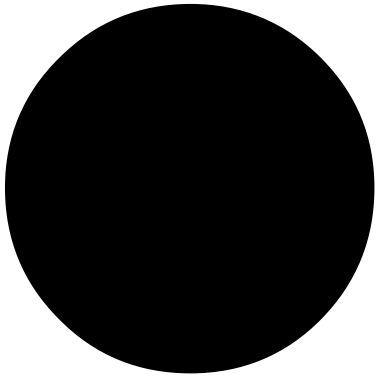
An *Unbound* Collection

featuring work from 2013 and 2014 contributors



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Unbound

The following issue arose from a collaborative effort between *Unbound* and the English Department at the University of Oregon. It aims to showcase and celebrate student work both in the critical and creative realms. It contains a sliver of the works published in *Unbound's* 2013 and 2014 online issues and four critical essays issued awards by University of Oregon English Department faculty. All student work! Enjoy!

We would like to thank both the Art Department and English Department at the University of Oregon. Without their generosity we would not have possessed the funds to print this celebratory issue.

Contents

Coyote

By **Austin Fulton**

In an old haunt of refuse and rot
I saw a ragged vagabond
sulk across the road
with his head bowed low
like a petty crook with
beady eyes casting about,
furtive, slinking from the road
into the gutter of the wilderness.
A highway ditch before a farmer's field,
the slums of nature cluttered and colored with garbage,
scented with road kill—
bloating, fetid carcasses swelling in the sun, their bellies roiling with maggots:
this is his familiar neighborhood.

He avoided plastic bags, soda cans,
and burger wrappers, his snout to the ground
swinging back and forth like a divining rod. Wading through the ghetto
he found a deer pregnant with gasses,
her legs obscenely spread.
There was no thanksgiving.
His head rose with curling jowls
and I turned away as he fell on the doe.

That quiet rush of gas as the coyote tore at the ballooned belly
whispered through my imagination.

No Homo

By **Elijah Sprints**

Happy Birthday Pop

By **Ethan Arlt**

Birthdays are a bitch. I can't remember a good one. There was one that was almost good, when Margaret took me to the Dodgers game, but it was ruined because she forgot to fill up the gas tank. We ran out of gas and we had to use her Jitterbug doohicky to call the operator and have him connect us to someone that could help. Then, there was the one where Walter and I went to the bars, after we had come back from the war, and got fucked up, but the next day I spent tossing my cookies over the toilet and I can't remember what we did. So that birthday amounted to jack shit.

Why do we even celebrate it? "Remember that day you were ripped, bloody and screaming from your mother's womb? Wasn't that great?" Yeah, a fucking blast. I'll tell you why we celebrate it: because some suit-and-tie richie, living off his father's money, decided one day that he could make a quick buck off it. People want to buy shit like cards with pictures of dogs and monkeys on the front that are blank inside. They want to buy a crease, and people want to get a crease. Not me, I'll take my morning paper and my coffee. Black coffee.

And if birthdays weren't bad enough before, now, my son, Scott, has another excuse to come over and treat me like a child. "Pop, you should look into adult diapers", or "Pop, why don't you get a dog?" Each time it's something new that he'll try to force on me. He'll come over once a week and treat me like I'm a dead-man walking, like I can't do shit on my own, no matter how many times I tell him that I'm fine.

For some reason, the big old grandfather clock's ticking too loudly—louder than normal—and the little Mexican neighbor-girl that was playing outside earlier was loud too, screaming and what not. It's been a noisy day so far. I get up to check the clock and my hip stabs at me, but it's nothing. I open it up to check the pendulum, and it looks okay. It's an old clock, large and brown, and it's always been reliable, not like the clocks they have these days, the ones that are all digitized and are dependent on electricity. This one runs all by itself and it's normally fine, but today it's busted. I go into the garage to get a screwdriver and when I open up my toolkit, I see Walter's old hammer, the one that he let me borrow the day before he died in his bed ten years ago.

It was weird to see him like that. I go into his house to return the hammer and he's lying in his bed, and he's cold as a popsicle, looking stupidly up at the ceiling. It's kind of funny actually, not in a *haha* way, but the kind of way that's funny to think about. The guy survives bullets in Germany, a drug addiction, ingesting rat poison, and then he dies in his bed. Like his body just said "I'm done." But he wasn't done; he had more in him, a little more.

Margaret had asked me about it that day when I came home. I had gotten out of my old truck that I used for painting houses and still had the hammer in my hand. She knew right away that something had gone wrong.

"What happened?" she asked.

"We can keep this," I said, pointing at the hammer.

I'd seen people, friends, blown to bits by artillery, but there was something about Walter's body. It was so quiet. At least with an artillery blast, you got a boom and an explosion to take you out, but he got none of that. That was ten years ago, and I don't think about it too much. Sad to lose a good man is all.

I don't need the hammer right now, so I get the screwdriver and take it to the clock. I twist some of the bolts at the top of the pendulum to tighten them, but that doesn't seem to work. Now that I think about it, I should have seen this coming with the clock. It was a gift from Margaret's family after all—gave it to us at our wedding. Just like something from her family to break on me all of a sudden. She didn't even want to take it after the divorce, and when she was walking out the door, she tried to make me feel bad for keeping it.

"I don't care," she said. "You can keep it. You always liked it more than I did." And then she left. That was typical Margaret, though. She'd always get bundled up in little things and then try to make me feel guilty. But that was five years ago that she left, and it's been good ever since—the peace and quiet. The quiet's good when you get used to it.

The doorbell rings and I can see by the short ginger hair poking out of the glass in the door that it's Scott, and he must have his wife and kids next to him. And the kids are probably playing on their gaming things, not looking at anything around them. I can hear them talking outside. One of the kids, probably Ronald, asking how long they have to stay, and Scott telling him that he'll have to see—a flimsy answer. I'll give the kid a better answer: they can leave now.

I get up and make my way to the door and the bell rings again and Catherine tells Robby not to do that because it's rude. When I open the door, I see Ronald throw his little brother a punch and tell him to shut up, and Scott's there with his little salesman smirk. Next to him is Catherine, with her eyes that are too far apart, like a bug. Sometimes I wonder if she can see on both sides of her. Always thought my son would do better.

"Happy Birthday," Scott says to me as he forces himself onto me with a hug. He hugs me softly like I'm some ancient relic, not a human being. The rest of the family says "happy birthday" again with less enthusiasm. The bug has a big box in her hand that looks like a cake – maybe chocolate, cause that's my favorite, but they wouldn't know that. They don't really care how much I like it. They care that they brought it and they can say they brought it. They can feel good about bringing it. Next to Ronald on the doorstep, Robby is a shrimp, and he's grabbing his crotch.

"Kid has to piss," I tell Scott. "Go to the bathroom. Don't want you pissing all over the carpet."

Robby looks at me with his signature blank stare from underneath his spiked-up brown hair,

and then bolts through the door. Kid never was all there. Last week when they all came over, I went to go get something from the garage and caught the little fucker licking Elmer's glue. It was a big scene, but he saved my ass cause the bug convinced Scott to take him to the doctor right away and they left. They tell me he's "artsy," but when people call kids artsy they really mean "sucks at sports" or "crazy." Margaret used to call Scott "artsy" all the time. He was the "sucked at sports" kind. Maybe some of the other kind too.

"He needs a haircut," I say. Scott gives one of his fake nods. The ones that you give to people when you want them to think you're listening, but you're actually not. Typical salesman.

I let them in and get them all seated on the couch, while I sit in my normal chair. Ronald takes out his games again. For a moment, the only sound in the room is the damn clock. The one that's still ticking too loudly. Does Scott know about clocks? Did I ever teach him?

"How are you, Pop?" Scott asks.

"Fine."

"So," he says. He takes out a folded piece of paper from his pocket and shoves it in my face. He tells me about how he did some searching for me and he thinks that a Shit Zoo would be a good dog for me, even though last time I told him I didn't want one. He tells me about how they're great companions and they're easy to take care of. He tries to sell me on it, like I'm another sucker customer. Talk talk talk, that's everything for Scott. He gets paid for running his mouth, by selling people cars that they don't want and gouging them out of their hard-earned money. The first Anderson to not be a doer.

"Why would I want some little fucker running around breaking things?" The bug covers Ronald's ears and he takes her hands off. Good for him.

Scott does a small half-laugh, which makes his sorry-excuse-for-facial hair under his bottom lip go up and down. I wonder how long it took him to grow that B-list porn star look.

"It'd be company for you," he tells me.

"I don't need company."

"Don't you get lonely?"

"No." Everyone dies alone anyways. Just like Walter when I found him dead in his bed. Some little dog won't change that—nothing will change that.

"What are you up to these days, Pop?" he asks.

"Same thing I been up to last time you asked me."

"You get out at all this week?"

"I needed food, so I went to the store."

I can't take the interrogation so I get up to grab a beer, and my hip stabs at me again. Scott jumps up and tells me not to stand quickly because the doctor said not to because of my new hip. I tell him to sit down and that I got it. I'm not dead yet.

Just like Scott to say that. He always trusts those professionals. He gets it from Margaret. Like the time he missed a whole week of school with some sickness, where the doc prescribed him these pills for his lungs, because apparently he had mucus in there.

"Can you walk?" I asked him after watching him rot his brain away in bed for three days. He said yes, and I told him to get his ass up out of bed, but he didn't. It was Margaret who convinced him to stay. She's the one who brought him soup and blankets—coddled him.

I get over to the kitchen and I can hear Scott talking to Ronald, asking what game he's playing. Ronald ignores him and Scott doesn't make him say anything to him. Pathetic. If there's one thing I taught Scott it's this: "Don't be a bitch." Even after all these years, he still disobeys me. And he's ruining this kid.

"Drinks?" I ask them. They say in the most polite tones what they want.

Oh please, sir, if it's not too much trouble, could I please, if you don't mind... Don't give me this Oliver Twist bullshit. Tell me what you want, dammit. Two waters? Okay.

