to leave. I got up, turned on one foot, and ran, nearly forgetting my backpack.

But I did return to Altobello, one week later, and every week after that, faithfully. Each time I returned, I explored the building more and more thoroughly. I even got used to the smell. Besides the cages which were present in most of the rooms, I found wheelchairs and padded tables, all bearing head, arm, and leg restraints. In addition to what I guessed were shock-therapy tables, ancient machines stood like

hovering bogeymen, seething with ignorant technology while trying to analyze my every move. The dark side of me, my true side, somehow found it homey.

Gradually, Altobello became my secret life-size dollhouse, inexplicably gratifying in a twisted way. The poetry I wrote by candlelight, painful recollections of my childhood, grew more intense with each visit as my legs grew stronger with each uphill ride home. When I wasn't writing inside Altobello, I would sit, sometimes inside the cages, and weep with compassion for the poor souls who were once trapped inside.

For the first time in my life, I was able to connect with something more terrifying than the abuse I received on a daily basis at home. Altobello was a therapist, a friend who was willing to listen to my unnatural fears and eerie dreams.

Ironically, Altobello was a hospital, specifically intended to ease the pain of the mind. And forty years after it closed, its purpose was served.

# **The AIDS Crisis**

**by Debbie McPhee**

*Faculty:  
Randy Monroe*

The AIDS crisis in the United States is deepening while the media have made the obvious choice of trivializing the tragic, and entertaining rather than educating the public. The distribution of condoms, without a rational discussion of the AIDS dilemma, has resulted in the fulfillment of an old slogan: "Try it; you'll like it." The rate of AIDS cases is increasing at an alarming rate, especially among the young adult (17-24 years) age group.

The entertainment industry has rejected the opportunity to approach the subject through realism. Instead, it has produced a series of movies and television programs that glamorize a virus, make heroes out of sufferers, and distort the true nature of the disease.

Contracting AIDS is not the result of an heroic act. It is the result of making a choice. AIDS can be spread only through the exchange of bodily fluids during heterosexual or homosexual sex, the exchange of dirty needles among addicts, or through contaminated blood transfusions. The media have concentrated on the "accidental" transmission of the virus, although less than one-half percent of the cases are transmitted in this manner. In this way, the sufferer can be portrayed as the hero, and the television special can be hailed as a family special. The whole family can gather around the set and watch the noble struggle of a doomed child who contracted the virus via contaminated blood. It is even more heart-rending to have the blood transfusion necessary because the child is a hemophiliac. How about the doomed struggle of an addict, or a prostitute, or someone who contracted the virus through gay sex?

What the whole family will not gather around and see is the reality of the disease. AIDS kills in many ways, all of them horrible, stinking, wretched deaths. Some sufferers of AIDS die of a particularly vicious form of cancer--Kaposi's sarcoma. As the cancer spreads, the patient begins to become thinner and thinner, and as the skin breaks down, bluish-purple splotches break out all over the body, giving the appearance of grape jelly spread over white bread. In some cases, the virus attacks the brain cells and the patient dies in a state of high dementia. Some die as paralyzed lumps propped up in hospital beds. This is never shown in the movies or on television.

How do they die in Hollywood? They die as Tom Hanks did in "Philadelphia," a hero fighting for the rights of a dying attorney. Reality? Well, maybe for the one or two cases of lawyers contracting AIDS and then fighting to remain employed. It was enough of a performance to earn Hanks an Academy Award for Best Actor. This is what the majority of young people fail to understand. The noble, heroic aspect of AIDS is an act, not reality.

The media need to educate by seeking the truth, not box office records. It was once thought that when public figures and Hollywood stars started coming down with the virus, the public would become more aware and more alert to the problem. The entertainment and sports field can now fill a cemetery with the graves of entertainers and other popular culture figures. Has the public become more aware? Has the public become more alert? Is the number of new AIDS cases decreasing? The answer to all three questions is "no."

The media still refuse to educate. AIDS has become almost an "in" disease. Everybody knows someone who has it. Celebrities can wear their red ribbons now that AIDS has become patriotic enough to have a postage stamp dedicated to it. AIDS can now go from the talk show to the soap opera and from the tabloid to the big screen.

AIDS scored big again this year. Tom Hanks, who died of AIDS in Philadelphia, came alive again in "Forrest Gump." As part of his heroic struggle, Forrest doesn't contract AIDS he marries someone dying from it. Once again, the popular virus helped Hanks win the Best Actor Award.

The Best Actor Award should go to the media for playing the role of educator. Given the opportunity to make a statement, it has opted for whispering an aside.

## Preparing Butterball for a Ride...

by Mickey Nilles

*Faculty:*  
*John Lehotay*

My body bundled against the brisk and occasionally arctic blasts of April wind, I anxiously walk toward the corral. I double check my pockets for the apple and the hand full of carrots. As I get closer to the corral, my heart lightens and begins to dance as the familiar and comforting equine smells meet me. I inhale deeply; the pungent odor envelopes me and takes me to a place of warmth that is not registered in my mind with reason, but deep within my heart with feeling. Sensing a high coming upon me for the joy of this wonderful smell, I force myself into a calm that I long to abandon. "Butterball, you handsome thing, c'mere babe," I yell across the corral, and one of the joys of my life comes cantering over for the treat he knows will follow.

My dear friend Karen bought a horse 6 months ago. Butterball. A twenty-nine year old chestnut brown horse of magnificent proportions, with the sweetest personality and a gentleness of softest possibilities. He stands hands above me (horses are measured in hands for height), and I raise my arms to encircle his thick muscular neck for a horsey hug. His body solid, he allows my embrace for as long as I want it, and when I step back, he holds his head still for the kisses he knows are sure to follow.

His face is regal, a bold combination of chestnut and mahogany with a white blaze on his forehead, slowly blending to solid white down toward his muzzle, which is the velvety softness of a newborn baby's bum. His whiskers long and coarse, like the hairs in an old man's ears, flicker as I kiss the silky spot behind his nostrils, his breath warm and sweetly scented, blows upon my cheek with the lightness of a butterfly's kiss. His ears proudly stand at attention, listening to my soft whispers of love and affection as I nuzzle him, rubbing my hand down his neck, stroking and caressing, but examining him at the same time, checking for ticks, cuts or anything else out of the ordinary.

Butterball snorts in anticipation of my pocketed treats. I lead him over to the ancient oak tree where I hook him and begin our ritual. Apple perched on the flat of the palm of my hand I bring it up to his lips, which are comical in the way they work over the apple, stretching and contorting to its shape. He sucks it into his mouth, and huge stained yellowed teeth chomp and crunch it, his eyes half closed in his own personal moment of joy. Juice dribbles over his lips, and I suppress the urge to

wipe it, as I would for a child.

I begin his preliminary grooming, brushing him down first with the steel comb, then the fat-toothed, blue plastic brush, and finally the soft bristle brush. Matted dirt falls off him, and his hair coat takes on a glistening sheen that sunlight dances on. My hands now have a coating of the dirty combination of his body oils and dirt, but that matters not to me. I stoop, leaning on him so he knows it's time to give me his foot. The heaviness of his single foot always amazes me as I attempt to balance while holding this seemingly 200 pound hoof for cleaning. I pick out the accumulation of muck, horse manure and hay pieces from his shoe, brush it clean and repeat the process with the other three feet, pausing momentarily between each foot to give him a carrot (his absolute favorite snack), a stroke over his rump, or a kiss.

I put on his bridle, lead him out the gate where Karen, and her boyfriend Keith, wait for us, and hoist myself up on his bare rump. Karen's been teaching me how to ride bareback, and I scoot forward on his width to the spot that feels like it was carved to fit my body. Reins in hand, my right hand lightly resting on the thick golden mane Butterball has, (that I wish sprouted on my head), we begin our journey, the cold blowing wind forgotten in the rapture of the moment. As we head into the woods, our ride takes on a familiar cadence. I become one with this majestic horse, and life is so incredibly sweet I can taste pure pleasure.

# The Tootsie Roll

by *Pat Shaffer*

*Faculty:*  
*Norman Bosley*

I was the ripe old age of five when I committed my first and only unlawful deed. Criminal comes to mind to describe my actions, but that may be a little extreme for a child so young. However, if there was one thing I knew, it was right from wrong, and I was definitely wrong.

My small hometown had a population of 54. Thank God, we had a church, no pun intended. It was the focal point of our lives. We attended Sunday school, church, Wednesday night prayer meetings, Daily Vacation Bible School, pot luck dinners, and revival meetings. Everything and everyone in town revolved around the church family. Therefore, I had a deep understanding of the consequences of sin engrained in me from the beginning of my life. I'm sure that's why my following actions were so surprising.

My mother had taken my sister, who was six, and myself to a nearby town to do the marketing. While in the check-out line, I spied the Tootsie Rolls and asked if I might have one. My mother answered, "No." Well, I guess my sweet tooth was bigger than my common sense because I took two of them anyway. They were the short, slim candies about three inches long. I found I could hide them if I put my hand to the ground and held them vertically inside my palm and up along my wrist. I knew I was stealing, and every fiber of my being knew that was wrong. My heart absolutely pounded inside my chest, and my mouth was so dry I could not swallow. There were no mirrors, but terror was surely written all over my face. My mother paid the cashier, and we walked out of the store. I felt such relief when we arrived at our station wagon. I can honestly say I should have been feeling more guilty than I was, but I happily climbed in the back with my sister and we started our drive home. I unwrapped a Tootsie Roll and bit off a piece. Stolen or not, I contentedly savored every bite.

I suppose being an amateur thief is what made me make this fatal mistake. I didn't think to keep these stolen Tootsie Rolls a secret. I decided it would be nice to share the other one with my sister. After asking her, she simply hollered, "Mom! Pat's eating a Tootsie Roll!" My mother immediately realized what I had done and pulled over. She hauled me out of the back of the car by my ear and put me in the front seat. To my horror, she turned the car around and headed back to the market.

Upon arrival, Mom literally marched me by the ear to the courtesy counter. The small, crowded ledge was on a built-up section of the floor. Mom had to look up at the woman behind the glass, so you can imagine how she towered over me. Bee hive hairdos were all the rage then, but hers would have provided housing for all the bees within a five-mile radius. Her bright blue eyeshadow and smudged red lipstick equaled the excessiveness of her hair. She leaned down to the hole in the glass and said, "Mrs. Nelson, was there a problem with your order?" Mom said, "No, but my daughter has something to tell you." The lump in my throat was the size of a golf ball. My nerves tingled to my fingertips, and my scalp felt as though a hundred creepy crawlers had wound their way through my hair. I swallowed hard and choked out my confession in a voice I'm sure was barely audible. I tried to turn in the remaining Tootsie Roll, but I couldn't reach the counter. Besides, it was stuck to my hand from squeezing it into a fist. I then heard Mom say ever so softly, "No, it is not all right." That's when the courtesy counter woman gave me my punishment loud enough for the entire market to hear. "Young lady, shoplifting is a crime! You are old enough to know better, but I will let you go with a warning this time! If it happens again, I will call the police!" Mom then asked me if there was anything I should add, and I mumbled, "I'm sorry," to my feet. Again, Mom grabbed my ear and led me to our car. My legs felt like Jello and the fiery redness of embarrassment was all over my face. The ride home was excruciatingly quiet except for Mom's reminder to ask God for forgiveness when I said my prayers that night.

It took me eight years to enter that market again. I never did get mad at my sister for being a tattletale. And my ear was no doubt a little sore, but nothing hurt more than knowing I had disappointed my parents. They were not wealthy in the monetary sense, but took great pride in working hard to *earn* what we had. I loved and respected my parents, and I knew my foolish actions had saddened them.

Needless to say, my career in crime ended right there. Unfortunately, it's one of those family stories that gets told and re-told at many get-togethers. My own children have heard it countless times and I always have to smile. You see, one of my son's favorite treats is, you guessed it, the Tootsie Roll!



## Both Feet First

by *Leo Shurtleff*

*Faculty:*  
*David Bordelon*

"So what do you think of all this Army crap, Don?"

"I just wanna get done with it so we can get back to the Mobile Unit."

"Yeah, I know where you're coming from. It's too bad the Navy doesn't have the jump school at Lakehurst anymore. That was only two weeks long, not three like the Army." Even after only a couple of days, the Army way of doing things was already getting to me.

"The frustrating thing is, the class is so big that you have to wait for every last knucklehead to get the landing right. How hard is it?! Hit the ground with both feet and roll with fall!" I like watching Don become flustered over Army types. Don's usual pose involves him shaking his head, hands astride bow-legged hips with lips pursed.

"I know, I know, but 300 people in a class leaves a lot of room for knuckleheads." Smiling, I lingered to see his reaction; Just more head shaking. "What about the jump? You scared at all?" This last part I asked weakly. I was anxious about the whole damn thing. I still could not believe I was getting ready to jump from a perfectly good airplane. There is nothing hard about the physical side of jumping. It's just a series of moves. In fact, it is so easy that any one who has done it calls it "dope on a rope." It's the mental side that I was having trouble with.

"No, not really." Pause. "Well, a little. But I'll deal with it when the time comes."

"O.K. Iceman! Listen, I'm going to get outta here and get some sleep. I'm a walking zombie at 6 a.m. Later."

"Hasta mañana."

While walking down the well used, bare hallway after leaving Don's room I had to wonder. Would I be ready when the time came?

The next week and a half flew by at an agonizingly slow pace. According to the instructors we were always late for something. However, upon arrival, the class

would wait for extended periods of time. This time was usually spent in formation and at attention. The weather was no help either.

July in Georgia is miserable. It's hot, humid and downright loathsome. It's the kind of humidity that makes a person feel like they're in a steam bath. Clothes are sticky, hair and face feel greasy, and everyone's deodorant is working overtime.

It was during one of these times that I stealthily conversed with Chief Petty Officer Gary Snee, who, like Don and five others, had come with me from my command. I've always looked up to Chief Snee as a superior and a friend. He is one of those level-headed people you like to have around in a sticky situation. With a cool manner and an easy going laugh, he can make an overwhelming job seem bearable.

"Are you ready for the first jump next Monday, Chief?"

"To tell you the truth ... NO," he breathed out of the side of his mouth while keeping his eyes focused in the distance. I was somewhat taken aback. This was a guy who, in the Gulf War, defused mines 200 feet underwater.

"Really? I thought I was the only one stressing this jump..."