I open up the fridge and grab my Bud and then reach for a water glass and my hip goes again, but the pain is nothing compared to getting shot in the leg in the dirt of Wesel and having an eighteen year old virgin take the bullet out with a rusty pair of tongs. Now that is pain.

I can hear them all talking about me in the living room. Scott's talking about my limp and the bug says that she sees it too. He says that I look weaker than the last time he saw me, leaner and my face is more sunken. I can tell they're about to steal glances at me out the corners of their eyes. When I turn my back, they'll look at me like I'm some charity case.

Thought I had taught Scott some respect, but I guess he didn't pick it up. No, no respect, even for the man that started it all. If it hadn't been for me, picking up Margaret in that bar sixty-eight years ago, Scott wouldn't be alive. I just walked up to her with my charm and I told her she was beautiful, because she was.

I take the drinks in the living room and put them on the little coffee table in the middle. The bug reaches for her glass, but her face goes sour. She makes a little "hmm" noise. Scott asks her what's wrong and she tells him that her glass is dirty, pointing at some piece of food that is stuck on the lip.

"I'll get you a new glass, honey," Scott says and stands. She can get it herself, but he goes and gets it and comes back, and at least if he can't be a parent, then he's being a bit of a man. I hear Scott shuffling around in the kitchen and I'm sitting there with the bug. I can't tell if she's looking at me, but she's squirming on the couch, nervous that she'll have to talk to me. She yawns into her hand and takes out her cell phone and moves her finger over the screen, and next to her, Ronald is still playing on his game device. She looks up. She's getting desperate now, made uncomfortable by the silence. She doesn't enjoy it yet. It takes practice to get used to.

"Honey," she wails, "how's it going in there?"

Scott bails her out and calls back to her that he's coming. He brings her the drink and she grabs it immediately and sips it, giving her something to do. Scott sits back down, but his attention is toward a picture in his hand, probably the one of Margaret in front of the pool at the old house that I keep forgetting to throw out.

"You still got this picture." Scott turns the picture towards me, and I lean in close to see it. It's the one of Margaret at the pool, laying in a lounge chair and raising a drink. Her brown hair is falling gently over her shoulders.

"Keep forgetting to throw it out," I say.

"Want me to take care of it? You probably don't want this here anymore," he says. He stands up and has got the picture in his hand and he's heading towards the trashcan.

"Sit down. I'll do it later." He asks me if I'm sure and I tell him that I am and he shouldn't have to throw my shit away for me. Scott sits back down and drops the picture on the coffee table.

"We went to visit her yesterday at her new place. It's called Sunset Living."

"The geezer lives."

"Pop, it's a really great place. There are a lot of places like this. A whole community of 'experienced' people. They go to concerts and play games."

Oh, games! Maybe we could play bingo. G-36. F-10. Bingo. Nope, just some old bag with a faulty hearing aid. Thrilling. Scott looks at me like he expects me to be excited, but I don't give him the satisfaction.

"You might be happier with other people."

"I'm happy how I am."

"If you change your mind, you can call me." Sorry to disappoint you, Scott, but don't hold your breath. Scott starts talking to the bug about things that don't concern me, so I try to tune out, but all I can hear is the damn clock. I wonder if Scott still remembers anything I taught him.

"Now, you see here how the pendulum works?" I had asked him when he was a kid. He hadn't looked at me when I was talking to him. He was somewhere else in his head. "Pay attention," I said. "Look at me when I'm talking. I'm trying to teach you something." He looked at me then, his ginger hair covering his tired eyes.

"I don't care about clocks, Pop. My phone tells time."

"Well, you should."

"Why?"

"Because I said so." Then, I went through the whole shpeel about how the parts work, and he gave me blank stares and he didn't listen to anything I tried to teach him about it.

The sound of Robby washing his hands comes through the walls and he's singing to himself, some kind of Christmas song. Catherine's wide-set eyes get big.

"Is there any glue upstairs?" she asks. I tell her no, and then when Robby stomps his way downstairs, whistling to himself, I look up and pretend like I'm forgetting something.

"Or maybe there is," I say, hoping for a good reaction. Scott doesn't think it's funny, and he grabs her and reassures her that I'm just joking. Ronald, who I thought wasn't listening, laughs from over his game device.

"What's that?" I point at his game device.

"A DS." He turns it towards me for a moment to show. It's just a bunch of nonsense and it hurts my eyes. He turns it back and continues playing.

"You're going to kill your eyes." He just shrugs at me like some punk. "Your grandpa is talking to you, so pay attention." Ronald looks over at his father, who doesn't give him any response, so he looks at me. Good, I'll teach this kid some manners even if Scott can't. "I've lived more life than you could imagine, so you listen."

"Okay," he says quietly.

"How old are you?" I ask him. I tip my beer bottle at the scrawny kid and wish he had one of his own. We could sit and talk shit about our wives, and shit that we've done that would make any dame go for us. Walter never got any dames though. He wasn't ever good at that.

"Ten," he says.

"You play sports?"

"Football. I'm a quarterback," he says.

Football? Wouldn't have pegged him as a kid good with a pigskin. Not with his frame. Maybe the kid can throw. Where would he have learned to throw? Not from Scott, cause Scott would never listen to me when I tried to teach him. Scott could never throw.

"Bet I can throw harder than you," I tell him. He looks up at me confused first, but then puts his game down.

"Bet you can't," he says. I put my beer down and go get my pigskin from the closet and head outside and he follows me out there. Scott warns me not to go out and I close the door behind me.

Ronald tosses me the ball in a pretty good spiral. He's got a cannon like his grandpa. I toss it back to him and I can see him reeling from the sheer force. Did Scott play catch with him? He must have taught him. Playing outside with his kid—like I tried to do with him.

"Catch it like this," I tell him. I show him the perfect form, how you make your hands like a triangle. He does it next time and catches it clean.

"I was a quarterback too," I say.

I can see this kid doing good things –running down the sidelines with ANDERSON in big bold letters on his back. He'd do the dirty work, he'd fight for his team to get the win, and he'd have respect. And the name Anderson would be known for greatness.

I throw again and my hip flares, like when I was shot in Wesel. Ronald tosses it back, so I put my hands up in front of me, but I can't grab the ball in time so it slips through and hits me in the face and then rolls into the street. My nose is bleeding so I stop it with my hanky.

"You okay, Grandpop?" the kid asks. The black hanky's getting soggy in my hand, so I readjust it.

"What'd you do that for? Threw it right in the sun."

"Grandpop, the sun's behind you." The little brat's just staring up at the sky.

"Get the ball out of the street before we crash a car."

He grabs the ball and runs inside before I can stop him and soon after he does, Scott comes

running out of the house with gauze and cotton balls like some fancy nurse. He tries to stuff one of the cotton balls up my nose, but I slip past him before he can reach me.

"Don't touch me," I tell him through the dripping hanky. "I didn't ask for help."

I walk inside, past the bug's wide-set eyes and go into the bathroom where I can clean myself up. I turn on the faucet and wait for it to get hot, and remove the hanky from my nose. The blood's slowed a little.

Besides the dripping blood and the redness my nose is still strong. It's suffered worse. But the creases near my eyes are bigger than I remember and I have a turkey gobble that could stretch to my waist. Walter had a big gobble too and I'd always give him shit for it. I guess he's giving me shit now from somewhere else.

I take my shirt off cause some of the blood had gotten on it. I look, and my chest is small, like a bear still, but a smaller bear – a bear that might get beat in a fight by a bigger bear.

The water's hot now. Couldn't get water this hot so quickly before, wasn't so easy. Pull a lever and in seconds out comes your water like magic. Had to wait a while before.

Like when me and Margaret were standing by the sink and brushing our teeth. She was waiting for hot water. Was she washing her face? No, like when I was brushing my teeth and Margaret, well, Maggie, was about to wash her face and I told her about how while me and Walter were painting some richie's house, Walter had fallen off the ladder and smeared a few stripes of blue paint over a white wall and when the richie came back and saw it, he nearly passed out because his precious house wasn't perfect anymore. I told the story like a real showman and she laughed.

Boy, her laugh was something that could make a cancer patient smile. And when she'd snort, it'd be funny cause she'd have this shocked look on her face like *did I do that*? Yeah, Maggie, you did.

But it wasn't worth it, she'd said. She told me that she didn't know when it happened, but I didn't love her like I used to, and she was right. I was happier when she wasn't around, because she had a habit of being a real annoyance, and so the whole thing didn't seem worth it anymore. And each night, for a long time before we divorced five years ago, we could feel that we were growing apart. It was in the few words we had before we each went to sleep. It'd be *goodnight Hank,* and then I'd say, *goodnight Maggie,* and that would be it and we'd go to sleep. It was in the arguments too. Like when she'd be a bitch over stupid shit like whether or not to go camping or how to arrange the furniture, and that might have been when I decided that she was right that it wasn't worth it. It was all an obligation, almost like we were trying to get something back but couldn't because it'd been lost for good. So she hit the road, and I'm much happier now.

But the hot water's just different now and that's what I'm trying to say.

Robby's voice comes in through the walls.

"Is Grandpop dead?" He must be talking real loud. I hear Scott shush him and Ronald mentions how he guesses he won the bet of who could throw harder and maybe he did. And the clock that still needs to be fixed is ticking through the walls.

"Dear, I'm tired and the dogs need to be fed, can we go?" says the bug. The boys chime in too. Go ahead Scott, go home, and go sell a few more cars.

"I want to go," Robby whines, "it's boring here." Scott shushes him once more.

"You can take the kids home," he says, "I'm going to spend more time with my Dad." The bug urges him to come home and tells him that I don't want them here and that I want to be alone and she's right. But he doesn't give in, and this time, he's not a bitch. He's got some fight in him this time. Stupid fight, but still fight.

"Why do we come here?" she asks. "Your Dad doesn't want us. You've said yourself he wasn't good to you."

"He's still my dad. He helped raise me."

That shuts the bug up for now. Guess Scott learned some of the respect I taught him after all. I get a new shirt and come back out of the bathroom and besides the clock it's quiet. I sit down in my chair and pick up my Bud and sip. Ronald flicks his brother's ear.