The standard Army parachute is a form of medieval torture. It pulls incredibly tight under the crotch and painfully down across the shoulders. Thoughts of Quasimodo drifted into my head.

Never let it be said that the military doesn't pull out all the stops when it comes to comfort, especially when it comes to their C-130 aircraft. The plane has no insulation, making the ride quite noisy. Not a steady hum but a din that varies drastically in pitch. The transport constantly trembles, violently at times. Small, silver tubes run everywhere. They twist and turn in every direction possible. Some leak, giving the air an overpowering smell of hydraulic fluid. The unfinished look on the inside lends to the fact that there is no paneling. With structural ribs running the length of the fuselage and green paint coating everything, it makes one wonder if this is what it's like to be swallowed by Godzilla.

Chief Snee was first in line to exit, and I was right behind. I couldn't hear anything over the roar of the wind coming from the door and every command the jumpmaster barked came out muffled and unintelligible. My brain felt hazy and disconnected as I tried to remember the order of events leading up to the exit.

"And in u oor!" What was that, "Stand in the door?!" The Chief shuffled to the door getting ready to exit the bird. The jumpmaster leaned out the door watching for just the right moment to give the signal. What if he fell? Even though he had a parachute

on, it still gave me chills to watch.

At that point I became painfully aware of my body. I had a death grip on the static line. My jaw hurt from clenching. The parachute hurt so much I thought I would never have kids. I just wanted to be on the ground and out of this damn plane!

"GO!" The command jerked me out of my daze and into the now. Heart racing, blood pumping, I pushed myself forward. However, I came up short as my advance was held up by Chief Snee, frozen in the door. He was held in some kind of suspended animation, perched on one foot with arms close to his body as the world fell into chaos around him. For all his screaming and flailing of arms, the jumpmaster had no effect. None, that is, until he planted his foot in Chief's ass and hurled him out the door. At this point something snapped--I let my body and training take over. I advanced to the door, planted my right foot and jumped into the void, both feet first.

Floating down to the ground, I was too busy forgetting what I was supposed to be doing to realize what had just happened. Gathering my parachute, I sauntered back to the gathering spot with the biggest grin of my life. Later in my Naval career I would be the one instructing and others would have to place their trust in me. They would have to overcome their fears or it was going to be my foot they would feel.

But for now it just felt good to be alive.

## **"The Ma"--My Ma**

**by Shannon Sopher**

*Faculty:  
David Bordelon*

She stands five foot eight inches tall in her stocking feet, has the most beautiful brown eyes anyone has ever seen, or so she has always told us, and the most unusual shade of auburn hair, which could never be duplicated because she mixed two different formulas. She has never really been "fat," but she is forever on a diet. Oh, the excitement of losing five or six pounds! She once borrowed one of my little sister's dress up gowns because she lost "five or six pounds", squeezed herself into it and ran barefoot up the street, waving her arms, singing, "I am mother love; I am love personified". I was just going through that prepubescent, fifth grade, "I am so cool" stage, so the sight of "The Ma" in pind satin running up the street didn't strike ME as the least bit humorous--though my friends got quite a kick out of it.

My friends always seemed to get a kick out of "The Ma". I remember when we, my sister and I, were little, there were so many kids on our block, and every one of them was at our house every day. There were picnics in the backyard, with triangle peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, and pop sicles, AND she let us make mud. She was never afraid of dirt on the floors or handprints on the walls. On warm summer afternoons, she would sit on the front steps with her guitar and sing folk songs. Sometimes it would irritate the hell out of us. My sister and I wanted to play, but our friends wanted to stay and listen to "The Ma" sing.

My mom loves to tell funny stories about when we were little, as most moms do. But my mom saves them for when we have friends over, especially boyfriends. She made me bring my first boyfriend home for dinner because it was the "right" and "proper" thing to do. He was nervous and shy which she picked up right away with her Mother's Sonar. She immediately proceeded to embarrass us both. As he was about to put the fork in his mouth, she blurted out, "Aren't you afraid that you're going to dribble something out of your mouth?" Then she told him how I used to shoot my drinks out of my nose, and wet my pants every time I laughed too hard. I thought I was going to die, but Tommy just flat out fell in love with her. And so it began, for the next four years every teenage boy who came within two hundred yards of "The Ma" wanted to become a permanent part of her life. Tommy and I lasted a few short months, but he still stops by now and then just to say "Hi" to "The Ma".

Some of the things that she did when we were little really shook us up, but as I get

older and we reminisce about the past, we have to laugh. One Sunday night in the middle of winter I discovered that I REALLY NEEDED hairspray (it was the eighties). She was pissed. "9:00 on a Sunday night and you need hairspray?!" She always complained but never said "no," so we went. "The Ma" had on her pajamas and robe and her slippers. I went into the store and my mom and sister stayed in the car with the car running, of course. Did I mention that "The Ma" loves snow? "The Ma" loves snow. It began to snow. She got all excited but wanted to make sure that the snow was really falling, so she jumped out of the car to look up into the street lights. My sister followed her and slammed the door, hitting the automatic door lock before the door closed. There we were stuck in one of the busiest stores I know with "The Ma" in her pajamas and slippers, for almost two hours, trying to beg a locksmith to come out to open the car for us. She never got upset in situations like that. She always said, "Just think of it as an adventure." I wanted to die.

She loves to remind us how gullible we were as toddlers, how we'd believe anything she said. She had me convinced that the correct pronunciation of meatballs was meataballas. When my baby brother began to speak English, I had him convinced that the correct pronunciation of "meatballs" was "meataballas." I was beginning to sense that a pattern was developing. The things that "The Ma" did to embarrass us were always funny and fun, and as I progress in this life, I'm finding myself imitating one of the funniest and "funnest" people that I know.

Christmas is such a joyful time for "The Ma." On December 1st, the red fuzzy hat with the gold ball on top comes out and remains part of "The Ma's" wardrobe until Christmas is a memory. One afternoon, my sister, my mom, and I went to the store for some last minute items of the day. "The Ma," in hat, began to sing -- LOUDLY -- Christmas carols. Most of the people in the crowded store seemed not to notice her. My sister was mortified, and I tried to disappear by sheer will. Some of the crowd smiled at us, and the guy behind the counter actually joined her in song. Last Christmas I began to sing in the almost crowded Taco Bell, just for fun and the embarrassment of my friends.

The situations that I found not so humorous as a child make me roar with laughter now. As a child, I was sometimes jealous of the attention "The Ma" drew from my friends and boyfriends. She embarrassed us often but would always tell us that we should have fun with life and learn to laugh at ourselves. The young adult that I have become is so proud of those memories, and proud to have my friends want to be at my house, or just stop by to chat with "My Ma." When I grow up, I want to be just like her.

## **Life Giver Monsoon**

**by Rachana Upadhyaya**

*Faculty:  
Julie Aparin*

I shivered in cold rain drops while walking across the college campus last summer. I started to think about the rain back at home in Bombay, India. I realized that although the rain has its beauty here, too, it is cold, silent, irritating and especially blue compared to the rain of South Asian countries. Unlike America, there are three main seasons in the South Asian countries: winter, summer and monsoon. Although each season has its own characteristics, the monsoon is the most distinguishable season. It follows the four months of summer. It occurs from the middle of June to the beginning of October. It is a season which brings relief ecologically, emotionally and economically to the South Asians.

It is a hot evening in the middle of June, and the mercury has reached 110°F. The trees and plants are just countable, naked branches. The open blue sky is blasting the unrelieving hot wind; the earth is dry, the ridges of mountains are empty, and everything is utterly quiet. It has been like this for the last couple of months. Suddenly, the sky gets dark and with crashing thunder and lightning, a thick current of rain pours down. As soon as the first drops of rain dribble, the whole climate changes. The first fresh wet fragrance from the first raindrops on the hot earth renews life. To welcome the rain, the peacocks spread their feathers and start cooing and dancing, and frogs start croaking. The rain looks impatient; amorous clouds are running to meet and to pursue the angry lover earth, to make up for keeping her waiting for almost eight months. Amorous earth gets dressed up with a long green scarf of grass and leaves and ornaments herself with beautiful flowers. Occasional thunder and flashes of lightning accompany the drops of water, creating a unique music like the sound of drums and tambourines.

After a heavy rainy night, at dawn the sky opens up with a pleasing fragrance-filled breeze and excited shiny, goldish-orange and pink colors of rising sun rays. The trees, the plants and the flowers have taken a virgin shower and salute the sky. Finally, a naughty ray plays mischief with a dew drop, and as a result, the sky fills with a fetching rainbow. The morning is full of full-bloomed flowers: beautiful roses, pearly fragrant jasmines, golden and scarlet marigolds, colorful evergreens, tender lotuses, pinkies, michelias, and pink-roses. Fascinated butterflies, humming bees and wasps cannot control themselves and start to compete with each other for the sweet pollen of flowers. Cooing groups of birds are flying all around the sky. The songs of birds and the hum of bees and wasps create flute-like tunes. The lakes, rivers and streams get new life. The joyful rivers and jumping streams flow like the

music of the sitar. The monsoon has washed the earth clean and coaxed new life into being.

While the earth is enjoying the downpour, how can humans exclude themselves? Even if they try to do so, the raindrops driven by the wind would not let them. In the summer, the humans suffer, too. Due to the blasting hot air, people get tired of steamy, sticky weather. They get tired of being sick with conjunctivitis and jaundice. In monsoon, at last, the rain pours down with a new hope for them.

When the first fine tender raindrops dribble, the children run away to the courtyards to enjoy the shower. They welcome the season with dances, rhymes and songs. One of the favorite short poems of the children is "Oh! rain, just pour more; we will offer you with deity of warm bread and bitter-gourds' porridge." With the heavy rains of monsoon, the schools close, and what else do children need? They pick up their seven-colored umbrellas or raincoats and some pieces of old newspapers to make boats in their courtyards. They make different kinds of boats and put them into the new puddles or streams in their courtyards. They bet with each other to see whose boat will sail for the longest time. They splash water on each other, pick up snails and earthworms on small branches with which to scare each other, or run after glow-worms. The famous poet, Sudarsan Fakir, begs to god, "Take my wealth and fame, snatch my youthfulness from me, but return me my childhood, the paper-boats and the water of rain."

Young couples walk in the fine current of slow rain hand in hand, underneath one umbrella, half wet, half dry. In the words of one folk song, "Not cold or warm dribbling rain drops are filling up the heat of the love in young bodies." In another song one urges his beloved, "Let's walk in the wet weather which sounds like jingling bells." The monsoon without the loved one seems a curse to the young as it is the most romantic season of the year. People celebrate lots of festivals during this season. Some of the festivals are just for welcoming rain, which are celebrated with dances and folk-songs accompanied by the music of drums. After getting soaked in the rain after a long day of work, people delight in tasty spicy tea and roasted barbecue corns. The monsoon fills up people's hearts, cooling and relieving their hot, steamy, sweaty feelings.

Most importantly, the monsoon brings financial relief. The South Asian countries are primarily agricultural countries. They have two main crop seasons: monsoon and winter. The basic economy is affected by rains in both agricultural seasons. In the case of too little rain or drought, the very poor farmers, who are relying on basic rain water and river water, can only look at the open sky for one small cloud, praying their farmed seeds do not burn inside the ground. The farmers who have wells on their farms worry about the decreasing water level. The government also worries about the water level in the lakes, rivers and reservoirs. Timely and

adequate rains keep away unwanted insects, such as mice, rats and grasshoppers, from the crops. By the end of the monsoon-crop season, the farms of corn, millet and rice bend down with their bounty. A good season of crops puts a prosperous smile on farmers' faces. Governments are happy for a stable economy and available exportable items for foreign exchange. Thus, the monsoon gives stability to the whole economy in the country for that year.

Although rain is very important for all living things, especially for humans, the monsoon is a lifeline in South Asian countries. It is one of the most important seasons of their lives, which contributes life to the earth, joyful hearts and a prosperous year. The monsoon is the best season for South Asians; it is a life giver to them.



## "Wilderness"

*by Adriane Wood*

*Faculty:*

*Mary Ellen Byrne*

At the northernmost tip of the island, an elevated concrete walkway stretches eastward into the storming ocean. Half a mile out, the concrete stops, and a posted sign warns that proceeding is strictly prohibited and extremely dangerous. The terrain beyond the sign metamorphoses, like a drawing by Escher, into giant, rough-hewn boulders, loosely grouped in mimicry of their man-made neighbor. The eastern end of the jetty disappears into thick, swirling fog: challenging, beckoning those who dare to take the risk.

To the north of the jetty, the surging inlet races past. White caps and riptides hurl the current against the rocks. A fine, salty mist is shot up and caught by the wind, carried away with dizzying speed. Blasts of air smack the face and tear through every crack and crevice in clothing, and the bitter dampness of the air seeps through exposed skin, until it finds bone.

From the beach to the south of the jetty comes the intermittent "roar, hiss...roar, hiss," of the crashing breakers. The sloping shoulders of waves pull and stretch the ocean's surface into fluid, arched monoliths of blue-green; their heads pitch towards their feet with such force that they tumble, end on end, until collapsing into a jumble of exhausted white foam. The resulting, frothy clusters send out tendrils in search of the shoreline. Blustering gusts catch the tendrils, guide them, propel them, to the sand where they pile up, like mounds of clotted cream to tease the waves' licking tongues.

Eastward, and away from land, the mammoth rocks are traversed by deep fissures, which echo guttural slurps and slaps from the waters far below. Lined with a thick coating of barnacles, the interior walls of the chasms are a reminder that injury is one, miscalculated step away--geysers spew from below, propelled by the pressure of water squeezing between rocks. Farther along the topside of the jetty, the boulders become more irregular in shape, the spaces between them larger, their craggy surfaces gradually overtaken by slimy, green mosses and saltwater puddles. With each step, the wet, wind, and chill become more brutal; water is no longer distinguishable from air; all is a soggy mist.

Ahead, a structure begins to take form from the fog. Gray, steel pipes rise into the air to support a platform; beyond it lies the ocean, uninterrupted for thousands of miles. A final vestige of civilization at the edge of Wilderness, the tower stands

atop the last rock of the jetty, continually battered by fantails of exploding spray that rain down in frigid showers. The structure's only features are its overhead platform and a narrow ladder that leads to it. The rungs of the ladder drip salt water and require a death-grip to ascend them without bashing brains on the granite below. The treacherous climb gives way to the corrugated steel scaffold and the rewarding view of continuous, oceanic fury on all sides.