"How's the nose?" Scott asks me.

"Fine. How's work?" I ask him. He asks me what I said and I repeat myself, slower this time like our roles are reversed, like he's the old man and I'm the young one with the family.

"Good," he says, "it's real good, Pop. Thanks for asking." I nod at him and finish off my beer in a big swig.

Nobody's talking, but the clock's loud.

"Clock's broken, can you hear it?" I say. Scott looks over at the clock and asks me how it's broken. "It's too loud."

He says he doesn't hear it, says that it sounds like a normal clock. I get up to check it and he follows me over to the backside of the clock. I try to move the clock away from the wall, but it's heavy. Scott goes on the other side of the clock to push.

"I got it," I tell him.

"Let me help you," he says. He starts pushing, and I pull, and he's surprisingly strong for his skinny frame. The clock moves easy away from the wall and the back is exposed.

I open up the door of the back and look inside at the parts. It's probably the main wheel that's getting caught. Might need to be oiled up.

"You know where I keep the oil?" I ask him. Scott crosses his arms over his chest and nods. The bug has closed her eyes to sleep.

"Yeah. You want circulating or spindle oil?"

He knows the difference between the two?

"We're going on just the gear here, so circulating."

He goes into the garage and gets the right kind of oil and hands it to me. I take the gear away from the system carefully.

"You study clocks or somethin'?" I ask him. I apply the oil onto the gear.

"You taught me, remember?"

"Of course I remember." Guess he took in some of what I was saying after all. I put the gear back into its place and let it run, but it didn't fix it.

"You say it's too loud?" he asks me. "Louder than normal? It sounds okay to me."

"No, no it's too loud. Maybe it's the weight."

"Let's check the escape wheel."

I hadn't thought of that—good idea. I use my screwdriver to unscrew the screws that hold it in place and take it out and we examine it. He asks if I see anything wrong with it. My eyes aren't as good as they used to be, so I hand it to him for a look.

"Looks fine," he says.

I wonder what's wrong. I oil up this gear too, like I did with the other.

"Dodgers are doing well," I say. Some of the oil seeps onto my hand so I wipe it on my jeans.

"How well are they doing?" he says.

"Playoffs," I say. "Got a good bullpen this year. Yep. They're always selling out now," I turn over to him. "You should see it when they hit a home run now, everyone goes nuts in the ravine there, and they set off fireworks. I don't remember them doing that before. You still have your hat? The one I got you when we went to a game some time ago?"

"Somewhere," he says. "Don't think it'll fit now, though."

"I suppose not. Maybe you can give it to your boys."

"Yeah. Maybe I could." Scott puts his hands in his pockets and steps in closer to see how I'm oiling the gear. "Careful with how much you're using." His voice is loud in my ear when he's close.

"Don't yell in my ear like that." I turn around and tell him to stand back.

"I wasn't yelling," he says. He looks at me and he raises one of his eyebrows, the way he used to do when he did his math homework up by the window in the den. "Have you checked your hearing aid?"

"No. No, it's not the aid, it's the clock," I say. He grabs at my ear and I swat his hand away. "Don't touch me. Look at the clock."

"Pop, it's not the clock. You must have messed up your aid somehow."

"I didn't mess up shit."

Scott closes in on me and holds down my arms down and tries to grab it, but I get free and push him back a few feet before he can get it. He stumbles back from the push and trips over my chair. He looks up at me like some abandoned puppy.

"Pop," he pleads, "I'm trying to help you fix this."

"I don't need your help," I say. The whole group is looking now. The bug's wide eyes are back open and Robby and Ronald have put down their games. "I don't need you to be here at all." Scott picks himself up off the ground and straightens his sweater.

"Do you want us here?"

"No."

"We want to spend time with you."

Bullshit. They don't even like me—not one. Not even Scott.

"You don't want to spend time with me," I say. "You all know I'm going to croak soon, so you come here and you pay your dues, and then when I die, you can all go home feeling good about yourselves. 'At least I made an effort,' you'll say. 'I'm glad we were there with him in his final days.' Those are the kind of lies you'll say to yourselves. I'm not buying it."

"Dad, there's nothing to buy," he says. "We love you."

Like how me and Maggie loved each other before we split. Ain't nothing but obligation.

"Why don't you take your family home?"

"It's your family too."

"I don't want any part of it."

"Fine," Scott says. He tells his family that it's time to go. "We won't come from now on then, if that's what you want."

"Fine."

The bug picks up the cake and card, and Scott tells her that she can leave them. The boys close their games and look at me for a moment, then return their eyes to the ground, as if they're scared that I might yell. Scott leads them out the door, and before he leaves, he looks back at me.

"Happy Birthday, Pop" he says. And then he closes the door, and I hear some car doors open and close. Their car drives away and finally they're gone—I've got the house to myself again.

I walk back to my chair and readjust it towards the TV. Have to fix it because Scott bumped it out of place. Scott's probably driving in the car right now, with the kids in the back seat, and the bug in the passenger seat. She's staring out both side windows at the same time. He's probably saying something about how he's sorry that the kids had to hear that and saying how he doesn't know what's gotten into me.

The cake is still sitting on the coffee table, so I open it up and inside is one of those cakes with the faces printed on it. My face, my old-ass face. I grab a knife from the kitchen and cut into it – into the part with my eye – and put a piece on a plate. Turns out the cake is chocolate. Scott must have picked it out. He's the only one that would know.

Taped to the top of the box is a card. One of those cards with a stupid monkey on the front with a party hat, doing a toothy smile. Inside it's a little better because there's a hand-drawn picture. It's of an elephant with a party hat and it's from Robby and it's pretty well drawn. In the squiggles, I can see the trunk and there's a cake that the elephant's holding. Maybe the kid's artsy after all. He's signed it: "Happy Birthday, Grandpop!" On the other side of the card, Catherine said "Happy Birthday" too and Ronald wrote his name under that and below, Scott wrote: "Love you, Pop".

My hip flares again, pretty bad this time, as I get up to throw the card out, so I set it down on the coffee table next to the birthday cake and the picture of Maggie. I'll throw them out later.

I take another bite of cake and some of it falls on the ground, so I get up slowly and grab a

paper towel to clean it up. A dog would at least it'd be good for this – cleaning up spills so I don't have to reach down every time. Not a Shit Zoo, though. A big dog, one that looks tough. I could name it Walter cause that'd be a good name for a dog and it'd be in my buddy's honor. And I could talk so much shit to it and it wouldn't be able to say anything back to me. *Walt, you fatass, you look like shit this morning.* And it might have a big gobble like mine.

I finish the rest of my piece of cake and pack up the rest and put it in the fridge, then I grab the paper from the dining room and sit back in my chair and read. There are some things about a movie that I've never heard of. "Great fun for the whole family," it says. Bill Rochester from the New York Times gave it two thumbs up. Now I have to see it.

Thinking back on it, there was one birthday that wasn't a total shit show. It was when Scott turned nine. Maggie and I brought out a tarp and a hose and made a slip and slide in our backyard. Scott and his friends jumped on it for hours and I got to watch them zip across the tarp like little hockey pucks and then get up all muddy and then go do it again. Scott had a big smile when he blew out the candles and the whole day he laughed a lot with his friends.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Over and over and it's in my head so I can't barely think. The clock won't let me have any peace, so I get up to check it again. I open up the back and check the gears and they all seem to be in their right place, the same place they were before. They're running fluidly, rolling past one another with ease. The screws are tightened as far as they can go, but it's still too loud in my ear.

I know I didn't mess up my hearing aid, but I take it out anyways, just in case, and check the dial. It turns out it's pushed a little farther than where it's supposed to be. I turn it back, and the ticking goes back to normal volume. It turns out that Scott was right about how to fix it, and it was so simple – the turn of a dial.

Now, it's back to the silence I'm used to. Quiet. So quiet. It's about as quiet as it was when I found Walter in his house, and as quiet as it was right after Maggie left me. It's the same silence. I know I said I'd gotten used to it, but I think I'm still adjusting. I go and turn on the TV. It's on a news show, and the pretty-boy anchor is reading about something or other.

"Yesterday, the Dodgers clinched the division with Andre Ethier's grand slam." Blah blah blah. Old news.

I look back over at the grandfather clock that's still sticking out from the wall. It's such a nice old clock, with its curves up on the top, the sharp carvings on the front, all purposeful in the mahogany. The numbers on the face are bold and clear. There's so much effort that went into making it. And it still has that old smell; the same smell it had when Maggie and I got it. It's hard to describe—some finish, and some earth. Doesn't seem right to leave it sticking out from the damn wall like that. No, it doesn't do it justice, not after all its years of service. I get up to try to push it back into place, but I don't have the strength I used to. I drive my legs as hard as they can go, but they don't go hard enough anymore and the clock doesn't budge. So I go grab the phone and make a call. It rings a few times, and then Scott picks up.

"Pop?" he says.

"Son," I say, "I'm going to need your help again with this fuckin' clock."

Uneven

By **Maddie Dunkelberg**

Shuffling feet and sizzling sounds nudged me out of sleep. Fuzzily smelling some sort of frying dough—the waffle iron?—I rolled over to find the blankets on her half-deflated air mattress had been discarded. Jamie was up.

Reluctantly, I slid out of the bed onto the cold wood floor, danced around the makeshift cot and grabbed an old sweatshirt. As I opened the door to the kitchen, I saw her sprinkling chocolate chips onto tiny pancakes. Seeing her uncharacteristically in just her bra and underwear, vulnerable, surprised me. Apparently she hadn't felt the cold as much as I had. Or maybe she had, seeing the way she slowly shifted her weight back and forth, straightening her left leg, then her right, bouncing lightly and smoothly on the balls of her feet.

It was the same sort of athletic energy she had exuded in high school. She was blessed with the ability to harness her nervousness in an attractive way, a way that made her seem confident and excited. Something lurked permanently below the service, like she was taught and ready to pounce, or maybe flee. Her small, wiry gymnast frame only added to her springiness. Jealousy had always crept up on me when I saw my baby sister on the soccer field. Between calls, she'd bounce back and forth in a hyperactive version of what I saw now. She was a body in constant motion.

That boundless inertia helped the rumors roll off her smooth, tan skin. They came in stupid joke form, anyway—about how she was a little too jock-y, so attached to her warm-up sweats and not so attached to boys—but anyway, she was a bit too quick and toned and together for any of the words to really stick, and I don't think she was confident enough to prove them true.

So of course she never told any of her teammates or honor society members.
But it was rocking back and forth in this way of hers that I imagined she told mom. In this same unconscious sway, like a third-grade boy delivering lines in a class play. She shifted to her right foot. Mom. Left foot. I'm gay. Froze for the briefest moment as Mom told her coldly that she could not be if she wanted to stay under her roof. Right foot. And then she left and came to me.

Her head jerked up in that controlled, taught way of hers, like a rabbit at the snap of a twig. One hand lay curled holding chips; the other poised dangling a few over the griddle. She was standing a little too far away from the stovetop, more weight on the right foot. The tightness of her muscles told me she was not really comfortable, and unsurprisingly so. We were sisters, but not the kind so free with our bodies to bare them like this. Was she trying to prove her femininity to the absent others? Who knew? We had said little to each other since her rapid knock on my door last night. She revealed the reveal, I cobbled together a bed for her, and she crawled into it and squirmed around restlessly until feigning sleep. But I could hear her soft weep.

Now she straightened and returned to her seesawing, chocolate chips clutched loosely in both small fists, her thinly muscular arms bent slightly. Simultaneously relaxed and held tense, she looked like a puppet offering up a treat. And like a puppet, she was moving, but stuck. I approached, and she tried to laugh for some reason, her normally coarse voice coming out as a squeak. The laugh didn't shake her body, but jerked it. This scared me. Her intense energy rarely reached this harsh edge.

Long, tangled hair hung half knotted at the nape of her neck. One hand on her boney shoulder, I used the other to brush a mouse-brown strand behind her small round ear. I held her away from me, absorbing her familiar frame. Her small breasts, her straight stomach and compact thighs, her flexing feet: they combined in an elegant tomboyishness.

I pulled her resistant, shifting body close to my own. As I held her tight (she was so perfectly built to hold) she finally began to melt. Chips tumbled onto the floor as she relaxed, finally releasing into the arms of someone who saw her body as something foreign, yes, but not as a weapon. How could it be? How could such an expertly crafted bundle of nerves love wrongly? I could never see it as anything unbeautiful. Not something so powerfully fragile. I could never see it as anything other than innocent.

Room Cube

By **Ruby Lambie**

Bow Tie and Sandals

By **Nick Borges-Silva**

Snow fell as Gerald stepped onto the plane, walked to the second row of paired seats, and sat himself by the window. Gerald thought back several minutes to the horrendous crone that screamed, "Your end is nigh!" at him, among numerous other passengers, as he waited to board the aircraft. He chose to ignore the recollection and avoid paranoia by turning his thoughts to his wife, seven sons, and two daughters who awaited him in Iceland just hours away. Gerald thumbed through his wallet, packed with photos of his family. He placed a white pill in his mouth, told himself everything would be fine, and waited

After approximately twenty minutes, a man appeared in the entryway, approached Gerald at a hasty pace, and took up the vacant seat. Gerald found himself trying not to look directly at him or say a single word. His anxiety was bad enough; he didn't think speaking to a stranger would help.

The man was mumbling into his cell phone and concluded with, "No, I'm in the middle of something. See you soon, honey." The stranger closed his phone, turned, and grasped Gerald by the shoulder. "How are you, Gerald?" he asked exuberantly. The fingers groping Gerald's shoulders were extraordinarily bony. The hand remained firm even as the engines caused the plane to tremble.

Gerald was shocked by the stranger grabbing his shoulder like they were old friends, but that didn't amount to much in comparison to the man knowing his name. Gerald quickly smacked the man's hand off of his shoulder and asked, "Excuse me? Who are you?" His voice was demanding but subtly shook along with the engine's vibrations.

The plane was moving and began to accelerate. Gerald turned to look at the stranger, and what he saw astounded him more than the man's previous gesture. Gerald's eyes widened. The man was practically a skeleton aside from the bits of dried, blood-crusted flesh that clung to his skull. His torso was draped in a loose-fitting suit, left open but secured at the neck by a bow tie. His shirt was tucked in to a pair of blue swim trunks adorned with a variety of flowers. On his feet were leather sandals. "Come on, Gerald," he said as the plane left the ground. "It's your old pal, Death!"

Gerald paused momentarily before speaking. How the man got past security in that ridiculous costume, Gerald could not say. "What do you mean you're Death?" He was laughing in his head but presented only a mocking chuckle to the man. Gerald wasn't sure if the joke or the pill was easing his paranoia, but he decided to play along. "If you're Death, what are you doing *here*? Shouldn't you be off having a cup of tea with the Lord of the Underworld or something?"

"A terrible misconception," the man replied. "I'm here to escort you and the rest of these suckers back to my place."

"Your place?" Gerald asked. How long could he keep this act up?

"Yes, my place, Gerald. It's a wonderful little complex in a resort right on Afterlife Bay. You're going to love it. But I do warn you. If you're traveling there at night, do not *ever* take Rigor Mortis Alley. I know some bad folks that hang around there."

"Okay, okay, I get it. Are you going to lose the mask?" Gerald's sense of humor was wearing away, and his anxiety was returning.

"Mask? I'll have you know it takes a lot of work to keep this beauty in such presentable condition."

"That's it." Gerald had had enough. He reached for the man's face, intending to tear the plastic mask off his head, only to stroke the solid skull that rested upon the man's shoulders. His internal laughter had perished by then. Gerald realized he was in a lot of trouble. Sweat began to gather on his forehead. He tried to yell, to stand up and call for help, but he found himself stuck to his seat, petrified. Gerald slowly faced forward, took two deep breaths in a feeble attempt to calm himself as much as he possibly could, then turned back to the man. "A bow tie and sandals?" he asked Death. It was all he could manage to say.

"Yes," Death said, "I get so many humans that expect some epic battle over their souls between the clashing forces of 'Good' and 'Evil'. What they don't realize is there's only one place to go! I wear this ridiculous wardrobe to make up for the lack of opposition. You'd be surprised at the degree of fuss I hear from people. But in the end, after the whole dying thing sets in, I always get thank you cards." Gerald's heart pounded under his ribs, and the casual way in which Death spoke made the situation all the more uncomfortable.

"So I'm going to die, is what you're telling me? You're here to take me to the afterlife?" said Gerald. He was trying not to sound frantic but his words were accompanied by frequent stutters and leaps in pitch. He couldn't control himself.

"Oh, don't make it sound so horrid!" Death brought his smelly skull close to Gerald's face and whispered, "I hear they're bringing in a rollercoaster." His voice felt like an icy claw tearing its way through Gerald's ear canal.

The shaking and stuttering in Gerald's voice temporarily ceased as his fear turned to anger. "You're telling me I'm going to die, and you're going off about some rollercoaster?"

"You need to quit worrying so much." Death took on a somber tone. "I know you have many fears, Gerald. And I know I'm at the top of your list, but you can't spend your life hiding under a blanket every time something troubles you. You knew we would meet eventually. That's just how it works." Death stared downward at nothing specific. "If it's any consolation, I have fears too." Death's voice quivered. "I don't think anyone likes me."

There was a long silence. Death's attempt at comfort didn't help. *That's just how it works*. Eventually Gerald spoke through heavy breaths. "So just like that? No warning or anything?"

"I always give a warning, but no one paid much attention to the hag. Actually, people often arrange their own warnings." Death took on a sarcastic tone. "Oh, let's build a bunch of nuclear weapons. That's a *great* idea." Death crossed his legs and sighed. "You're not alone, Gerald. Look

around you."
Gerald forced himself to turn his head to look around the plane. Every single passenger wore a terrified expression similar to Gerald's and was accompanied by the same strange-dressed fellow. Behind Gerald, the same man with his bow tie and sandals was pulling out a tissue for a an elderly man who insisted that his life was just getting started, and in the back corner Death was kneeling beside a couple telling them they didn't have to break up just because they were going to make a living adjustment. This was becoming more disturbing by the second. "You've got to be kidding me. How are you all over the place at the same time? Is this some sort of sick game?"
"Not a game, just a job. And don't get me started on *Time*." The word was dripping disdain. "Time is always trying to argue about which one of us is the most absolute. Well, look around. When your time runs out, who is always there to greet you?" There was a brief moment of silence. Death drummed his fingers on the arm rest. "Would you like a hint?"
"I get it!" Gerald attempted to hold back tears as anxiety prickled the back of his neck. "I don't get to speak to my family, do I?"
"Oh, you can send them messages from the afterlife, but only if they're vague enough to be mistaken for common coincidences.

Gerald was completely lost for words. "I'm going to take a quick trip to the little boy's room, but we'll head out after I'm back," Death said. Gerald noticed Death rise and turn back towards him. "It's going to be okay, Gerald." Death strode off and entered the restroom at the back of the plane, closing the door behind him. Gerald prayed to no one in particular that his escort wouldn't return. He wished for nothing else that Death would fade away in that restroom as he woke up during the plane's landing in Iceland.
Gerald's clothes were sticky with sweat. He attempted to steady his breath as he held onto his wallet of pictures. Gerald faced forward and closed his eyes as the captain's voice, riddled with apprehension, came onto a set of speakers. "Sorry, ladies and gentlemen. We're going to be experiencing some light turbulence. Please stay seated and keep your seatbelts fastened until further instruction. Thank you." The plane shook. Gerald heard the restroom door open.

Thirsty for Justice

By **Phillip Smith**

They're likely to haul my ass off, but I just don't give a damn today. Driving my heel through the glass—this is the peak of liberation! They didn't listen when I told them their machine was stealing more often than vending. Now they've got something worth fixing. Reaching past the broken glass, I'm mindful of the jagged shards (these hands have been cut before) and take that which is rightfully *mine*.