The blue-gray of water stretches to the eastern horizon, meeting, and melting into the blue-gray of the sky. Every breath of brine-filled air that rushes into lungs awakens, stimulates, exhilarates every muscle, organ and tissue--like breathing adrenaline vapor. Standing at the farthest point of the jetty, the narrow bridge of rock remains the only connection to civilization. Perched on the very ledge of the world, alone and surrounded by nature's unbridled violence: this is a place of freedom.

## Setting Transformed Into Theme

*by Jenny Altizio*

*Faculty  
Mary Ellen Byrne*

The setting, as described in Rebecca Harding Davis's Life in the Iron Mills, is crucial in comprehending the various themes in the novella. Actually the setting is described more clearly than the characters. Even the title emphasizes the element of setting with its words, "in the Iron Mills." Furthermore the narrator invites the reader to come down to this level of setting and experience what she witnessed there. With clear contrasts, Rebecca Harding Davis describes setting in relation to obvious themes in her novella, Life in the Iron Mills.

Its opening paragraph gives the first picture of the filth and darkness of the town. Here Rebecca Harding Davis sets the mood. It is not a sunny, cheerful day, but a "cloudy day...the air is thick, clammy with the breath of crowded human beings" (11). The presence of smoke also creates a darkness around the town. The smoke "rolls sullenly in slow folds from the great chimneys of the iron-foundries, and settles down in black, slimy pools on the muddy streets" (11). The canopy of smoke entirely encompassing this town of iron mills is symbolic since the everlasting presence and the effect of the smoke negate the town's "dream of green fields and sunshine, a very old dream,--almost worn out, I think" (12).

The actual street of this town of iron mills "was like a street in hell" (20). The fire of these mills was "in every horrible form: pits of flame waving in the wind; liquid metal-flames writhing in tortuous streams through the sand...over which ghastly wretches stirring the strange brewing...and crowds of half-clad men, looking like revengeful ghosts in the red light, hurried, throwing masses of fire" (20). About these mills, Mitchell frightfully observes, "These heavy shadows and the ampitheatre of smothered fires are ghostly, unreal" (31).

From these "ghostly, unreal," (31) depressing settings, emerge Rebecca Harding Davis's characters. The people of the town are compared to its surroundings and features. On these streets walk the mill workers, people whose faces mirror "a reality of soul-starvation, of living death" (23). The river, "dull and tawny-colored, drags itself sluggishly along, tired of the heavy weight of boats and coal barges" (12), just as the people have "something of the same idle notion...when...I look on the slow stream of human life creeping past, night and morning, to the great mills" (12). Here the unhealthy life of the mill workers is directly related to their environment. These men are "skin and muscle and flesh begrimed with smoke and

ashes; stooping all night over boiling caldrons of metal...breathing from infancy to death an air saturated with fog and grease and soot, vileness for soul and body" (12). Here, the unhealthy conditions the iron mills create, namely the setting, is eventually deadly to its workers. These workers are a product of their environment.

These horrible living conditions, endured by the mill workers and their families, only worsen their ailing plight. They cannot afford to live in more than two cellar rooms which were "low, damp, the earthen floor covered with a green, slimy moss, - -a fetid air smothering the breath" (16). By describing their dwelling conditions Rebecca Harding Davis emphasizes the strength of the mill workers amidst these, de-humanizing circumstances. These living conditions rob the mill workers of everything but their ability to work. Because of his lifestyle, the individuality and creativity of Hugh Wolfe, the worker/artist figure, were inhibited.

Even though he lives in such a barbaric way, Wolfe's humanity is evident during his visit to the church and from his feelings there. He leaves the depression of the night, "the filth and drunkenness, the pig-pens, the ash-heaps covered with potato-skins" (48), to visit the church, "a sombre Gothic pile, where the stained light lost itself in far-retreating arches...the distances, the shadows, the still, marble figures, the mass of silent kneeling worshippers, the mysterious music, thrilled, which lifted his soul with a wonderful pain" (48). However, Hugh Wolfe realizes that even the words of the speaker were "toned to suit another class of culture; they sounded in his ears a very pleasant song in an unknown tongue" (49). To most, this setting would provide a sense of optimism and pride, but to him, this provided feelings of failure and depression.

After Hugh's death, the end to his hellish existence, the setting of the novella changes with the introduction of the Quaker woman. She promises that Hugh will be buried where she lives, where "the light lies warm there, and the winds of God blow all day...where the blue smoke is, by the trees" (62). The Quaker woman also vows to Deborah a better life after her prison sentence is completed. Then Deborah joins the Quakers in "the long years of sunshine, and fresh air, and slow, patient Christ-love, needed to make healthy and hopeful this impure body and soul" (63). Although the Quaker woman is too late to save Hugh Wolfe, she is not too late to save Deborah from the horror of the mills.

As much as Rebecca Harding Davis overwhelms her reader with the depressing settings through Life in the Iron Mills, her closing brief description of the Quaker life and Deborah's new life is important. By her closing setting, Rebecca Harding Davis underscores a crucial theme in Life in the Iron Mills, namely that there is always hope, regardless of the hardships of one's life. By contrasting her scenes of urban desolation and rural beauty, Rebecca Harding Davis transforms her setting into themes.

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## Examining an Examination

*by Vern Berube*

*Faculty:  
Louise Silverman*

I suspected that I was not the only one to look into a cat's purr. I recall my own ear pressed on its furry body, searching for the purr that would pinpoint the source of the feline fibrillation. In the poem, "The Secret in the Cat," May Swenson describes such a search. She matter-of-factly dissects her cat in an attempt to find the mechanical "gizmo" responsible for that mysterious muffled sound which is emitted by a contented cat.

She first "undoes his throat," looking for "a wire running under the fur," or maybe there's "a throttle which controls a bubbling engine." Finding neither, she opens the chest "as though it were a door" and suspects a "whisk or rattle" as the origin of the purring. Directing her search southward, the Poet "halves the little belly" in the hope of finding a gear churning out purrs.

Failing to find evidence, she suspends the search, and the kitty is easily reassembled. The lid is replaced, and the other parts are either sewed, zipped or buttoned to form a whole cat. That other unique feline characteristic, the erratic tail wobble, is accused of transmitting signals. She states, "His tail rose to a rod and beckoned to the air. Some voltage made him vibrate." The title of the poem, "The Secret in the Cat," is addressed, "My cat a kind of tuning fork? Amplifier? Telegraph? Doing secret signal work?" Even his eyes are accused of being part of the network. Elliptical in shape and reminding the author of tubes, the cat's expressionless stare seems to be broadcasting messages. Even though all this electronic-like buzzing is suspect, the last line admits that stroking the animal does not turn up a dial.

Though the activity in the poem could be described as being bizarre, bordering on gruesome, the mood of narration is light. The absurdity of the first line, "I took my cat apart to see what made him purr," raised an inquisitiveness that propelled me forward. After reading a few more lines, I realized that the impossibility of such a dissection suggests an imagined operation. The use of many onomatopoeic words, such as "fizzled" and "sizzled," adds to the easy flow of the poem. Even though the throat is undone, the chest opened and the little belly halved, just as quickly, the cat is put together again using conventional means, such as buttoning, zipping and lacing.

With the cat whole again, I noticed what beautiful images were being presented. I

could just picture the cat being a "soft car" with a "bubbling sound." Putting together the two unlikely words of "woolen sound" describes a cat's purr perfectly. The author uses many similes. Two of my favorites are as follows: "Like the snore of a warming kettle" and "I opened up his chest as though it were a door." I also found these metaphors to be very visual: "I replaced his lid" and "His heart into his vest, I slid."

I enjoyed this simple poem upon the first reading. After analyzing it and rereading it many times, I feel that it is a very imaginative work of art, and I appreciate the fond memories of my own cat that the poem has rekindled.

## Saying Goodbye to Norma Jean at Shiloh

*by Carol Kilgannon*

*Faculty:  
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Goodbye, Norma Jean, though I never knew you at all . . . .  
But I was just a kid. . . .

"Candle in the Wind"  
Elton John & Bernie Taupin

These are the words of an Elton John song of the 1970's, a farewell tribute to Marilyn Monroe, born Norma Jean. In the story *Shiloh*, written by Bobbie Ann Mason, we are saying goodbye to another Norma Jean, Norma Jean Moffitt, wife of Leroy Moffitt, and one of the main characters in the story.

The events in the story are narrated from Leroy Moffitt's somewhat limited viewpoint. As long-haul truck driver, he has been on the road for most of his sixteen year marriage. Home now with an injured leg, "he has begun to realize that in all the years he was on the road he never took time to examine anything" (491). As Leroy begins to look around him and examine things more closely, his observations make it immediately apparent to us, but more slowly to him, that Norma Jean is changing. No longer the girl he married sixteen years ago, she is becoming stronger and more independent. The changes in Norma Jean become evident in her new interests (and attendant energy), her relationship with her mother, and her attitude toward Leroy.

Of recent origin is Norma Jean's interest in physical fitness. Prompted by Leroy's physical therapy, she takes a body building class and seems to be taking it quite seriously. In fact, the story begins with Norma Jean "working on her pectorals" (490). During a conversation in the kitchen with Leroy, Norma Jean is "raising her knees as she talks. She is wearing two-pound ankle weights" (494). At the end of another conversation, Leroy sees her "marching through the kitchen. She is doing goose steps"(494) -- an exercise move. Now, in the morning, Norma Jean eats a cereal called *Body Builders*. By the end of the story, she has quit smoking. Norma Jean seems determined to build up her physical strength.

Body building is not the only new interest for Norma Jean. When she graduates from the body building class, she moves on to an adult education course at the Paducah Community College. Leroy begins to see that "something is happening" (497). Time that Norma Jean would have spent with him is now filled



with homework and experimentation with new things. Leroy sees her writing papers and reading books about other countries. She has taken to "cooking unusual foods--tacos, lasagna, Bombay chicken" (498). Strangest of all, she is staying up late when she used to "drag all day" if she lost "ten minutes' sleep" (497). Norma Jean is approaching these new interests with increased energy and enthusiasm.

In addition to pursuing new interests, Norma Jean is beginning to react differently to her intrusive mother, Mabel, who is first introduced through Leroy's new found realization of "how much time she spends with Norma Jean" (493). She has come for one of her frequent visits during which she invariably corrects and comments on any and all aspects of Norma Jean's life. At first Norma Jean seems tolerant of her mother. But soon Norma Jean is correcting her mother. When Mabel asks if they heard "about the datsun dog that killed the baby," Norma Jean informs her that "The word is `dachshund" (496). We also get a sense that Mabel has always had the ability to induce guilt in her daughter, even to the degree that after a subsequent visit by Mabel, Norma Jean is crying over being "caught" (at the age of thirty-four) smoking in her own home by her mother who did not even knock before entering. Later though, while in conversation with Mabel and Leroy about visiting Shiloh, a Civil War battlefield, we see a change in Norma Jean's response:

"Who's going on a honeymoon, for Christ's sake?" Norma Jean says loudly.

"I never raised no daughter of mine to talk that-a-way" Mabel says.

"You ain't seen nothing yet," says Norma Jean. She starts putting away boxes and cans, slamming cabinet doors" (498).

This seems to be a telling exchange. Mabel's reaction indicates she is not used to her daughter speaking in that manner, and Norma Jean's retort sounds like she is ready for things to be different with her mother.

Although we are not told much about Norma Jean and Leroy's life before the story begins, we can fill in the blanks by what Leroy is observing now and see that Norma Jean is reacting differently to him. He comments on the fact that he is alone in the house a lot. When he came home in the past, Norma Jean would stay in with him watching TV and playing cards (things it would seem he wanted to do). Now they may sit at the kitchen table together, but Norma Jean is concentrating on her writing. In the past, "She would cook fried chicken, picnic ham, chocolate pie--all his favorites" (495), instead of the new foods she has been trying. With him home this much, Norma Jean seems impatient with him now and urges him to find a job. She "reads to Leroy from a list she has made. `Things you could do,' she announces" (494). At one point "She takes Leroy's needlepoint and shoves it into a drawer. `You have to find a job first'" (494), she tells him. All this sounds as though Norma Jean feels a certain disdain for what Leroy is doing with his time, while Leroy expected his wife to be happy to finally have him home. Leroy is taken up with the idea of building Norma Jean a log cabin, the home he always promised her.

But Norma Jean just seems angry with him when he brings this subject up.

When they talk to each other, they are always conversing on different levels. Norma Jean talks about "the three stages of complexion care"; he thinks "of other petroleum products--axle grease, diesel fuel" (491). She talks about the origin of names while "he is trying to get her to go to Shiloh" (499). She talks about what her mother means by the things she says; he says, "But she didn't really mean it. She was just talking" (497). Worst of all is what they don't talk about -- had never really dealt with -- the death of their son "at the age of four months and three days" due to "sudden infant death syndrome" (493).

So, in the final paragraphs when Norma Jean says to Leroy, "I feel eighteen again. I can't face that all over again" (500), you feel a weight upon her and wonder if she is referring to unresolved issues around her son's death. Or, is it that she feels stifled and kept a child herself by her husband and mother? For in Norma Jean we see a woman who, like many, lived her life meeting the expectations of other people -- people who, as the song points out, never knew her at all. Yet whatever might be weighing upon her, it is a different Norma Jean who at the end of the story tells Leroy that she wants to leave him -- an act that confirms that Norma Jean has truly changed.

In the final scene when Norma Jean rapidly walks away from Leroy to the bluff by the Tennessee River, we are left to wonder if, in an ironic twist of fate, Leroy is actually seeing his wife leave him by leaping to her death. Are we saying goodbye to Norma Jean literally? No, for we have seen Norma Jean grow stronger physically and emotionally. It is the old Norma Jean -- immature, docile, cut off from her true self -- who dies, and the new Norma Jean who emerges. In the end, we do say "Goodbye, Norma Jean," but not for keeps.