Go ahead, ignore my trouble calls. Deny my refund request. Lie to me once more and tell me the machine has been fixed. I get mine. Mine. Bought and paid for in plain view of the security camera, yes, mine.

Twisting the bottle top, brimming with satisfaction as the plastic cracks on the tamper ring as it breaks free, I wait for the fizzing to subside and then take that first drink, long and satisfying. Nearby, the sheeple gawk. I am their momentary distraction from mundane reading, a ten second sideshow, and if anyone's recording I'm about to be viral. Text book definitions and flash cards and essay research and Hemingway's shortest short story and conversations about the upcoming party at Tappa Kegga Day just took a backseat to my spontaneous eruption and I couldn't be more… indifferent. I just want what's mine when the money's spent. Fool me once machine, shame on me.Fool me twice, you thieving ass Vendo-O-Matic, shame on you.Fool me three times, and the charm of convenience that once held sway over me is relinquished, the glass barrier separating me from mine had to be vanquished.
I turn with my middle finger raised in resentful salutation to that soulless, black see-all mounted in the ceiling corner, and take another triumphant swig. And then I smile wide enough for whoever's on the other side to count my teeth. There's a clamorous echo growing in the stairwell and it stirs the flighty alarm within but I stand fast while a cardiac fist begins to pummel my ribs. The familiar chime of the arriving elevator signals the end and I think *roll credits* as the doors open in slow motion. There's a sharp pang of shame as I lock eyes with the professor who teaches my next class. Just a stab and then the feeling is gone because I'm being seized from behind by many large, powerful hands that force me to the cold, polished concrete. My soda, my triple-priced prize, is still half-full and jostles loose from my grip, rolling through the open elevator doors, and I watch with the eye that isn't being ground into the floor as wasted liberation glugs and splats and splashes my professor's shoe (sorry about that prof), forever escaping me.
For one minute I lived free. In that moment, I tasted victory.

Home is Sad

By **Stephen Summers**

home is
Sad,
either
Sad because it's actually
Sad, or
Sad because it's happy and you left, or
Sad because it's happy and it left you, or
Sad because it's supposed to be happy and it's not, or
Sad because he told you it was
Sad, or
Sad despite the yellow on the walls, or
Sad because the roof is on the floor, or
Sad because she was under the roof, or
Sad because you wished she'd been under the roof, or

Sad because it's not your home at all, or
Sad because it's no one's home, or
Sad because it's not the home you wanted, or
Sad because
ten thousand bologna sandwiches,
ten thousand bud lights,
ten thousand bad dreams,
ten thousand hours sweating into the couch cushions
cannot fill one damned word with the meaning it should have always
Had.

Untitled

By **Miró Merrill**

The Mortician and the Clown

By **Rodney Cimburke**

Going down the hills to the funeral parlor was a treacherous drive in the best conditions. The road spooled through dark fir forests veined with the bare skeletal branches of deciduous trees—all of them growing plumb from the rocky earth. Before it spilled onto the valley floor, where it grew traffic lights and a couple of strip malls, there was a nasty chicane with a sunken grade on the outside of the last curve—no guardrail. If you left the road there, the only thing cushioning your crash would be the roofs of houses thirty feet below. Michael cursed the town for not repairing this hazard even as it threatened to crumble completely away; according to his calculations, that particular stretch of Mallard Hollow Road lost on average three-quarters of an inch every year, and at this rate, the road would be totally washed out in a little under three years; perhaps it will be the Crumley hearse that takes the dive because the town road crew refuses to work in the rain.

Michael babied the hearse through the curves, then rode the brakes down the hill as the road flattened and became wider. The stoplight at the intersection of Mallard Hollow and First Street became visible up ahead through the brushy trees. The hearse emerged from the woods, and the rain came back diagonally against the windshield. The town was satisfyingly quiet, grainy and sizzling in the rain.

Along the old quarter of Main Street, Michael could see the reflection of the hearse coursing along the window fronts on either side. It was like driving through a tunnel of mercury.

The hearse was a long two-tone gray and black Fleetwood that was somehow more elegant because of what it was.

Michael drove the speed limit.

The whitewall tires sliced the water, fanning it onto the empty sidewalk. The light at Main and 16th turned yellow, and Michael pumped the brakes twice, then came to a graceful, quiet stop. Lights up and down the streets flipped colors and there was no one to stop or go but Michael in the hearse.

He pulled up to the empty curb in front of London's Market and switched off the engine. The rainwater sluiced past the tires of the hearse. He opened the door, popping his black umbrella open. In his dark gray suit, he looked like a darker part of the gray afternoon—a smudge of gathered rain crossing the sidewalk to the storefront, the water beading and sliding continuously from his umbrella.

He had gone to school with Chris London, an ex-football player two years older than Michael. Chris had thrown away a promising career at Northwestern (and probably the NFL) due to a second-year drinking, gambling, and whoring problem, so he came back here, and his dad put him up in his shop. And, despite his problems (two-thirds of which were still a problem), he coached junior varsity at the middle school. People trusted their sons with him. Sometimes, Michael disliked the town for its open arms policy that allowed the worst miscreants, the most notorious drunken troublemakers back into the municipal fold based solely on their previous citizenship. Half the town council had taken rampaging breaks from the slow little town at some point in their lives, and they seemed to be trying to run the town as if they were still on hiatus.

When Michael entered the store, the bell over the door clinked weakly; that same bell had hung over the entrance to London's ever since Michael could remember.

There was a woman with two small girls standing by the racks of candy and when Michael turned down the aisle, the woman placed her hands at the backs of the girls and shooed them to the other end of the store. Michael shook his head. He heard the bell clink a few seconds later as the woman and girls left the store.

His occupation carried with it a grim connotation that caused townspeople (some of which had known him as a child) to avoid him. Michael liked this just fine as it tended to keep him out of conversations with others.

He scooped a large pack of his favorite gum, Big Red, out of its shelf box and turned toward the counter at the front of the store.

Looking at big Chris London standing behind the counter, the cash register at his thighs, Michael thought that he would run for the council. If nothing else, the scorn that would surely be shown him by the incumbents would give him truer reason to dislike them, other than they had no appreciation of the town and the quiet civic order of small-town life.

Chris was taking off his apron. His father still insisted they wear them; part of the small-town charm that made the intermittent tourists spend money.

Chris whistled as Michael came up to the counter. "You in that *suit*, Michael Crumley," Chris said. "Very handsome. Trim too. Hey man, you been working out or what? And your skin, so full of color."

"I take vitamins," Michael said.

"Yeah. You're not as young as you once were."

"You're older than me."

"Yeah, but I got the kids. The squad really keeps me fit and feeling young." Chris dropped his apron on a stool. He pulled on his jacket, removing a flask from the inside pocket. "Yeah, those boys," he said, stopping to pull from the flask, "they'll really run you. Try you too, but I keep 'em straight down there." He paused with the flask near his mouth, staring through the store at nothing. He took another sip, and screwed the cap back on. He dropped the flask back into his pocket.

"How's your record?" Michael asked. "I don't keep up on it much. I read in the paper where the high school boys are already on the road to states, but I haven't heard anything about JV."

"One and three. They're a great bunch of kids though. They're tough. Plenty of football left in

the season." Chris patted his jacket to make sure the flask was there.

Michael knew the JV team was shit. He had even heard the varsity quarterback, Danny Bluth's kid Carson, and his go-to receiver, Stem Paulson talking about the JV team. Not good things. He thought about those poor souls who, although they were freshmen at the high school, still played JV ball. The taunting, the public insults, the hideous pressure applied by the wolf pack mentality of the varsity players. No wonder they weren't good, they were ashamed to play. It was like that exactly when Michael was in high school. He went out for JV kicker—the laughingstock of the laughingstocks—when he was in eighth grade, and Michael could recall Chris (a petty instigator, always ravenous for attention) as a member of that wolf pack, always taunting.

He had the sudden memory of Chris kicking him in the cafeteria once while he was tying his shoe. It wasn't a hard kick, more of a foot shove, but it was enough to send him sprawling against the wall. Everybody saw. "Kicking the kicker!" Chris kept shouting, as if anything about the brainless phrase was funny. Yet, the whole cafeteria roared with laughter, many of the girls red in the face from it. Chris threw his arms up, signaling a field goal; Michael could remember the yellow and green letter jacket, laden with pins, riding up on Chris' tall frame.

"Speaking of which," Chris was saying, "I have to head on. Practice starts in ten minutes, and my dad won't be here for another half hour. I gotta close the store. Michael?"

"Yes, Chris. Just getting this gum here," Michael said. "As usual."

Michael looked Chris in the eyes for some seconds. He said, "You know that time you kicked me? In high school? You should've said, 'It's good!' instead of 'Kicking the kicker.'"

"Aw, man, come one Mikey, that was a long time ago. Damn. I had totally *forgotten* about that. Man, the memory on you, huh?"

"I guess so," Michael said, handing Chris a dollar. "Keep the change," he said, and left the store.

Outside it was raining harder.

He drove on Main Street past the buildingfronts, and the park opened abruptly on his right. Over its space Michael saw the funeral home. He went down another block, to Meridian Street, and turned right, keeping it in his sight as he approached.

He passed the fire station. The ever-flashing caution lights suspended above the street swung and drooped in the weather, as if it was the day itself they were cautioning against.

There was a stand of tall firs marking the park's northern border, and when Michael entered under the dark trees, the funeral home was obscured behind their rushing green. It reappeared when the trees fell away, twice as large, almost monstrous.

He looked up at the peaked facade of the gothic revival. Dark green with ornate white bargeboards. With its curlicues and its fluting, the wide front porch, it could've been a bed and breakfast—at the very least, a town museum (the actual town museum was in a back room at the library and community center), but the weird touch of elegance afforded the hearse because a hearse was impossible to bestow on the house because it was a funeral parlor. Its gables glowered.

There was a bunch of blue foil balloons twisting and bobbing on a ribbon tied to the parlor's mailbox across the street.

On the porch he turned and looked out over the park, the town proper on the other side of it. The space was perfectly kept, quadrangular and neat, and no one was out in the slanting rain.

"Good day for a funeral," his father said, stepping out onto the porch behind him.

"What?" Michael said. "I didn't know there was one today."

"There isn't. Not here. Still a good day for one though."

Michael watched the balloons move. His father closed the door and came to stand beside him at the railing.

"What's with the balloons?" Michael asked.

"Oh," his father said. "Those weren't there when I came out to get the paper this morning. Word travels fast in this tiny place." Michael looked past the balloons, out across the park, the town, the stoplights colored wetly in the empty streets.

"You always make the town sound so bad. Of course word travels fast, there's less than five thousand people that live here. What word?"

His father chuckled. "I never said this place was *bad*, it's just...small. It doesn't take long to get tiresome. Predictable. Boring. I happen to like those things, but—"

"I do too."

"But, not everybody does. Obviously."

"Obviously," Michael said, looking at the balloons again. "So, what's this word?"

"Monty Buford died this morning. Not three hours ago. I assume those balloons are for him."

"Balloons. Okay. We handling it?"

"Yes. You don't know who he was, do you?"

"Should I? Does he live here?"

"He did, yeah. Left for many years, he would've been in his forties. Came back to die here. At home. Or at least that's what his daughter told me when she called this morning. He'd only been back a few months. He was very bad off, his daughter said, but he went peacefully. When she called, she made it a point to tell me that it had *just* happened, a few seconds before. Gave me the impression she was poised with her hand on the telephone, watching his breathing. Unsettling."

"Well, at least she called us."

"Monty Buford was the clown. Puddles the Clown."

Michael stared down at his hands where they clutched the railing. Across the street, the balloons flapped; he had known it the minute he'd seen them, but not known it, or not believed it, that people would be so tacky as to decorate a funeral home with balloons.

He remembered the birthday party, but he didn't remember which of his friends it was for. Michael was eight and small for his age. His friend Ronnie Hacker had a little brother, Chester, that was four and a half and the same height as Michael. He remembered needing a booster seat so that his head was even with those of his friends at the long table inside Pit Stop Pizza. The parents

sat at a separate table drinking beer and smoking, ignoring the kids' party. Michael's dad was not there. There was a funeral that day. Michael remembered because he saw the procession go by the window of the restaurant, and he had seen his father driving the hearse; pale and stiff with decorum, he didn't turn to look as they passed.

There was a loud honk and Michael jumped. The clown stomped in, dressed in iridescent blue with fuzzy buttons the size of softballs, a darker blue. His face was painted chalk white, with sparkling blue arches over his eyes and a huge red grinning mouth; the mouth was the only thing not blue in the clown's getup, and it stuck out like a wound. Michael was unable to take his eyes off of that mouth that seemed glistening with blood.

The hair on Michael's arms stood up and his stomach fluttered when the clown drew near. He cringed every time the clown honked the bulbed horn clipped to the giant lapel of his clown suit; on the other lapel, a giant blue flower stared out at the room full of cheering kids.

The clown went through his act. Most of his gags involved water: he pulled water balloons full of goldfish from his pockets while pretending to look for something else and gave the fish to the kids, he lifted his round blue hat, water spilling onto the floor (the waitstaff hovering near the party shook their heads), he pretended to throw a bucket of water onto the table, but it was only blue flakes of confetti. When the clown swung the bucket toward the kids, Michael cringed, almost ducking underneath the table.

When his act was over, the clown went around the table, saying goodbye to the kids one by one. When he got to Michael, he bent down so the flower on his lapel was even with Michael's face.

"Smell it kid," the clown said.

Michael leaned in, and a gush of water came from the flower's center, soaking him. Everyone was laughing, especially the parents at the other table. Michael pretended to laugh along with them. He slid out of his booster seat and went to the bathroom to dry off as best he could (he hadn't thought he'd need to bring a change of clothes), and when he was alone in a stall, he sat down on the toilet lid, and shook and cried.

Michael remembered seeing the clown around the small town sometimes, always in makeup and costume, never as a human.

Often, Puddles the Clown would set up shop in the park: the water gags, balloon animals, the whole thing. Michael hated those times when his father took him to the park and the clown was there, a ring of kids (and adults) gathered around smiling and cheering as the clown went through his tired old routines. Michael never went near. If the clown was by the swingsets, Michael wanted to play on the slides, if the clown was near the picnic tables, Michael would beg his father to take him to buy a kite so they could fly it in the meadow on the opposite side of the park. When his father caught on and asked him about the clown, Michael just said he was afraid of him, which was true, but Michael never told his father (or anyone) about the incident at the birthday party, which had compounded that fear with unforgettable embarrassment.

For years, he saw the clown around the town: in the park, along main street, in the grocery store. Puddles was everywhere, and Michael remembered thinking the clown was following him, intent on making his life miserable because the clown knew he was afraid of him. He had begun to hate the clown more than he feared him. He could remember the relief he felt when he stopped seeing the clown and was sure he had left the town for good. That relief seemed to dissolve as he stood there on the porch of the funeral home watching those blue balloons sway.

"I remember him," Michael told his father. The porch railing began to creak under Michael's grip.

"Well," Michael's father said, causing him to jump. "We'd better get going." Michael stared at him. "To get Monty Buford? Her daughter is expecting us."

"Oh. Right. Right," Michael said, jingling the hearse's keys in his pocket.

Buford's house was in the poorest part of town. It sagged, and large peels of yellow paint were hanging off the walls, revealing the old blue underneath. Buford's daughter Denise was waiting for them on the warping porch. She wore a water-blue dress that didn't come to her knees and a necklace of big pearls.

Michael remembered her from school. She was quiet like him, and they had hardly ever crossed paths, although Michael remembered her eyes when she looked at him—big innocent eyes, a little afraid, but somehow warm and a little challenging, even defiant. He never spoke to her, as she was a grade below him, and Michael already caught enough grief from his schoolmates, not only for the JV kicker thing, but also because he was the son of the town undertaker. Even then, the job that his father did—that he would one day do himself—hung about him like a dark shroud, and most kids that didn't make fun of him shunned him altogether. He would watch her sometimes, but could never hold her gaze when she looked at him. They were the same in their loneliness, and separated from each other by it.

Denise had stayed in the town just as Michael had, working as a nurse at the local medical clinic. He had seen her there on the few occasions that he'd needed medical attention: a sprained ankle, a badly burned right hand from losing his balance and falling against the wood stove in his tiny house up in the hills, strep throat. Still he never talked to her. She was always doing something else in the clinic when he was called to the back to see the doctor, but he felt those huge eyes on him. He didn't know as a kid, and wouldn't let himself believe as an adult, that he regretted never getting to know her.

He looked at her now, admiring the pale smoothness of her lower knees where the dress fell.

While Michael unloaded the gurney from the back of the hearse, his father approached the porch slowly, the appropriate expression on his face, the ideal timbre in his voice. "Miss Buford? Hello, I'm Charles Crumley, we spoke on the phone. We are sorry for your loss." He took Denise's hand. "My son Michael and I will take care of all the arrangements, so please don't hesitate to ask if you require anything."

"Thank you Mr. Crumley."

"Charles, please."

"Thank you. *Charles*. My father is right in here." She turned into the house, Michael's father following as he rolled the gurney up to the porch. Again, he looked at her legs, the soft fold of the back of her knee as she led the way to the body of her father.

The house was dark and cluttered. It took a little time to navigate through, Denise scurrying before them moving boxes and scattered furniture out of their way, the giant pearls on her necklace swinging against her chest.

"I'm sorry," Denise said. "It's not usually this messy, but ever since dad came back, he wanted to take some of his things out of storage, and..."

"It's okay," Michael heard himself say. "It's really no problem. We're fine." He searched his memory; he was certain that was the first time he had ever heard her speak. Her voice was smooth, steady like her eyes.

Michael stopped pushing the gurney and looked at her, smiling. She smiled back, pushing a strand of shiny golden hair behind her ear. Michael's father cleared his throat, and they continued into the bedroom.

Monty Buford laid uncovered on his bed. Next to him, perfectly composed, was the blue clown suit Michael remembered him wearing at the birthday party; he stood staring at it as his father unfolded the sheet they would move him to the gurney on.

Denise stood in the doorway, and every time Michael looked at her, she was looking at him with those big unwavering blue eyes. Still with that defiance they had in high school. She scarcely looked at the body of her father as Michael and his father moved it onto the gurney. One of Buford's arms dangled loosely from the side of the gurney and still she looked at Michael; he could see her now out of the corner of his eye.

"So, should I follow you down there?" Denise asked. "To the funeral home? There are some specifics about the funeral my father asked me to talk to you about."

"Of course," Michael's father said.

Once they had the body on the gurney, Michael stood looking down at the suit but only seeing the birthday party when he was eight. There was a huge blue flower pinned to the suit's lapel.

"He wants to be buried in it," Denise said. "I'll bring it with me."

They got the gurney down the porch steps and into the back of the hearse, the gurney's legs scissoring neatly as they slid it into the back. As they were pulling out of the drive, Denise stood on the porch watching them go. She made eye contact with Michael behind the wheel and smiled again, waving. Michael raised his hand in return, smiling back at her.

"Well well well," his father said over the smooth revving engine.

"Be quiet," Michael said. He couldn't get the image of her exposed lower legs out of his head—her little feet in the plain black flats, the crevices between her toes just visible.

When they got back to the funeral parlor, there were more balloons, and there were people moving about in the park, setting up brightly colored canopies, blue pennants flapped on the guy wires.

"Holy hell," Michael said.

"Yep," his father said.

Michael's father began to prepare the body in the basement while he sat with Denise in the receiving room, discussing her father's wishes. The flat light came through the high arches of the windows. She had her father's clown suit folded in her lap, and she was looking at a piece of notebook paper she had pulled from her blue-sequined purse.