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# Clash of Cultures

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On being Foreign is a compilation of short stories that profiles characters struggling to adapt to an intercultural environment. Many of these characters experience feelings of confusion in their new world which, depending on how the traveler chooses to deal with them, contributes to either his survival or his failure in the new host culture. Adjusting to a new culture can often be difficult and ostracizing depending on how positive the traveler is about experiencing a new way of life, and can even depend on what goals he actually hopes to achieve through his encounters with his new environment. A close and secure family life, religious tolerance, and ethnocentrism all have effects on the traveler as well. In Lewis and Jungman's On Being Foreign, it is these elements and circumstances that determine how successful the transition between cultures turns out. Often the host culture changes the traveler, as the traveler enhances his new culture as well. Marshall H. Segall, the author of Cross Cultural Psychology: Human Behavior in Global Perspective, describes this as "the human animal has created and continues to create cultures...So is the manner in which culture, in turn, creates the human animal" (5). Throughout several stories, we see examples which enable the reader to closely examine and make conclusions about what types of social adaptations are needed in order to complete a smooth passing into a host culture.

The traveler's relationship with his family has a great impact on the amount of success he has upon his entrance into his new environment. A stable environment in the traveler's nuclear family allows him to embark on his journey to explore a new culture and expand his ethnic horizons. He intends to learn, grow, and observe. On the other hand, if the traveler emerges from an unstable family, one in which he is unhappy, insecure, and unsatisfied emotionally, his reasons for leaving his environment may be very different. The unstable traveler wants to escape, adopt, and conform to another culture in order to provide himself with security and happiness that he never found through his family.

One example of the unhappy American family member exists in Paul Theroux's story, "Yard Sale." Floyd, the main character, is an only child in an American home where the parents exist only for themselves. Martin Gannon, author of Understanding Global Cultures: Metaphorical Journeys Through 17 Countries, says perhaps American ideals are based too much on "equality of opportunity, independence, initiative, and self-reliance," and these have "remained

as basic American ideals throughout history" (306). These are "all expressive of a high degree of individualism" (306). His father demonstrates this through his affair with an airline attendant; this takes "individualism" to the point of egotism, self-centeredness, and selfishness. Obviously American ideals and culture take a great part in the results the traveler has in his cultural transition. Therefore, caught in the middle of American selfishness, Floyd decides to escape through the Peace Corps, spending two years in Western Samoa. Upon his return home Floyd acts with an arrogant and conceitful display of his new cultural experience. After practically defaming his home town while revisiting some of his favorite places and finding them changed or renovated, he makes the decision to leave; his newly found ethnocentrism leads him straight back to Western Samoa without even thinking twice. Perhaps if Floyd had been happy with his family, he never would have the need to return to Samoa. Unfortunately, most American students "approve less of individualistic values" and prefer "values consonant with the continuation and smooth functioning of society" (Segall 141). Perhaps this sense of individualism in American society caused rebellion in Floyd. Maybe if he had respected his culture's family and personal value system more, he would have looked at his journey as a learning experience instead of the need for a new cultural transformation.

Religion also plays a great role in the process of adapting to a new culture. A strong sense of one's religious beliefs gives us enough faith to keep our own religious ideas from wanting to change the host culture's religion. Most often the traveler goes into his new country with the notion that he can better the quality of life in the new culture by indoctrinating them with a new religion. He may also put down the host culture's way of worshipping. In a short story by Craig Storti in To Touch the World: The Peace Corps Experience, Storti remembers the evening prayer call he heard during his stay in Morocco, North Africa. Storti says, "To my ears, the cadence, the rhythm, the tone were all wrong, about as musical as a burglar alarm" (Storti 111). He told his roommate, "Even they can't think that's pretty" (111). If the traveler has a broad understanding of religion, he can understand the true basis of its meaning--which is to accept, love, and provide faith. After staying in the country for a few months, Storti's views had changed. He recalls, "From somewhere behind us the muezzin's prayer call floated out over silence," and as he listened, "The beauty of the chant stayed his step; he had to be still and listen. And then he remembered what he had said in September" (111). He also learns a valuable lesson: you are "not irrevocably the way you started out. With a little luck, you can grow" (112).

Similarly, in the story "Robert Aghion," written by Hermann Hesse, a preacher goes to India with the intent of expanding Christianity throughout the people. After many months of observing and experiencing, Robert Aghion realizes that India's religious ways are equally as decent as the ways of Christianity. Once he understands that each culture adapts religion for its own purposes, he sees it

shouldn't matter which religion is chosen, as long as its followers have faith. If Aghion had entered India with a better understanding of its country's religion, perhaps he would have not wasted so much time trying to figure it out and change it; he would have been able to experience and learn from it. Philip R. Harris, author of Managing Cultural Differences says it best:

Just remember that all characteristics of culture are interrelated, and to change one part is to change the whole. There is a danger in trying to compartmentalize a complex concept like a culture, yet retaining a sense of its whole. (62)

Often, educational goals get in the way of making a clear decision between the traveler's own culture and the new environment that he wishes to enter. If the traveler is inculcated to believe, through teachers or through preconceived ideas, that another country can provide a better or happier environment in which the student can learn, the traveler decides that the new environment must be better than his home culture. Desires fill the traveler to flee his country and move to the new country to experience its wonders of education and happiness, and he leaves his family and obligations behind to fulfill his fantasies of becoming a scholar. Although the traveler has never actually experienced the new culture, he leaves with very high preconceived expectations, which often fail to meet his high standards.

We see this trait in Hari Lal from David Rubin's "Longing for America." Hari Lal acquires information about America through his American professor at the Indian University, and immediately wants to flee his family in pursuit of a better education in the "land of opportunities." Hari Lal struggles between giving in to his priestly father's desires for him to submit to his obligations as the oldest son and remain a Muslim, and his own desires to study at an American University. Cultural problems tend to escalate here since "in Hindu belief, love of family is not merely purpose in itself, it is a way to the final goal of life" (Gannon 286). This is where the conflict between Hari Lal and his father comes into play since his father believes Hari Lal will not "yield rewards from their gods if love is selfcentered (286). His conflict is resolved after his father's funeral when he decides to leave his family and culture behind and follow his dream. As Hari Lal leaves his country, his thoughts are plagued with doubt perhaps because he is afraid his decision was based upon his American professor's ideas. If Hari Lal had experienced the culture before putting it on a pedestal, he may have had little or no doubts, for he would know exactly what to expect. Hari Lal's desire for a rich education clashed with his father's illusionary ideas that "people cannot achieve true happiness through the mere physical enjoyment of wealth or material possessions" (Gannon 281). Once again, a difference in cultures leads to uncertainty and feelings of isolation.

Many times, repression from living in a third world country drives the traveler elsewhere to seek prosperity, fame, and fortune. Immigrants have a somewhat "utopian vision for the American land" (Gannon 316). "The ideals that the American concept symbolized were, and still are, considered sacred and perfect" (316). To immigrants, America represents "all that is perfect: strength, wealth, philanthropy, family, children, and glory" (316). It is these pretenses upon which the traveler places his reasons for traveling to live in another country and adapt a new lifestyle. This lifestyle may not always meet the standards of extreme wealth. Shortly after, the traveler is forced to leave his new environment with newly found despair and ends up worse than he started off, leaving the family disoriented and shattered in an unfamiliar and confusing environment.

In "Saree of the Gods", by G.S. Sharat Chandra, Shekar does exactly this: he leaves India against his new wife's wishes in the hopes of starting a new job and making a fortune. As Shekar befriends some new colleagues, he gets a taste of American life. The wife of one of Shekar's colleagues spills brandy on his wife's saree, her sacred wedding veil. The destruction of this wedding veil proved symbolic of the demolition of Prapulla's and Shekar's lives as native Indians. Not only is her husband blinded by the American Dream, but Prapulla notices many more of her kind caught up in the dream that they call America. Through this, Prapulla realizes that they are just two of millions who have the dream of coming to America to strike it rich, but don't realize that their chances of actually beating everyone else to that dream are slim. Once again, the traveler is filled with false hope and blinded with the obsession of attaining the American Dream.

Finally, the traveler has come to encounter ignorance, the greatest conflict which stops him from making a comfortable adjustment to his new culture. Cultural ignorance, often ethnocentrism, certainly plays the greatest role in causing the traveler to encounter problems with understanding. Tom Pierce, a member of the Peace Corps, was a victim of ignorance while staying in Togo, West Africa. After organizing an effort to help the women in the town stabilize their weaving business, Pierce gave command of the group to a man. Obviously, he said, "underestimating the women and not giving them enough credit" (134). Once the women took over, the business took off; Pierce's mistake was that he "acquiesced power to a man in an environment where authority is hierarchically defined by men and rarely challenged" (Pierce 134). Pierce thereafter realized, "how important his experience was towards opening his mind to the world, neutralizing cultural ignorance and naivete" (134). Without the ability to accept other practices, ideas, and beliefs of new people, the traveler is completely turned away from adapting to his new culture. This is best seen in Paul Bowles' short story, "You Have Left Your Lotus Pods on the Bus."

This story gives an account of two Americans spending time in Thailand with a group of Buddhist monks. The problem unfolds in the beginning when the

monks feel uncomfortable in the Americans' luxurious hotel room and cannot understand the purpose of wearing neckties. Subsequently, the journey that the Americans take with the monks proves their own cultural ignorance. On the bus ride during the journey, the monks offer the Americans lotus pods. Although the Americans forget about the lotus pods and leave them on the bus, they complain throughout the day about their hunger. Not accepting the gift of food was inconsiderate; they could have satisfied their hunger had they eaten the pods which the monks graciously gave them. Instead, the Americans were consumed by the desire to eat lunch while the monks were exploring and learning about their new place of inquiry, thus proving that cultures' ignorance caused communication problems. It also suggests that if this ignorance were eliminated, the journey would be more sociable and would prove to be an enlightenment through the richness of two cultures teaching each other. This cultural ignorance is seen everywhere all over the world. Perhaps if cultures understood each other in greater depth, they would spend less time criticizing and more time asking questions. Pierce says, "The challenge of our time is to move individuals to this middle ground, substituting misunderstanding and fear based on cultural ignorance with constructive material and spiritual progress" (135).

A secure and stable family life, religious tolerance, and ethnocentrism are a few of the many factors that cause the traveler to fail, or succeed, in the transition from one culture to another. Whether the traveler adjusts to his new environment or not, one thing can be assumed in every case: the traveler always changes. These changes expand each traveler in different ways; each traveler learns and grows individually. "We should look at people's culture the way we view a beautiful jewel--we hold up different facets to the light of our consciousness, so as to better appreciate the beauty of human diversity and capability" (Harris 62). Regardless if the traveler adjusts, one thing stands out the most: the traveler is the individual who makes the attempt to accept a culture other than his own, which is more than most people try to do in a lifetime.

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## Charles Dickens' Hard Times: Fact Versus Fancy

by Linda J. O'Donnell

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Charles Dickens' novel Hard Times depicts the conflict between fact and fancy. The characters Cicilia "Sissy" Jupe and Bitzer are essential to Dickens' representation of this conflict. Despite their differences, Sissy and Bitzer are similar in one way; both are committed to the path they choose and do not vary from it -- ever. Dickens cleverly presents the contrast between fact and fancy through these characters, made obvious to the reader by his descriptions of their features, thoughts and deeds. He also demonstrates how fancy triumphs over fact through the ironic climax in "Book the Third."

Dickens opens the novel by physically linking Sissy and Bitzer, highlighting their important representation of the conflict between fact and fancy: "Sissy, being at the corner of a row on the sunny side, came in for the beginning of a sunbeam, of which Bitzer, being at the corner of a row on the other side, a few rows in advance, caught the end" (9). It seems the sunbeam is the delicate scale on which Dickens balances fact and fancy, one opposing the other. He deliberately connects Sissy and Bitzer with a straight line, the sunbeam, then weighs their differences thus, forcing the image of a scale. With this illustration, Dickens introduces his opening argument between fact and fancy.

After linking the two, Dickens deliberately separates Sissy and Bitzer by describing their strong contrasts in features, physically characterizing the opposing elements of fact versus fancy. Sissy, depicted with dark hair and dark eyes, receives "a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun, when it shone upon her" (9). Dickens is illustrating metaphorically by Sissy's outward appearance that she has been emotionally nourished and enriched by her upbringing with the circus people. Therefore, her colors are deeper to emphasize how she stands out against the paler and emotionally malnourished Bitzer. Sissy possesses virtuous qualities, vitality, generosity and compassion. She is profoundly wise to the needs of the human heart and is able to detect and nurture these needs in others. In direct contrast, Bitzer represents fact. Dickens describes his character as "so light-haired and light-eyed that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed." Dickens continues that "His skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white" (9). Dickens symbolizes Bitzer's character as shallow and transparent, possessing no sense of sentiment or emotion learned from the nurturing of a parent or guardian.

Only reason, the byproduct of fact, runs through his veins. Dickens chooses an interesting mix of words, reflecting that education based solely on fact is not natural. Dickens conspicuously plays the words "unwholesomely" and "deficient" against "natural," using this symbolic oxymoron to foreshadow his intent for fancy to win over fact.

Dickens reveals Sissy's and Bitzer's conflicting qualities through their responses to questions. The schoolmaster tests Sissy with statistics of accidents upon the sea (48): "a hundred thousand persons went to sea on long voyages, and only five hundred of them were drowned or burnt to death. What is the percentage?" Dickens demonstrates through Sissy's response that, despite her genuine efforts to learn statistics, she cannot detach herself from the great loss the hypothetical families and friends must have endured. As a result of her upbringing, Sissy is naturally sensitive and compassionate to the plight of others. Bitzer, however, performs like a computer. He is ready on command to present what facts he has learned. His definition of a horse is compiled solely of fact and contains no sentiment of the animal. Bitzer's eyes blink rapidly while he processes his data (9). Dickens uses this comical imagery to embellish Bitzer's machine-like qualities. Dickens repeats this image prior to Bitzer's conversation with Mrs. Sparsit (87): "He was a very light porter indeed; as light as in the days when he blinkingly defined a horse, for girl number twenty." Dickens reveals more of Bitzer's character in writing, "His mind was so exactly regulated, that he had no affections or passions. All his proceedings were the result of the nicest and coldest calculation" (88). F.R. Leavis writes in "Hard Times: An Analytic Note" that Bitzer opposes "the life that is lived freely and richly from the deep instinctive and emotional springs to the thin-blooded, quasi-mechanical product of Gradgrindery" (344). Leavis' statement confirms Bitzer's machine-like profile and further supports Dickens' continuing argument for fancy versus fact by citing Bitzer's lack of humane qualities.