"All it really says is for you to do the suit and the makeup personally," she said. "There are instructions and a diagram here for you." She handed the paper across and Michael folded it in half without looking at it, sliding it into the inside pocket of his jacket.

He shivered.

"Me, huh?" Michael said, looking out the windows across the road to the park. There were many more people now, and more cars were pulling up. A bouncy castle flumped upright and children cheered.

"Your dad was a popular man," Michael said.

There were people he recognized—adults that had once been the children gathered around the clown wherever he went, and their children with them—and many Michael didn't recognize; the clown's fame and reach had obviously not been limited to this small town, and he felt foolish for ever having been afraid of the clown, but then he supposed, he was a kid, with a kid's fears, which were often themselves foolish, unfounded. But what kid could know that at the time?

"I guess this will go on until after the funeral?" Michael asked.

"As far as I know it will," Denise said. "Is that going to be a problem?"

"No, I guess not."

"I remember you from high school," she said abruptly.

He turned from the windows to look at her. There was pink in her pale cheeks. He held his gaze for a few seconds, then looked down into her lap at her hands. She spread her fingers, inspecting them. She had sparkly blue polish on her short, neat nails.

"I remember you too," Michael said. He opened his mouth to say something else, then closed it again.

"Been a while," she said, looking back up at him.

"Yes it has," Michael said too quickly. "Hey, would you like some coffee or tea or anything?" He said, getting up.

"Yes. Tea please. English breakfast if you have it."

"I believe we do, yes," Michael said, turning to leave the room.

"You've never left, have you?" Denise said.

"No. You?"

"Nope. Do you like living here? *Have* you liked it?"

"Sure. I mean, it can be slow at times. Small. But I like those things."

"Yeah, I guess I do too, but...I don't know."

Michael didn't respond, and it was very quiet in the room. A heavy clock chimed in one of the back rooms and occasionally someone whooped in the park.

"Well," Michael said, "how's the job at the clinic? That place seems like it would be a nice place to work."

Denise sighed, turning her head to look out the windows at all the blue gathering in the park. "It's *alright*," she said.

Michael stood looking at the cords pulled taut in her milky neck, the fall of the giant pearls across the top of her breasts. "I'll go and start that tea," he said.

"It's good he's dead," she said, still looking out the windows. Her steady voice wavered.

Michael stopped halfway to the kitchen. He turned back and she was no longer looking out the windows onto the park, but directly at him. Those huge eyes, now swimming in tears that had yet to spill. He sat back down across from her and took her tiny, soft hands in his.

"Denise," he began.

"Michael, it's not like that," she said.

"Like what?"

"You think I'm glad he's dead because I hated him. Don't you."

"Well, I kind of got that impression when you said, 'It's good he's dead.'"

She smiled. "How was it being the mortician's kid growing up?"

"About like you'd expect."

"I watched you. I knew who your father was."

"You and everybody else."

"I know what it was like. People hated me because my dad was Puddles the Clown. Well, not hated, so much, but everyone was so weirded out by me. You know?"

"I do," he said. "I really do." He looked away from her, but she wouldn't let him pull his hands away.

She told him that while there was a time she had hated her father for being who he was, that time had long passed. She said that she didn't care—at least not now—how the kids had taunted and shunned her for the profession of her father, because her father had taught her how silly life could be, and how precious. How life was something to be enjoyed for its hilarity and its seriousness, and how one complimented the other in such a way that made her enjoy every single moment. That lesson had helped her deal with the loss of her mother at a young age, and had helped her cope with her father too getting sick and deciding to leave the town he loved behind to split his remaining time between a cancer center back east and his surviving family members scattered between here and there. She told him how easily the peace of his passing came to her in his final hours, how then, all he could do was crack jokes, and remember the smiling times when they were all together: father, mother, and daughter. How all he had wanted for her in the end, was to be at peace with his passing, to realize there's nothing that she could do besides not moping around in grief like she had done when her mother had died.

When she had finished, Michael was the one with the wet eyes.

"Denise," he said, clearing his throat and looking away, "I'm sorry, I—"

"Michael, that's just it. There's nothing to be sorry for. He lived a great life, and so did mom, and so have I for that matter, thanks to him and her. It's good he's finally dead because he's not suffering, and it was his time—he was finished. I'm glad that so many people have shown up to honor his wishes for a party of blue instead of a depressing funeral of black." She let go of his hands. "Now," she said, thumbing the tears from her eyes, "how about that tea?"

Michael flipped the lightswitch at the bottom of the basement stairs. The lights clinked and flickered on, shining on the body of Monty Buford. He walked over to the table slowly and laid the clown suit on a chair.

The clown wore royal blue boxer shorts. His chest and belly were rounded, pale and nearly hairless.

The suit was a one-piece, and it was difficult for Michael to slide it over the stiff body by himself, but since it was the request of the deceased that he dress and make up the body himself, he was bound.

Once he got the suit on and buttoned up, Michael smoothed out the wrinkles and stood back to look at it. He tugged on the soft fabric in a couple of places, stepped back to look again, and was satisfied. He'd have to make small adjustments again, of course, when his father helped move the body into its blue satin-lined casket, but that would be easier, as not as much of the suit would be visible in the deep folds of the coffin.

The makeup (which Denise had handed him along with the instructions, their fingers brushing softly) was easier to apply than he thought it would be. Even that horrid curved gash of a mouth went on quickly, evenly. His guard was up, but he felt an odd sort of comfort in applying the final touches to the dead clown; the pride he had in his work took over by the end, and when Michael was finished, he stood looking at the clown, a little disappointed that he was done.

He went over the suit one last time. He looked at the flower. He ran his fingers around its neat ring of petals. The flower was real, an aster, dyed, Michael guessed, because that color of blue seemed unnatural for the flower. There was a loose thread where one of the stitches of the lapel's buttonhole had come unraveled. Michael leaned in to snap the tiny string off; if he noticed it, someone else undoubtedly would. When he pulled it, the flower jetted water into his face. He leapt back, screaming. A metal tray of instruments clattered to the floor. For a moment it seemed as if the decorated clown was sitting up on the table, laughing at him, but he was still.

Michael backed against the far wall and scooted down to the floor. His heart was hammering quickly and the blood rushed loudly in his ears. Then he began to laugh.

He laughed for a long time there on the basement floor, the dead clown on the table above him. He shook his head, saying, “He got me again! Man! The son of a bitch got me again.” He was still laughing when his father opened the basement door.

“What the hell was that?” His father asked.

Michael wiped his streaming eyes and said, “He got me again. Ho boy, did he ever. Ho boy.” He began to laugh again.

He explained to his father about the birthday party, and it was the first time Michael had mentioned anything about it to anyone. His father began to laugh himself.

The day of the wake, Michael walked over to the park. He weaved his way through jugglers, black-clad magicians, and clowns, a blue, honking ocean of clowns. He saw Denise standing at the back of the line for a dunk tank. She had her back to him and he looked at the curve of her hips in a shiny blue dress (not the same one she wore when they had sat together in the front room) as he walked up behind her. At first, he just stood in line behind her, and she did not know he was there. He looked back at the funeral home towering across the street from the park. With its outdone trimwork and slate tile roof it looked like a giant gingerbread house, warm and inviting, not so hard and sterile, so final, as it had always seemed before.

“Hey,” he said behind her.

She turned around, her hair flipping onto her rosy cheek. Her eyes were a fiery blue to match her dress, and just about everything around them.

“You ever think about maybe leaving this place?” Michael asked, smiling.

He picked her up at her house shortly after her father was buried. She came out wearing yet a different blue dress. She looked very good crossing the patchy yard to where he waited in the hearse.

“Don’t you have a car?” She said, sliding into the passenger seat, her dress riding up.

“Sure I do, but I’ve just become accustomed to driving this,” he said, stroking the gray dashboard lovingly.

He goosed the engine out of her gravel driveway, the hearse’s tires squealing when they grabbed the asphalt of the road. Denise whooped, stamping her feet in the carpeted floorboard.

The weather had cleared during her father’s interment, and the sky was a radiant blue as if the heavens themselves were in confederation with the celebration of Puddles’ life. The hearse climbed the winding road toward Michael’s small house in the hills, and the sunlight was very bright where it was barred through the trees. There was a warm breeze that swayed the firs slightly, giving them the attitude of waving in hello or goodbye. The deciduous trees were dotted around with lime green buds.

There was a flagman straddling the double yellow lines of the road where it bent back on itself. Michael slowed. The flagman spoke something into a walkie talkie, then put it to his ear so that he might hear the response. He waved the hearse through.

Where the road had been crumbling away, the town road crew had set up a barricade of cones and yellow tape. There was an asphalt truck parked precariously, and three men with shovels worked the steaming asphalt out of the truck and into the missing chunk of road.

As the hearse crawled past, the men stood from their work. Michael waved at them, and drove on.

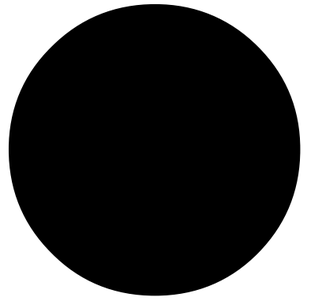
Ukiyoe

By **Bethany Kaylor**

Images come like dreams.
The stench of wilting honeysuckle,
in August, the elegy of the bullfrog at dusk.
And then the swing set, its wooden limbs
splintered and sagging into the dark
soft womb of the earth, the blood
of walnut hulls staining hands green
like aloe, like algae, like malachite, like grass.

Recollection takes root.
Your father's song
as he presses spatula to griddle.
The neighbor's half-dead cat
dragging itself across the hot asphalt, mewing.
A photograph of a young man
on the pier in late October,
suit thrown over his left shoulder.
Water lapping wood,
wind whistling Vivaldi.

Ukiyo-e.
Pictures of the floating world
for sale. Memory
is the holiest garage sale,
half-stories bloodied and sacrificed,
scattered around the altar.