Bitzer and Sissy are brought together in "Book the Third" through a single event: identification of the thief as young Tom Gradgrind. Dickens' argument for fancy versus fact is animated through his shrewd incorporation of bitter irony. Both Bitzer and Sissy have observed and suspect Tom; Bitzer reports on Tom's shady activities at the bank (89) and Sissy confronts Tom during Stephen Blackpool's rescue at Old Hell Shaft (202-204). Bitzer and Sissy approach the knowledge of Tom's embezzling differently. Sissy advises Tom to take refuge with the circus people for his father's sake and his own. The characters exit the world of fact and convene together in the world of fancy (210-215). The circus tent is a dynamic stage for this ironic climax to unfold. It houses the circus people who also represent fancy. It symbolizes the environment in which fancy abounds, but more importantly, the tent embraces or welcomes the spirit of fancy, encircling softly around all that wander (or wonder) in it. Mr. Gradgrind, Tom's father, once insisted

his students and family be educated with fact and nothing else. Now changed and alive with knowledge of the heart, he is confronted by two model products of his own former ideals, Tom and Bitzer. Dickens confirms Mr. Gradgrind's transition from fact to fancy by having Gradgrind use the words "heart," "compassionate," and "pity" as he pleads with Bitzer to free his son. Despite Tom and Bitzer being friends, fellow students, and co-workers, Bitzer remains true to the path he has chosen, and he apprehends young Tom for the reward of a higher position at the bank. Juliet McMaster comments on Bitzer supporting this reading of his heartlessness. "Bitzer is a successful utilitarian, but at the price of losing his humanity. His blood is white, and he has no heart – none, that is, except for the physiological organ that pumps his corpuscles around his bodily frame after the manner described by Harvey" (414). Bitzer holds his ground, unmoved by Mr. Gradgrind's petitions to have mercy. This proves Bitzer has lost his humanity and his heart is accessible only to reason. The bitter irony peaks as Mr. Gradgrind faces this version of his former self. Fancy steps in (in the guise of Mr. Sleary, the ring master) and triumphs over fact by assisting its prisoner, young Tom Gradgrind, to freedom. Because of fancy's influence, Mr. Gradgrind learns life based solely on fact is empty, deficient and barren, devoid of value.

Throughout Hard Times, Sissy and Bitzer are the faces, minds, and actions successfully representing Dickens' argument for fancy versus fact. Each affects those lives they come in contact with, be it positive or negative. By transforming representatives of hard-core fact like Mr. Gradgrind into softened characters enriched in matters of the heart, Dickens proves that fancy does triumph over fact. Through ironic demonstration, Dickens successfully argues his point that life cannot be lived by fact alone; balance between fancy and fact is essential for life to hold true worth.

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## The Dove

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The first time I ever heard a mourning dove, I was four years old. It was early morning; it was still and quiet. Suddenly I heard a gentle soprano: lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos, the last one sustaining long enough to drift off with a gentle breeze. I sat completely still and silent, not knowing where the creature was that made that sound and not wanting to scare it away. I heard it again and again, over and over until someone called to me and it flew off in a blur from its branch of a nearby tree. I've been mesmerized ever since by that sound.

In the twenty years since then, I've been to many places. And the only places that felt right in my heart were the places I could hear the mourning dove, lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos. It sings first at sunrise, when the world around it is still covered in clean morning dew, waiting for the drying warmth of the sun. It calls to me from outside my open window, perched in the new lush leaves of a tree close by, shielded from my view. Its voice carries on a soft, warm breeze, waking me up gently, calming and soothing me for what lies ahead in the upcoming day.

I hear it again at the end of the day, in the rosy glow of a sunset that sends dark orange and purplish hues streaking across the horizon, as the world winds down and a quiet hush falls across the earth: lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos. As the sun disappears completely, leaving long dark blue shadows in the twilight of the moon, the mourning dove falls silent, slumbering.

The first time I'd ever seen a mourning dove was early last spring. I'd heard it every day for several weeks, and had figured from the direction of the sound that he lived in the velvety needles of the pine tree closest to my bedroom window. But one chilly morning, as I sat on the cast iron and cement balcony of my apartment just after sunrise, the dove flew down and landed on the railing an arm's length away. I sat silent, like a statue, afraid to move, afraid to breathe. The dove was beautiful. He was light chocolate brown, speckled with black, and had a snowy white-tipped tail. His feathers were so sleek and smooth they gleamed like silk. His curves were elegant and graceful, a true work of art. He didn't make a sound; he merely sat on the railing and watched me intently with shiny black onyx eyes. After what seemed to me like a long time, but was really only a few moments, one of my many neighbors broke the tranquility of the morning with a banging door. Startled,

the dove leapt into the wind and, with a sharp flap of his wings, was gone. I waited to hear the notes, but he was quiet.

Every morning for several more weeks I waited, but the dove was silent. I strained to hear the lilt and the coos, but they would not come. The more I waited, the more I knew the dove was gone.

Before the dove had appeared ever so briefly that spring, my life had taken a turn that threw it into utter chaos. Perhaps by coincidence, perhaps not, the morning I realized the dove wasn't coming back, a realization that had been building inside me for several months suddenly hit me as strongly as the absence of the dove's voice--I was in the wrong place. It had been time for the dove to move on; it was now my time to move on.

I wasted little time, and came back to a place I belong. Right after sunrise on my first morning back, through my open bedroom window, from high above in a nearby tree, came the sound I longed to hear: lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos. And I knew I was in the right place. God is in that dove, and that dove is in God. And I know as I've known for the last twenty years that wherever I find a mourning dove, I'll find God.

Mourning doves do disappear for awhile each year. By the time the chill of the first crisp autumn morning arrives, they take their leave, waiting out the harshness of winter in some other place. But when the ravages of winter are replaced by the renewal of spring, the doves come back. Last week, as I was bustling around the house, my mind spinning with thoughts of all the things I needed to get done before the day was out, I stopped in mid-step and listened. I thought I'd heard something, an echo, a distant memory. Moving to a window, I listened harder and there it was: lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos. The evening was warm, so I stepped outside and looked around in the trees, not really expecting to see anything, but nevertheless wanting some assurance that I was hearing the truth. I finally found sitting high in a young oak tree, his graceful form standing out against the still-bare branches, silhouetted against the glow of the approaching sunset, at peace with himself and the world around him. He looked down at me as I stood still, not moving, not breathing, waiting. He rewarded my patience: lilting up four notes, pausing, then down three long coos. My dove is back; God is with me.

## **A Spiritual Undercurrent In Jane Eyre**

**by Cerity M. Choate**

*Faculty:*  
*Louise Silverman*

Charlotte Bronte, one of the three Bronte sisters, famous for their nineteenth century literary works, was born in Yorkshire in 1816. As the daughter of a very enthusiastic Irish clergyman and a Fundamentalist Methodist, "Charlotte grew up familiar not merely with basic Christian doctrine but also with the idiosyncratic beliefs of various sects, her knowledge of which filled her schoolmates with wonder" (Blom 21). Later, this religious knowledge became the backbone for some of her short stories and eventually for one of her greatest literary creations, Jane Eyre. In fact, it is because of the heavy influence that religion had in her own life that Charlotte Bronte felt compelled to create a poignant sense of spirituality in her novel Jane Eyre. This spiritual undercurrent is carefully conveyed in the form of plot, characters, and symbolism. In fact, it is the careful combination of these three things that leads the reader of Jane Eyre on an agonizing spiritual journey to the self-actualization Jane achieves at the novel's end.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Jane Eyre is the fact that the novel has often been viewed in the form of a religious pilgrimage. This idea is clearly demonstrated by Norman Sherry, Ph.D. who writes, "Viewed in this way Jane Eyre is an unusual novel, since it is a kind of pilgrim's progress presented in the terms of the Gothic and the romantic world...it is a moral and religious discourse under the guise of a popular novel" (59). Charlotte Bronte uses the plot of Jane Eyre as a spiritual journey that the main character must undergo, a journey in which Jane is required to learn a new lesson in each place she stays. These lessons are woven into the fabric of Jane's soul by the other characters she encounters at each step of her journey.

Jane's "pilgrimage" begins at Gateshead, the home of her affluent but antagonistic Aunt Reed. It is there that Jane is forced to endure the tortures of her sadistic cousin John Reed as "He bullied and punished [her]; not two or three times a day but continually" (Bronte 354). Jane's Aunt Reed, rather than coming to her aid, blames each incident on Jane and punishes her accordingly. With this kind of treatment, it is no wonder that young Jane finds she has developed an intense hatred for Gateshead as well as her relatives who live there. She even goes so far as to threaten her aunt using what Norman Sherry calls "pagan ideas of reacting to hurts--an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (56). Later, when she is introduced to Mr. Brocklehurst, Jane admits to him by her silence that she is not a good child.

Then, when she is questioned about the fate of wicked children, she replies that they are sent to hell (Bronte 373). Once she has recognized that she is a sinner and is in dire need of spiritual reconstruction, Jane is ready to move on. As Norman Sherry emphasizes, "She realizes that such a doctrine of revenge [for the injustice inflicted upon her by her aunt] does not make for happiness" (56). Knowing that she can never affect this change in Gateshead's oppressive environment, young Jane Eyre becomes anxious to begin the next step in her spiritual journey.

From Gateshead, Jane's road leads her to Lowood Institution. It is here that Jane learns forbearance and the importance of conquering her own angry emotions. As Sandra Gilbert suggests, Lowood is a potential sanctuary for Jane, offering her a chance of future employment as a governess yet teaching her to control her passionate temper (480). Fortunately for Jane these painful lessons are learned in the company of a few women Jane both admires and respects.

"Foremost among those Jane admires are noble Miss Temple and pathetic Helen Burns...their names are significant. Miss Temple, for instance,...is a sort of shrine of lady-like virtues..." (Gilbert 480). Though Lowood is a harsh place where girls are alternately starved or frozen to break their will, Jane finds comfort in these two women who bring so much to her spiritually starved soul. When Jane is made into a public example for wrongs she did not commit, young Helen Burns encourages her to "submit to the injustices in this life, in expectation of the ultimate justice of the next" (Gilbert 481). Later, both girls are temporarily rescued by Miss Temple, who secretes them in her room, feeding them physically with seedcakes, and spiritually with her kindness. By the time Helen Burns is taken from Jane in a plague, Jane has learned the lesson of Lowood. She has learned as Helen once said to her, "It is not violence that best overcomes hate--nor vengeance that most certainly heals injury...Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you and spitefully use you" (Bronte 396). As soon as Jane begins to exercise this newly learned lesson, she is ready to take her next step.

The third segment in Jane's spiritual journey occurs at Thornfield. The name itself is symbolic. As Sandra Gilbert explains, Thornfield is to be "the painful experience that is at the center of her pilgrimage...where biblically, she is to be crowned with thorns...and most important, she is to confront the demon of rage who has haunted her..." (482). According to Norman Sherry, this new testing comes in the form of the love Jane has always sought, but never received. When Mr. Rochester offers Jane this kind of love, she faces a choice between her idolized "Master" and the law of God regarding marriage (57). For as Jane comes to find out, Mr. Rochester is already married to a woman who has no control of her passions. As Sandra Gilbert notes, there are also several "negative role models for Jane [at Thornfield], and all suggest problems that she must overcome before she can reach the independent maturity that is the goal of her pilgrimage" (484). Of all

the women residing at Thornfield, Adele and Blanche are the most noticeable examples of poor role models for Jane Eyre. For as Sandra Gilbert asks, " Might not Adele, the daughter of a 'fallen woman' be a model female in a world of prostitutes? Blanche Ingram, also a denizen of Vanity Fair, presents Jane with a slightly different female image...she is worldly" (484). The word "worldly" is aptly used to describe Miss Ingram, who cares only for Mr. Rochester's money, and is as beautiful as she is heartless. In fact, it is Blanche Ingram who causes Jane to struggle not only with anger, but with jealousy as well. Yet Jane is once again triumphant. Learning to rise above her petty jealousies and anger, she finds the strength to leave a possibly immoral relationship with Rochester. This resolve becomes poignantly evident when Jane rebukes her sin-willing soul, saying, "I will keep the law given by God; sanctioned by man...Laws and principles are not for times when there is no temptation: they are for such moments as this when the body and soul rise in mutiny against their rigor" (Bronte 619). Once again the lesson is learned and Jane is ready to move on.

The fourth step of what Sherry describes as Jane's "pilgrimage" leads her to the final segment of her spiritual refinement. Sandra Gilbert clarifies this particular point by stating that "because...Jane has an inner strength that her pilgrimage seeks to develop, 'kind angels' finally do bring her to...the house significantly called Marsh End...that is to represent the end of her march toward selfhood" (495). It is here at Marsh End that Jane must learn to trust in her own judgment, while determining God's will for her life. From the two sisters, Diana and Mary, Jane learns what it is to have a family, and how to love unselfishly. But it is from St. John Rivers that Jane learns how to take the final step to her long sought after self-actualization. St. John calls Jane to give up independence and emotion all together. He calls her to come away to India with him as a missionary's wife, not for love, but out of duty. Having already lost Mr. Rochester, Jane nearly gives in and accepts his proposal. At the last moment, however, there is an incredibly symbolic telepathy that occurs between the distant Mr. Rochester and Jane. Out of the night, Jane hears Mr. Rochester's voice calling to her, and she answers him saying, "I am coming...wait for me! Oh I will come!" (Bronte 706). It is as if heaven suddenly decided to smile upon the lovers, clearing the way for their happiness, and using this telepathy to make them aware of the newly cleared path. It is this extraordinary telepathic contact that saves Jane from committing what Norman Sherry terms "an error of judgement" (59). In exalted expectation, Jane Eyre returns to Thornfield.

In this, the final step of her pilgrimage, Jane is at last complete. Her trials have purified her, enabling her to care for and support the now handicapped Mr. Rochester with the same love that she has for herself. As for Mr. Rochester, the novel clearly portrays him with a complete change of heart. With his first wife dead



and his home in ruins, he turns to God as the only way to find his lost love. "Rochester, maimed and blinded, but now acknowledging God's goodness, is a fit mate for Jane, who has also gone through the tempering fire of misery and temptation" (Sherry 59). As Norman Sherry explains, "Her marriage to Rochester is not merely the conventionally romantic union of the novel, but a coming together of two sinners who have repented and suffered, and whose union is thus sanctioned by God" (55). In this way, Jane has come to the culmination of her journey and stands complete both spiritually and emotionally.

It can be clearly seen that a great deal of Charlotte Bronte's early religious training was transposed into this novel. The argument of religious influence in the writing of Jane Eyre is not a new proposition. As Margret Blom points out, "Almost from the day of its first publication, readers have argued over the nature of the morality and the quality of the religious thought in Jane Eyre" (102). In all likelihood, Charlotte Bronte's novel Jane Eyre will continue to be the premier catalyst in the debate over the effect of her religious upbringing on her career as a writer.

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## **John St., Freehold**

**by MaLissa L. Blevins**

*Faculty:  
Mary Ellen Byrne*

In one of our homes on John Street, in Freehold, New Jersey, where I was brought after I was born in 1970, the oldest of three children, I grew up to the influences of a unique group of family friends. There were the artists, painters mostly, who hung out in the basements in many of our homes: there Mom allowed them to make their messes, with their vibrant slapping strokes of avant garde self-expression. Through the night my sister and I--before my brother was born--listened as we fell asleep upstairs, as poets took turns reciting in the living room. Their voices would gently climb the staircase, like ghosts tripping up each step into our doorway. Many times we would sit in the shelves that ran down alongside of the staircase just to get a glimpse of it all. But the determined musicians--a culmination of the groups--influenced me the most. In the summer backyard celebrations they would jam. The sounds resound still to this day: drums, guitars, voices, harps, tambourines, bass guitars, banjos, and occasionally a flute--whenever the love for the arts started in my family, the last couple of generations were surely influenced by this artistic legacy. Luckily, my family supports who I am and what I do for we share an admiration for the arts.

## "Up The Library"

*by Doris Irving*

*Faculty:  
Mary Ellen Byrne*

"Up the library." This timeworn reply to "Where are you going?" rang in every fiber of my being, bringing memories, long submerged, rushing to the surface as I once again walked "up the library." My car was parked at Mom's so I could walk, enjoy the beautiful day, and once more look about my old home town. I had been to the library countless times in the fifty years since I first entered the portals of the old building, but today my visit turned out very, very differently. There, on the edge of the path beside the front door, stood a white marble bench that seemed not to have been there on my previous visits. It was just a bench, a simple thing, as benches go, but with one great difference; it bore an inscription that read:

In Memory of  
Mrs. Alicia H. Freas  
Librarian: 1935-1967

I stood transfixed, tears streaming, as the world of today faded. I drifted back in time; I was seven again standing for the first time in the doorway of a musty, crumbling 110 year old building that bore a sign on the narrow door: Leonia Public Library, upstairs. The door was open, inviting all to enter. Up the narrow stairs and with the dark walls glowering, I went, screwing up my courage to face whatever lay ahead. Once at the top my eyes beheld a wondrous sight. BOOKS! Everywhere I looked there were books. Small books, large books, books in racks, books in piles on tables, books towering over me in boundless array. I had found heaven on earth.

A plainly dressed, well coiffured, black haired lady approached, asking if she could help me.

"Oh, yes, please," I quavered, "Are we allowed to take some of these books home to read?"

"Of course," she replied, "but you must have a library card first. Go in there and see Mrs. Freas at the desk. She will help you." She was pointing to a door behind the stairwell. Going through the door, I entered Alladin's Cave. It wasn't a very large room, but every wall, had from floor to ceiling was covered with cases of books. There were even two freestanding cases towering over me in the middle.

This treasure trove was presided over by a small, white haired lady clad in black alpaca adorned with crocheted collar and cuff. The cuffs were carefully covered with those celluloid protectors one wore in those days to keep them from getting soiled. God forbid a lady had dirty cuffs! She stood there smiling at me, her eyes full of laughter and love. Taking my hand, she led me to the chair next to the desk. "I'm Mrs. Freas," she said, "and what may I do for you? I'll bet I know. You want a library card so you can read all these books. I know a reader when I see one."

Speechless, I nodded and sat on the chair, totally mesmerized by this woman who was treating me like a person. Something about her just filled one with love, and I instinctively trusted her. It was an inexplicable quality that is elusive even now, but whatever it was, hundreds of children encountered it, trusted her, loved her because of it, and consequently learned to read and love books.

She seated herself, took out a form which she swiftly filled out and then handed to me to fill in my portion. She hadn't asked; rather, she treated me as an adult by handing me the form to fill in. If nothing else had happened that day, that would have made me her slave forever. I was a person; she treated me as such. "Now take this card home, have one of your parents sign it and bring it back to me. If you bring it today, you can have books today. We are here till five so hurry if you want a book."

She put down her pen, carefully adjusted her cuffs, patted me on the shoulder (none of that childish head stuff), and waved me out the door. A new record was set, I am sure, for getting across the park, down the street, and into the house. For once there was no trouble; going "up the library" now joined "up the park" as freedom phrases.

Back I went. The entire time frame couldn't have been more than fifteen minutes total. Mrs. Freas laughed heartily at my speedy reappearance and swiftly filled out the first of many many cards that admitted me to a world where I was in total control. I don't recall what book I took that day, but whatever it was, a relationship was started that lasted until Mrs. Freas retired. Our meetings were many over the years, and our conversations were always those of adults on an equal basis. She would draw me out with gentle prodding for it was her belief that children had opinions which should be heard and dealt with just as those of adults were, for we too would be adults one day to be heard and reckoned with. Her attitude was that reading was the backbone of education and a well-read child would mature into a well-rounded adult.

She would have laid out on her desk for her regulars: those books that she felt were challenging and at the same time interesting to us. Upon their return, she

would ask us to give a synopsis and opinion. If she felt that we had not grasped the content, she would ask us if we would please take the book back and give it a reread to look for more of the content. Most of us willingly obeyed to our everlasting benefit. Now I realize that we were gifted with a great and subtle teacher who very craftily exposed us to the habit of reading, understanding what we had read, and, learning to love it. I, of course, lapped it up--even though she never did get me to really like Dickens. Still she was very successful with Dumas and Scott, among others.

We grew up and graduated to the adult room, but my many visits were to Mrs. Freas; now, our conversations were those of peers reminiscing on what was, who we were, and what we wanted to be.

In teaching them to read and love books, this small woman with the white hair, black dress, crocheted collars, and gentle loving smile did more for generations of children than all the teachers and parents combined. To grow into an adulthood awareness of words, loving them and, most of all, knowing how to use them was the greatest gift one mortal could have ever given another--and it was given freely with love and joy to all who entered her world.

As I stood there beside that bench, drenched in tears and filled with memories of love, I thanked God for having put Mrs. Freas in my life.

## **AWOSTING**

*by Doris Irving*

*Faculty:*

*Mary Ellen Byrne*

In our summer home in Awosting on Greenwood Lake in Northern New Jersey, there hung over the stone fireplace a very large deer head with enormous antlers. He dominated the Victorian clutter comprising a summer dwelling for the very well-off in the early nineteen hundreds; this mounted head, which I still have, is my fondest memory of the place where I arrived in May of 1927 at approximately six months of age. This was my grandmother's home; my grandfather had died in the spring of 1926. She was there unusually early for the season with her daughter and son-in-law as they awaited my arrival to fulfill the terms of grandfather's will, which stated quite firmly: no issue, no inheritance. The couple had not produced an heir; hence, one imported Californian waif. This over--fortyish couple, who had no idea of childrearing, much less caring for a baby, awaited me with some trepidation. Hardly an auspicious beginning for the waif, but a beginning nevertheless. Thus, my earliest memories are those of talking to the friendly, ever--present deer, playing about among the antimacassars, musty furniture, and well-padded Victorian grande dames. All rather stifling but fun and a basis for my later chameleon-like ability to leap from one era to another in a single sentence, an ability which fascinated my confreres and teachers throughout my youth. Winston, as the deer is now known, remains my confidant of fond memory, who eclipsed and made bearable later, very unpleasant experiences. He was someone for me to talk to.

## Letters to Emily

### An Imitative Tribute to Eudora Welt and One Writer's Beginnings

by *Yvonne Mathison*

*Faculty:*

*Mary Ellen Byrne*

In 1848, the post office of Baltimore was a quaint red brick building, nestled in the downtown business district. The postmaster himself was equally quaint; his disposition matched his building. The man was short, round, and jovial. He wore his serious uniform of grey and black dutifully, yet the red visor that perched on his high pale forehead betrayed his sense of humor. His glasses were never polished, and his hair was rarely brushed he was the postmaster and in this he was compulsively perfect. The postmaster's given name was Joshua T. Biddlebong; to the townspeople he was "Josh."

One late winter afternoon, Josh was sorting the dead letter file, disposing of the letters that were more than three months old. Things were proceeding routinely, until he saw something quite unusual. There was a letter addressed to "Angels--twice descending / why aren't I ascending," with no return address (Dickinson 2877). Josh sat up, holding the letter in his left hand, absentmindedly running his fingers through his thinning grey hair with the other. "Well of course this letter didn't get anywhere. What kind of address is that?" he questioned aloud. Just then, Josh heard the bells over the front door jingle, as a blast of cold grey air ruffled the letters scattered on the floor. He ambled toward the front of the post office to see who the distraction was. It was only Edgar Allan Poe, there to mail off his latest journals. The counter girl was assisting Edgar, so Josh turned back to his work. However, he could not avoid the inevitable.

"Well, hello there Josh, and a fine day to you. What's gotten into you? You won't even say hello to me, your best customer?" Edgar asked cheerfully.

Josh turned round. "Sorry Eddie, didn't mean to be rude, but I was very involved in what I was doing," he said brusquely.

"And what may that have been?" came the persistent reply. Josh sighed in resignation. "Well, Eddie, if you must know, I was sorting through the dead letters. Actually, I found one that might be of interest to you. Take a look at the address." Josh shuffled over to the counter and handed Edgar the envelope, which was wrinkled with neglect. Edgar took it and examined the handwritten address.

"I say, that person must be in some kind of anguish. I wonder what's in here. May I open it, and see?"

"I don't see why not," Josh replied. "After all, it wasn't going to go any farther than my rubbish can, since it is a dead letter and all."

Together they peered at the envelope, each waiting for the other to open it. Finally, Edgar tore the flap. "Seems to be an awful lot of papers in here," he murmured. He shook the envelope, and a sheaf of small papers fluttered to the floor. Edgar bent over and picked one up at random. His eyes eagerly scanned the paper, a look of pure enjoyment crossing his face.

"What is it, Edgar? What does it say?" Josh pressed.

"Sh, listen to this. It's fantastic." With suppressed excitement in his voice, Edgar began to read aloud:

"This is my letter to the World  
that never wrote to Me--  
The simple News that Nature told--  
With Tender Majesty

Her Message is committed  
To Hands I cannot see--  
For love of Her--Sweet--countrymen--  
Judge tenderly--of Me' (2896)

This is by somebody named Emily Dickinson. I do wonder why she sent these off in such a strange envelope. I really must write to her. But there's no return--ah ha! here it is hidden all the way at the bottom of one of these frightfully small pages," Edgar declared breathlessly. "Well, Josh, I really mustn't tarry! May I take these with me?" he asked, waving the sheets of closely written paper in the air.

"Sure," said Josh. "Just don't let her know how you discovered them. Opening other people's mail is against the law."

"Fabulous!" Edgar thanked Josh and the counter girl for their help, and bustled out the door, trailing papers behind him.

Later that night, Edgar sat before a crackling fire, in the comfort of his study. He was pondering Miss Dickinson's poems, and wondering however to begin his correspondence with her. She seemed to be such an interesting, troubled person! It was almost as if one of his own stories had come true; this divine stroke of destiny had led Edgar to the ubiquitous work of Emily Dickinson. After some time of thinking, he picked up his antiqued quill pen and began to write:

Dear Miss Emily Dickinson,



I know I am taking a chance in writing to you, since you may be completely unaware of who I am. However, I have come across several examples of your delightful poetry, quite by accident. I cannot believe that someone as talented as yourself would mail off such work to an address that is really nothing but nowhere. I would like to take this opportunity to critique your work, if I may.

First of all, your subject matter is very intriguing. You write about yourself, your perceptions of love, death, pain, loss. This is particularly evident in your poem whose first lines are "I can wade Grief Whole pools of it I'm used to that But the least push of Joy/ Breaks up my feet" (2881). How much pain have you endured in your eighteen years that you are used to it? It seems to me that, for you, happiness itself is painful. Is it that Grief is remembrance, and Happiness is to forget that which you've grieved for? I cannot fathom the desperation within this poem; my own grief must not be as deeply rooted.

Secondly, you seize our English language and alter it completely. In my "Philosophy of Composition," I speak of structure and how important it is to achieve the most important effect of them all, Beauty. Your poetry isn't structured at all, yet it is utterly arresting. When I wrote "The Raven," first I pondered the creation of the structural bones of the poem in terms of rhyme scheme, length, whether it was logical. As a result, I created an almost mathematical formula. Each line within "The Raven" had to have an exact number of syllables; each stanza had to fall into a patterned rhythm and metre. The rhythm is "trochaic, and the metre is octameter acatelectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic, repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic (1454). I also wrote the poem backwards, starting with the last stanza. "I began at the end, where all works of art should begin," theorizing that if I knew the climax, I would be able to write the logical beginning (1454). Once begun, first I pondered the refrain, and which sounds would be best to use for it. My refrain is, of course, "Nevermore," and "Nothing more," chosen for their long *o* vowel sounds (1452). I did my best to make "The Raven" universally appreciable in its topic, theme and effect.

Later in other poetry I experimented somewhat, "Annabel Lee," or "the Sleeper," for example. Though I am considered a radical writer, I've never done anything as radical as you. There's barely any punctuation in your poetry, and if you do punctuate, you use dashes! That creates much more stress on certain words than exact syllabication or metre ever would. Also, you capitalize words everywhere within your work, words that have no reason to be capitalized. But as one reads over the poem two or three times, one begins to realize that the capitals signify what's important to you. Very clever! The lack of rhyme scheme is fantastic also. None, absolutely zero, of your poems rhyme. Why is this? Does your absence of rhyme signify loss of direction? I've always thought metre was very important, yet your scarcity of metre creates an interesting effect. The way each line rambles in its

own direction suggests to me that you think human beings can't ever attain all that they are capable of, because each gets lost on the way to its goal. Is this the effect you were aiming for? If so, you have achieved it, and splendidly.

I fully admire that you address delicate emotions and situations, for example, love, death and pain, in such a tactful, yet bold manner. If you've ever read any of my poetry or stories, you'll find that I constantly circle the same subject matter. The only topic that inspires me is death and all of its mysteries, in particular the death of a lovely raven-haired lady I once knew. She was the love of my life; however, she died. I wish I could resurrect her, but the only way I know is through writing. Perhaps in further correspondence, you could show me the way out of this weary hole of horror that I am buried in. Your poetry inspires me to reach further outside of myself and my world of hurt.

Miss Emily, I have truly enjoyed reading your poetry, though it was quite by accident. If you don't mind, I would like to publish some of your work in my journal Eureka, but I cannot unless you answer this correspondence. To publish anything without your consent would be a breach of your privacy, you see.

Good luck, and good will,  
Edgar Allan Poe"

By the time Edgar finished writing his letter, it was well past midnight. He tucked the letter into an envelope, sealed it, and posted it to the return address found on the bottom of one of Emily's poems. "Well," he yawned, "I'll mail this off in the morning, now 'tis time for slumber." On his way out of the study, he dropped the letter into the gilt-edged letter holder, where it would sit, waiting patiently for morning.

Several weeks later, the letter reached the house of the Dickinson family, located in Amherst, Massachusetts. Pale, frail Emily received it with trembling hands. "A letter from the esteemed Edgar Allan Poe! Whatever would he be writing me for?" she wondered as she tore it open, careful not to ruin his address. She read it quickly, in disbelief. "He wants to publish me; he thinks I'm good," she cried, pressing the precious letter to her bosom. She ran into the other room to show her mother and sister, who oohed and aahed appreciatively. "You really must write him back, Emily," her sister advised.

"Oh, yes, of course, I will, but whatever will I say?" Emily fretted. "Oh, you'll think of something clever. Why don't you write him a poem?" was Lavinia's trite reply.

"No, no. That's probably what he expects me to do. I suppose I'll just

explain myself to him as well as I possibly can, and see if he understands." With that, Emily went into her austere bedroom, and gathered her pens and paper. Within a few minutes, she had plunged into the answer to the honorable Edgar's correspondence.

Dear Edgar,

"My size felt small to me I read your chapters in *Eureka* -and experienced honor for you-" (2944) 'Your praise is good to me because *I know it knows-and suppose-it means* Could I make you proud sometime a great way off twould give me taller feet' (2942). 'If fame belonged to me, I could not escape her if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase and the approbation of my Dog, would forsake me then My Barefoot-Rank is better' (2945)

The inner life is the far more significant life not the one that goes on regardless of the happenings of the self. To me, Society is not worth bothering with. I would much rather be able to pick and choose what happens within my life than allow it to happen to Me. From the time that I was a young girl, I have chosen to live a socially austere Lifestyle. I am Content, surrounded by Family and the small circle of Friends I have chosen. I am comfortable with this and live with the consequences every day of my Life.

'A Counterfeit-a Plated Person-I would not be..Truth is good Health-and Safety, and the Sky' (2928).

I, like you, Mr. Poe, am obsessed with Death and 'its mysteries. 'This Consciousness that is aware / of Neighbors and the Sun / Will be the one aware of Death / And that itself alone. (2920) Because of my socially limited lifestyle, the deaths of people close to Me strike harder than they would most. Sharing the Burden of love is difficult sharing the Pain of loss is impossible. 'I like a look of Agony' (2880). Death, loss, pain are all three taboo subjects to discuss, which is ridiculous because everyone experiences such things at some point in her lifetime. Many of my "contemporaries" toss these emotions off through what they call "transcendentalism." I call it Denial. I prefer to attempt to deal with the confusion of Pain, or Love, through writing rather than denying it exists. If you think about it, Mr. Poe, you'll find the same True for yourself, I believe.

Thank you for noticing understanding my technique of 'dashing' instead of punctuating. Mere periods and commas are not enough for me in poetry I need something more forceful. I also thank you for understanding my seemingly nonsensical capitalization of Words. To capitalize is to make important, as you correctly assumed. Though you were quite correct in most of your critique you made one inappropriate generalization. In your letter, you mentioned that I never rhyme, or never have a precise rhyme scheme. I make my poetry rhyme when it is suitable. Sometimes I rhyme only once or twice within a poem, occasionally every other line

rhymes, often no lines rhyme whatsoever. I am attempting to break away from the Idea of structure within poetry experimenting with all sorts of different forms. This probably completely offends you, because although you tried to break out of your own mold, you couldn't do it, not completely. This is evident in much of the poetry you have written after "The Raven."

"They shut me up in Prose--As when a little Girl / They put me in the Closet--Because they liked me 'still'"(2908) I am having difficulty with publication. It seems that nobody is interested in what I have to say. Perhaps I am too caustic for my world. That is the reason that I mailed all of my poems off to Nowhere. I have given up hope of ever being published in this lifetime. I have not an inkling as how such a prominent figure as yourself came across those precious pages. I am rather glad you did, for it has given me Hope of recognition. However, at the same time I am leery of possible publication-my carefully chosen world would be quite disturbed. Fame has its price-I am reluctant to pay it. Use your judgment, Edgar, since my Indecisiveness is so turbulent. Actually, I am rather hoping you will decide to forge ahead and publish a bit of my work in Eureka.

Is this Sir what you asked me to tell you?, (2944)

Your friend,  
E Dickinson"

Emily signed the letter with a flourish, slid it into an immaculate envelope, and gave it to her sister to post, since Emily hated to leave the house. Her sister, Lavinia, forgetful girl that she was, put the ill-fated letter aside. Several months later, in September, Lavinia found it in the kitchen cabinet. The letter was finally posted September 29, 1849.

Meanwhile, poor Emily was distraught over the fact that Edgar had not published any of her work. She could not understand why, since she had clearly consented in her letter. In Baltimore, Edgar was slightly vexed that Emily had not the courtesy to answer his correspondence.

In late October, 1849, the letter finally reached Edgar's Baltimore address. It was too late. Edgar had died on October 7th, of unusual circumstances. Emily's letter was eventually returned, unopened and unread, to the dead letter office, where Josh glanced at it, and mused, "Now why does the name Emily Dickinson ring a bell?" for a moment, before tossing it into the rubbish receptacle.

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# Unrequited Friendship

by *Meredith Nicholls*

*Faculty:*  
*Mary Ellen Byrne*

The bearded sea-dog sat warming his hands by the fire, eager to ease the New England chill. His thoughts ambled among the wharfs and piers of his youth, like a crab side-winding its way through bay weeds. His hands sufficiently glowing, he retired to his desk and, with heavy breast, began one last correspondence.

10 November 1857

My American Shakespeare, Nathaniel,

May I still call you such? A year has passed since we shared eves of impassioned conversations at one of New England's finest firesides. I often long for the easy camaraderie of our days in Lenox, and I feel the need at this point in time to continue our transcendental exchanges on a trans-Atlantic basis (mindful, as always, of your impregnable intellect and education). Our similarities are great, and differences too few, to let the glow we share become eclipsed by the clouds of convention.

We hold a common belief, you and I, in the danger to the individual of isolation from society. I see this so clearly in your Scarlet Letter. My heart swells at the honor of knowing the creator of Hester Prynne. The total isolation of her lonely cottage, located not "in close vicinity to any other habitation, and which itself suggests therein was some object which ought to be concealed (2220)," shows the danger of haughty disregard for fellow man. Portraying Hester as the isolate due to the strength of her beliefs was a stroke of genius! Her bias remains in favor of the human condition and the "freedom of speculation (2264)" required by the human heart and mind. In painting such an unabashed portrait, you, as I did in Benito Cereno, allow humanity to view the repercussions of isolation due to assumption. Surely your superior mind can draw the parallel between Hester and my good Captain Delano, whose assumptive bias of white superiority endangers him to the very end.

In addition, Nathaniel, you must acknowledge our shared indignation of oppression, though I respectfully assert oppression of the physical body deserves literary weight commensurate with oppression of the heart. I empathize with the Mistress Pynnes of this country, whose emotional slavery to their sins leaves them without "Love, Passion, or Affection (2264)." I recognize the urgent need of the Dimmesdales to rid their souls of the fetters, lest they continue in the unspeakable

miserly of false lives (2254). I too believe in the sanctity of the human heart, to be held upon the highest sail of the mast. And I salute you by becoming an extension against the force of oppression.

There can be no greater oppressive force than that of slavery--human bondage. Those with muscle of pen must not be blind to this dangerous situation. Nothing shatters the sanctity of the human heart more than the labeling of a race as "valuable cargo, traveling across the ocean in unaspiring contentment due to their limited mind--like Newfoundland dogs (2528)." Concern for the immortality and infinite value of the souls in the hereafter is admirable, but the direct straits exist in the here and now! The ugly passions of slavery will breed generations of Chillingworths, "who withdraw their names from the roll of mankind" (2240) with each shackle and levy.

There's no safe harbor for me now--my ship has set sail against the tide of opportunistic critics and publishers. While you may choose to "ride well your horse of the night" (Martin 23), I still believe there is hope for American literature.

In constant admiration,  
Herman Melville

The letter made its way across the ocean, its author left to wonder if his attempt would mimic those of the San Dominick's hostage crew to Captain Amassa Delano.

Political assignment in Europe and Italy had left the senior novelist uninspired and stultified. Upon receipt of a particular letter from America, he drew upon his last reserve of rhetoric for an adequate reply. "My young Herman believes too long I skated with Emerson, and understand not his restlessness," (Martin 45-50) thought Hawthorne.

16 December 1857

Mssr. Melville,

I, too, must say that I occasionally reflect on our conversant days in the Berkshires. I acknowledge our commonalities with easy vigor. The structure you retain throughout Benito Cerano is reminiscent of the rigorous timing of the chapters in my Scarlet Letter. I see that we both employ conflict of the heart as well as conflict between appearance and reality, although we may differ in subtlety. My disguise of "Hester the Angel as Hester the Adulteress" challenges my reader to reflect deeply on the duality while Benito offers a strategic and dramatic revelation to shock the reader into duality. But I have come to the conclusion you thrive on

affrighted revelation, and this is where we differ.

A writer must never lose the perspective of his current society. You "persistently provoke discomfort of a public not yet ready to part with its religious and political sensibilities (2443)." Great are not the numbers who are prepared to accept the image of a Negro as a headsman, standing over his white Captain as if at the block, completely empowered with only a steel blade (2529). Please do not misunderstand. I feel in my heart that slavery in itself is Evil; however, I remain skeptical of what the abolitionists can actually accomplish (2114). In light of my skepticism, the greatest concern I have is for what is in my soul, and its affinity to the Afterlife.

You must also remember the true definition of Romance, Herman. It must remain a neutral territory between the real world and fairyland (2114). Although the open sea, to you, may represent complete romance with its "undulating long roods of swells, and gray surtout sky filled with even grayer, troubled fowl (2498)," these sailor-esque passages give your reader little room for the abstract. One's choice of symbols actually draws out the Romance, and prolongs its effect. I was busy a great amount of time in creating the perfect symbol of Dimmesdale's guilt, "the blazing spear, sword of flame, the zenith" in the sky of a celestial "A" (2259). I ask you, how long had you labored before determining the most fitting and crude symbol for oppression was that of a "human body, hung as a ship's figurehead instead of a proper flag (2547)?" Truly, now, how can one expect his literary contemporaries or remunerating audiences to receive such harsh representations?

I fear, Melville, that neither time, distance, nor my opinion, will be able to protect you and your idealism from the critical keel-haulings of the very society you offend. I also fear that what I am offering is not what you had hoped to receive, but I must remain honest to my intellect and opinion. Please receive this in good spirit, for I know not when our paths shall cross again, if they shall.

Godspeed,

N. Hawthorne



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## Naturalism and the Role of Gender in

### Maggie: A Girl of the Streets

by Meredith Nicholls

*Faculty:*  
*Judith Angona*

"...one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls (notably an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people."

-Stephen Crane to his friend Hamlin Garland (Solomon 19)

The style and content of Stephen Crane's writings defy cursory classification and ignite certain conflicts among his critics and readers. Born in 1871, this New Jersey native witnessed the literary transition from Romanticism to Realism. His first novel, self-published at the age of twenty-two, is a direct result of his desire to reflect the growing genre of Realism and to portray certain aspects of humanity as he perceived them. Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, the official title, can trace its beginnings to Crane's days at Syracuse University. His eagerness to escape the strong Methodist influence of his mother and the Jersey shore would lead him to this attempt at formal education. However, unable to avoid the attraction of the big city, he soon left Syracuse to experience life in New York first hand. As a journalist, he immediately immersed himself in the decadence and bohemian lifestyle of the lower Manhattan Bowery, gaining the insight he needed to galvanize an image of urban slum life upon the pages of Maggie.

As a result, Maggie clearly surpasses Crane's descent into Realism, catapulting him instead into the heart of Naturalism. The two literary philosophies are very similar in their attempts to describe human behavior from an objective, empirical point of view. Naturalism, though, completely refutes one of the basic tenets of Realism, the belief in the free moral will of every person to exercise choice, despite any detrimental forces or pressures, and to thereby have a hand in determining one's own fate to a greater degree (Lauter 13). This element of choice is absent from the framework of Maggie. A fairly simple work, it tells the story of Maggie Johnson, an Irish girl growing up among the Bowery tenements of New

York City. She lives with her alcoholic mother Mary, her crude and sneering brother Jimmie, and their frequently absent father. Anxious to escape her brutal family environment, she is led astray by Jimmie's swaggering friend Pete, in whom she sees a shining white knight. When Pete tires of her and casts her aside, she finds herself unable to return home because of her "ruined virtue," and turns instead to a life of prostitution. Overcome by despair and rejection, she disappears into the East River one evening in a final attempt to cleanse her soul.

Maggie is much more than a work of Naturalism. The central character is a woman. Historically, women at this time, especially those burdened with foreign heritage, were given little or no choice in their lives. The very element of free will, moral or otherwise, does not exist for them, regardless of their social class. Therefore, Maggie extends to become an examination of the often brutal, always impersonal forces of nature, primarily biology, poverty, and moral hypocrisy, upon the lives of urban women in Industrial America.

Biology, the nature of gender and of sex, is one of the more harsh elements affecting the lives of tenement women. For example, Mary Johnson, Mag and Jimmie's hot-tempered mother, is put forth as an Amazonian, huge of physical form and great in strength. This, of course, ensures her survival among the weaker members of the slums. Her "massive shoulders" frequently "heaved in anger" while she shook her children until they literally rattled (Crane 7). Her survival is also secured by her ability to take on those traits reserved primarily for men. She "delivered reproaches, swallowed potatoes, and drank heavily from a yellowbrown bottle" (9), damning souls with a variety of profanities. Mary is physically masculine, and she drinks and swears with the best. Nevertheless, she is still a woman. She has the biology to reproduce and, despite her facade of indifference, is one of the many grieving, "formidable women whose gruesome doorways gave up loads of babies to the streets and the gutter" (6).

Likewise, the character of Nell is able to survive in the slums by adapting male biological patterns. Nell is a seasoned girl of the streets who seduces Pete from Maggie and reverses the typical male dominance evident in tenement relationships. She accepts her sexuality with a confidence not bestowed upon Crane's heroine, and uses her gender to gain the advantage. She is an example of a "Darwinian super-woman...whose audacity is merely the price of her survival" (Hapke 80). When Pete asks her how her "business" in Buffalo worked out, she merely shrugs her shoulders and states, "Well, he didn't have as many stamps as he tried to make out, so I shook him, that's all" (Crane 45).

Maggie, on the other hand, is physically small and frail. She has neither the biological make-up nor the emotional adaptability from which to draw any strength.

She is "a small, ragged girl" with a "thin, white face..her features haggard from [constant] weeping..." (Crane 12-13). Her eyes gleam from fear of her mother. This image likens her to a young lamb, acutely aware of an enemy presence alongside her in this jungle, but utterly precluded from doing anything about it. The fact that Maggie perishes, while Mary and Nell survive, is a classic example of Darwinian theory and survival of the fittest.

Poverty is another impartial force responsible for shaping the lives of these urban women. Mary Johnson reflects the lack of economic options available to women in the slums. A devout Irish-Catholic properly laden with children, she is homebound, stifled by her "career from a seething stove to a pan-covered table" (Crane 7). Indeed, the dark, grimy walls of the tenement itself offer Mary no outlet, and the most challenging task of her day is to create an appetizing meal of rotten potatoes. She has the option of gossiping with the other women of "uncombed hair and disorganized dress" (6), or of losing herself in drink. Her mind is numb, due in part to her alcoholism, but also in part to the economic limitations placed upon her by a male-dominated society.

Nell is also a victim of poverty's economics. Having few options to choose from with which to support herself, she opts for prostitution. "A woman of brilliance and audacity" (Crane 45), completely unrepentant, Nell ensures economic survival by turning an otherwise unfavorable option into a profitable venue. In later chapters, as Pete lay passed out upon a barroom floor and their friends exit in disgust, she remains behind, "taking up the dollar bills [Pete left] out and stuffing them into a deep, irregularlyshaped pocket (59). Declaring Pete to be a fool, she makes a profit in the tenement. However, the fact of her success should not be held against her. One must ask, is her situation, her lack of options, any less tragic than Maggie's simply because Nell suffers to survive?

Miraculously, the forces of poverty do not rob Maggie of her beauty, but instead rob her of her youth. As a young teen, she is told by her brother, "Yeh've edder got teh go teh hell or go teh work!" (Crane 17). She takes a job in a cuff factory where the foreign owner's fat purse "deprived them of the power of retort" (26). As she works, she observes the other "grizzled" women of the factory to be no more than "mere mechanical contrivances," as they labor in fugue-like states, and she speculates how long her youth will endure (26). As a woman, she earns just enough to save for the purchase of some material for a lambrequin to put over the stove. On the contrary, Pete, who works fewer hours as a bartender, earns enough to display the "fascination innovations in his apparel" (21) on a daily basis. Clearly, gender has a special significance with regard to economy.

Finally, the most significant aspect of nature and environment affecting the

lives of Mary, Nell, Maggie, and the other women of the Bowery is the great moral hypocrisy of society. As a woman, Mary is given the responsibility of raising her children while attempting to preserve society's moral value of family. Her husband remains harshly indifferent to his role as a father. He protests her frequent child beatings because it disturbs his sleep. He declares, "...I can't get no rest 'cause yer allus poundin' a kid...Don't be allus poundin' a kid" (Crane 8). In addition, the role of religion in society teaches Mary to use it as a condemning, not healing force. To secure her own soul in the hereafter, she casts Maggie out for "queering" the family, completely oblivious to the part she plays in Maggie's ruination. Mary wonders aloud, "When a girl is bringed up the way I bringed up Maggie, how kin she go teh the devil?" (42). The hypocrisy of religion culminates when Maggie's death is relayed to her family and Mary exclaims with a moan, "Oh yes, I'll fergive her! I'll fergive her!" (41).

Without a doubt, Maggie suffers the brunt of society's moral hypocrisy. She is a victim of a society that applies a different set of rules to women than to men, specifically where sexuality is concerned. Maggie's family condemns her a sinner before any "sin" has even taken place. Afterward, Jimmie casually considers to himself the possibility that some of his own female "acquaintences" have brothers like him (Crane 43). Soon after, he is approached by one of his many amours, one very anxious to resume contact with him for some hidden reason. The cornered animal makes his position clear: "Oh, go teh hell!" (49) he cries as he ducks into a nearby bar. When Maggie finds herself in a similar position, without a home to return to, she plaintively asks Pete, "Where kin I go?" He echoes her brother's sentiment. "Oh, you can go teh hell!" (53).

Maggie suffers also from the hypocrisy of male-oriented religious beliefs. Once cast out, she approaches a priest on the street, hoping to find the Grace of God she has heard so much about. However, upon sighting her, the good priest "gave a convulsive movement and saved his respectability by a vigorous sidestep...for how was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving?" (54). Upon this final rejection, she submits fully to a life on the streets, illustrating what critic Jayne Anne Phillips asserts to be the constant in Maggie; "the deceit and irresponsibility of men toward women" (xi).

The opposing and often vicious elements of biology, poverty, and moral hypocrisy dominate Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, and reflect the particular plight explicitly known to the women of urban Industrial America. Although critical response to this work is both praising and corrective, few critics view this from a female perspective. Laura Hapke defends Nell, whom she calls a "sexual politician of the highest order," as a superior element among the Bowery inhabitants (80). Christopher Benfey, in his autobiography of Stephen Crane, points out that a

major theme in Maggie is "the different status of boys of the street, opposed to girls of the street" (65). He goes on to point out that a man walking alone on the street or simply "hanging out" is quite a different picture than one of a woman doing the exact same thing (66). In addition, while Bernard Weinstein will go as far as to say Maggie is "filled with examples of degradation and the absence of moral responsibility for oneself and others" (68), he does not attempt to explore the particulars of Maggie's outcome, and is content to cite the overall putrid environment of the slums as the cause.

In terms of literary style, this work has been debated as one of either Realism, Naturalism, Impressionism, or even Imagism. Author Theodore Dreiser places it among the works of Naturalists, citing its lack of sweetness, uplift and moral or spiritual solution (126). Joseph Conrad, on the other hand, declares Maggie to be the work of an Impressionist, revealing the color of the Bowery and life in the slums as they appeared to Crane (141). Still other critics, such as Thomas A. Gullason, state that the war motif of survival in the tenements and the frequent use of battle language to describe everyday events is a clear indicator of Realism (150).

Literary style notwithstanding, Maggie is a work that should be studied for its meaning. Frequently, the horror of slum life supersedes the inadvertent feminism present in this novel. Although Stephen Crane surely did not intend his story to be a call for women's rights, the very existence of a character such as Nell, whom he neither condemns nor passes judgement upon, explores the issue of gender equality. Sadly, Maggie was, as Leonard Unger states, "made respectable by the success of The Red Badge of Courage" (408), and only then became somewhat financially fruitful. However, careful readers will appreciate this novella for its own wise insights, and will see this clearly as a work that is able to stand on its own merits.

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# The Immortal Hero

by Joseph Belas

*Faculty:*  
*Peggy Boese*

The literary identity of Jesus Christ is an amalgamation of the Hebrew and Greco-Roman literary traditions. One can assume that the Greco-Roman tradition influenced the way Jesus' life, death, and resurrection are perceived and written about, for as a Jew, Jesus was also exposed to this tradition. We see this in certain aspects of the New Testament which resemble previous works of literature. For instance some aspects of Jesus resemble Job, Achilleus, Hektor, Odysseus, Socrates, and Aeneas, among others. Remarkably prescient passages describing phenomenon later found in the New Testament are found in the Old Testament, the Iliad, the Odyssey, The Death of Socrates, and Virgil's Aeneid.

Robert Hefner reminds us that "[o]ne of the chief centers of this Hellenizing influence [on the New Testament] was Sepphoris, which lay just a few miles from Nazareth, the hometown of Jesus....all the features of Hellenistic culture were present and invited participation: theaters, hippodromes, gymnasia, temples" (47). Jews of this time "were assimilated to the [Greco-Roman] culture" where "they adopted Greek as their basic language and sought to perceive the underlying commonalities between their ancient scriptural traditions and the philosophical insights of the Greeks" (Hefner 47). Long before the birth of Jesus, Virgil describes "a star...trailing flame" (Aeneid 2.872). The "star" leads Aeneas and his family out of Troy, like the "star" that leads the Magi to baby Jesus. The Magi "behold the star that they had seen in the East [as it] went before them" (Matthew 2.9). The gospel according to Saint Matthew was translated into Greek certainly before the close of the first century and the imagery of the Aeneid may have affected the author or translators of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew.

"Why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27.46) Jesus asks the Lord; he was not the first to ask for an explanation of his suffering. Actually, Job, a "perfect and upright" (Job 40) man, is the first to question the Lord. The Lord tests Job's faith by letting Satan inflict upon him the "greatest imaginable suffering" (Job 15). In the New Testament, Satan "offer[s] wealth and earthly power to Jesus" (Watts 291). However, Satan is not able "to worst Jesus in argument" (Watts 291). Job wants justification for his suffering. "[His] desire is that the Almighty would answer [him]" (Job 54). Both Jesus and Job must undergo unimaginable suffering, but Jesus transcends Job because Job had no idea why he was being tested. Jesus asks the Lord to "let this cup pass from me" (Matt. 58.9). Aware of his fate his "sweat



became as drops of blood running down upon the ground" (Luke 22.44) because he did not want to be crucified. Stating "not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22.42), he allows himself to be arrested and crucified. Giving his "body" and "blood" "that repentance and remission of sins should" (Luke 24.47) occur, he makes the ultimate sacrifice.

Similarly, Achilles knew sacrifice and like Jesus he willingly gave up his life. While Achilles died in order to achieve "everlasting glory" (Iliad 9.413), Jesus suffered and died "to atone for the sins of humanity" (Mack 579). They did not want to die. Achilles states that "all the possessions [that] were won for Ilion, are not worth the value of my life" (Iliad 9.400-402). "The great desire in my heart...drives me to take a wife and to enjoy with her possessions won by [my father] Peleus" (Iliad 9.397-400). However, his mother "bore [him] to be a man with a short life" (Iliad 1.78). She gave birth "to a son who was without fault and powerful, conspicuous among heroes" (Iliad 18.113). In the Bible, an angel told the shepherds that "a Savior has been born..., who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2.78). Achilles may have been the son of a goddess and "godlike," but that "savior" of the Greeks was not a god.

Betrayed by Athena, Hektor died protecting the people of Troy. Athena used the "form" of a man to convince Hektor to "stand fast against Achilles" (Iliad 22.231). Similarly, the Bible notes that "Satan entered into Judas...and he discussed how he might betray [Jesus]" (Luke 22.3). Both of their deaths were a direct result of betrayal. Like Jesus' treatment by the Romans, Hektor is taunted and "despoiled" by the Greeks. Finally, Priam must ransom Hektor's body with "gifts beyond number" (Iliad 24.502), as Joseph of Arimathea must "ask for the body of Jesus" (Matt 27.58).

Jesus never apologizes; he does not "answer...a single word" (Matt. 27.14) to His accusers. On the other hand, Socrates, "affected by [his] accusers" (Plato 432), attempts to defend himself. However, Jesus and Socrates "have no part of any compromise that would undermine [their] moral [authority]" (Mack 431). They sacrificed themselves so that they would not "betray [their] life's work" (Mack 431). They were put to death for speaking what they thought to be the truth. Like Jesus, "Socrates himself wrote nothing" (Mack 431); it is from their followers that their words live on.

Hundreds of years prior to the writing of the New Testament, Homer had written of Odysseus walking with the dead and living to tell about it. To escape the grasp of the goddess Kirke, he was forced to "take a strange way" home (Odyssey 10.225). Odysseus did not die in order to take this journey, and he states that "no man has ever sailed to the land of Death" (Odyssey 10.225). He is the first mortal to make this journey. While in the land of the dead he speaks with many of the inhabitants.

In the Odyssey the inhabitants of the land of the dead are mainly "famous and beautiful" people (Mack 223): "kings", "queens," "princes," and "the world-renowned" (Odyssey 11.339) heroes. In a lecture, Margaret Boese points out that the Aeneid shows "the gods are getting more accessible to the common man." Not only heroes and royalty inhabit this underworld but "mothers and men, boys and girls" (Aen.6.53-54). do as well. However, the "pauper" must wait "a hundred years....to cross the deeps" (Aen.6.83) and enter the land of the dead. In direct contrast, by the time of the writing of the New Testament, it is said that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God"(Mark 10.25). After his resurrection "[Jesus] parted from [the apostles] and was carried up into heaven" (Luke 24.51). No mention is made of His speaking with anyone in heaven or hell; however, heaven has been opened to all "souls" no longer will the poor be denied entrance.

Odysseus and Aeneas make terrifying visits to the underworld. Achilles, Hektor, Socrates, and Jesus chose their own end; by doing so, they define themselves as heroes. In their quest for truth Job and Socrates are also heroic. These "heroes" with their "Christ-like" qualities are bound together by how they lived and how they faced adversity and death. They would not bend; they could not be broken. The New Testament is the synthesis of the "Greco-Roman" and Hebrew cultures. It has been said that "no Greek ever became a god and no true Greek ever gave up trying" (Segal 3). Jesus never had to "try" to become God.

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