Samuel Rodgers, UO undergraduate Economics and English double major, was awarded The Stephen Swig Essay Prize for his essay, "The Performance of Du Bois and Dunbar." His essay was written for Professor Courtney Thorsson's ENG 360: African American Writers course. The Stephen Swig Essay Prize, named for a distinguished UO English alumnus, is awarded each term for the outstanding student essay on any subject and comes with an award of $500. The winning essays are chosen from essays nominated by the English faculty.

By **Samuel Rodgers**

The Performance of Du Bois and Dunbar

Paul Laurence Dunbar and W.E.B. Du Bois were prominent cultural figures in African American literature during the Nadir period. Booker T. Washington hailed Dunbar as "the poet laureate of the Negro race," while Du Bois achieved a reputation as "one of the leading lights of the African American intellectual elite at the turn of the century" (qtd. In "General Introduction" xxii; Du Bois ix). These two writers use vastly different literary mediums: Du Bois analytically dissects race relations in his essays; Dunbar's medium is succinct but densely complex poetic verse. Nonetheless, both writers assume a shared manner of protest that highlights the second-class status of late nineteenth-century African Americans. Comparing two of Du Bois' passages from The Souls of Black Folk with Dunbar's poem "Accountability" shows that each text creates an African American straw man of sorts, intentionally setting up imaginary arguments whose purpose is to pave the way for their primary ideas. Dunbar and Du Bois exploit the nature of their respective mediums as the formal means by which to project certain African Americans as working against their own people's advancement. More specifically, they draw attention to the crime that undereducated African Americans are drawn to during the Nadir era. These African American straw men are in fact deeply ironic, critical not of themselves but of the social structure that they inhabit. Despite their different literary mediums Du Bois and Dunbar both employ a kind of strategy of reversal—encouraging readers to assume one view and then undercutting that view to suggest the opposite—and thus set out a shared critique of the American view of African Americans during the Nadir. The following essay examines each text as a means of demonstrating this shared ironic method.

Marcellus Blount, in his literary analysis of one of Dunbar's poems, begins with a unique interpretation of the word "performance" in the context of African American literature. Though his central argument is irrelevant here, his initial definition of performance functions as a helpful tool that connects the mediums of verbal expression and written literature:

> While the term performance can be applied variously to a range of cultural and literary phenomena, I use it to designate verbal performance viewed as a cultural event . . . scholars often associate the term vernacular with the modern concept of folklore as an intricate interaction between performer and audience that relies on linguistic, paralinguistic, kinesic, and thoroughly contextual codes and conventions. This implied notion of performance has become a model for how to discuss formal literary texts. In written texts that draw on the aesthetics of vernacular performance, the relations of orality and literacy are continuous. The tensions between repetition and improvisation that operate in a verbal performance are translated into competing structures of creation and recollection for literary artists and their audiences. (583, italics in original)

Blount observes that the usage of a vernacular can serve as a tool that connects a performer with his or her audience, with repetition or improvisation creating an "intricate interaction" between them. Repetition, which can solidify certain speech as relevant to the speaker's chosen vernacular, is in conflict with improvisation, which introduces new speech to the dialect that is relatable to a specific audience. This connection translates to the more permanent written art forms, but the connection between audience and speaker is now made through "creation and recollection." A writer creates within vernacular to grab the attention of the audience, but must also recollect previous ideas to establish understanding of the dialect. Blount's usage of performance is to identify traits of one form of communication within another. This translation overcomes the biggest hurdle for comparing Dunbar with Du Bois, which is that their two texts operate in drastically different literary mediums and contexts.

Paul Laurence Dunbar's poem "Accountability" uses an uneducated African American vernacular to meditate on its titular subject.

> Folk ain't got no right to censuh othah folks about dey habits;
> Him dat giv' de squir'ls de bushtails made de bobtails fu' de rabbits.
> Him dat built de gread big mountains hollered out de little valleys,
> Him dat made de streets an' driveways wasn't shamed to make de alleys
>
> We is all constructed diff'ent, d'ain't no two of us de same;
> We cain't he'p ouah likes an' dislikes, ef we'se bad we ain't to blame.
> Ef we'se good, we needn't show off, case you bet it ain't ouah doin'
> We gits into su'ttain channels dat we jes' cain't he'p pu'suin'.
>
> But we all fits into places dat no othah ones could fill,
> An' we does the things we has to, big er little, good er ill.
> John cain't tek de place o' Henry, Su an' Sally ain't alike;
> Bass ain't nuthin like a sukkah, chub ain't nuthin' like a pike.
>
> When you come to think about it, how it's all planned out it's splendid.
> Nuthin's done er evah happens, 'dout hit's somefin' dat's intended;
> Don't keer whut you does, you has to, an' hit sholy beats de dickens,—
> Viney, go put on de kittle, I got one o' mastah's chickens. (Dunbar 50)

Dunbar utilizes a vernacular to classify the poem's speaker as a poorly educated African American, but his tight structure complicates this categorization. The poem's stylistic elements adhere to a rigid poetic form. Its four stanzas each have four hexametrical lines, which in turn each have a caesura after the first eight syllables. The third stanza has fifteen syllables in each line, whereas the other three stanzas' lines each have sixteen. Regardless of this small imbalance, an anapest still begins each half of every line and there is an AABB rhyme scheme for every stanza. Dunbar is very much operating within the educated constraints of his own poetic verse, which makes the poem itself markedly clever and consequently distances Dunbar from his own uneducated narrator. However, Blount's claim is applicable here: "In written texts that draw on the aesthetics of vernacular performance, the relations of orality and literacy are continuous." It would be a mistake to assume that Dunbar lowers the stakes of the poem's argument by giving his narrator an uneducated dialect. Dunbar is obviously more educated than his speaker; the poem's structure gives its vernacular an oral quality that provides the narrator with authority otherwise undermined by illiteracy. In other words, Dunbar uses vernacular alongside refined poetic form to give a voice to the type of people utilizing this same dialect, a people largely unheard by American society. According to Shelley Fisher Fishkin and David Bradley, "For Dunbar, then, to write in dialect was not a choice, but an imperative of artistic intent" ("Part One" 12).

Thematically, a linear interpretation of the poem is elusive due to its final line. In the first stanza, the use of the word "him" and its connection with omnipotence alludes to God creating the earth. The central theme at this point is exposing the hypocrisy of those that oppressed and still oppress African Americans. The God they follow so righteously was not ashamed to celebrate the differences inherent to his creations: "Him dat made de streets an' driveways wasn't shamed to make de / alleys." Similarly, why would the differences in personality, race, or instinct for the people he created be any different? He notes, "we all fits into places dat no othah ones could fill." At this point in the poem, the speaker seems to be challenging racism. Everyone

is unique and predisposed to behave a certain way, and this should be a cause for celebration rather than hierarchical separation.

Such appears to be the case, at least until the black humor of the final line: "Viney, go put on de kittle, I got one o' mastah's chickens." The use of the word "mastah" identifies both the speaker and "Viney" as slaves, which turns the rest of the poem on its head. The first line now seems defensive rather than audacious, "Folk ain't got no right to censuh othah folks about dey habits." The speaker is not using this discussion to teach a valuable moral lesson, but rather to justify stealing by saying his actions are inevitable given his predisposed character. The twist is especially distressing because the speaker uses the same racism previously thought to be the target of his allegorical dialogue as a platform to dodge blame, "ef we'se bad we ain't to blame… We gits into su'ttain channels dat we jes' cain't he'p pu'suin'." While Dunbar is deconstructing inherent hypocrisy of racism through religious allegory in the beginning of the poem, his speaker weakens his claim by performing an act that would violate the doctrines of the same religion. The poem is in conflict with itself, trying desperately to elevate a people who are quite able to hinder their own progress. The speaker who at first appears remarkably insightful despite his rudimentary dialogue is actually quite willing to accept inferiority, and even use it as an excuse.

Dunbar's poem, then, cleverly operates towards dual conflicting purposes, simultaneously lifting itself up and casting itself back down. W.E.B. Du Bois explores this frustrating concept in his book The Souls of Black Folk, especially in the chapter entitled "Of the Sons of Master and Man." The chapter primarily to explores the relations between whites and blacks in a post-emancipation America. At the outset, Du Bois offers his stance on African American crime:

> Moreover, the political status of the Negro in the South is closely connected with the question of Negro crime. There can be no doubt that crime among Negroes has sensibly increased in the last thirty years, and that there has appeared in the slums of great cities a distinct criminal class among the blacks. (120)

After this point, however, his purpose shifts to shedding light on the meaningless nature of examining African American crime. The following passage occurs near the end of his calm tirade:

> What in the name of reason does this nation expect of a people, poorly trained and hard pressed in severe economic competition, without political rights, and with ludicrously inadequate common-school facilities? What can it expect but crime and listlessness, offset here and there by the dogged struggles of the fortunate and more determined who are themselves buoyed by the hope that in due time the country will come to its senses? (122)

Du Bois' tone is incredulous. He presents two rhetorical questions that serve to emphasize that America is very much accountable for negative treatment of its own people, regardless of race. The more that people "appreciate and sympathize with each other's position," the more that both races, sharing a country and sculpting its culture, will reap the mutual benefit (126). As Dunbar's speaker noted, "Him dat giv' de squir'ls de bushtails made de bobtails fu' de rabbits. . . . But we all fits into places dat no othah ones could fill." Du Bois wonders why anyone is questioning the difficulty that African Americans are having assimilating into a society so eager to accentuate its inherent disadvantages. Society is increasingly critical of a people that it continues to pile disadvantages on, even though these people are just as much a part of the development of that society.

Du Bois' language here is important because his diction is strategically inclusive. He asks, "what . . . does this nation expect of a people?" His phrase "this nation" does not limit the blame to whites that have directly oppressed African Americans, but instead pleads to the country as a whole, all races, genders, and ages included. His tone is incredulous, but it is also exhausted. You can almost see him throwing up his hands, drained, as he is constantly grasping at the fleeting hope "that in due time the country will come to its senses." His phrasing is also tactical: "What in the name of reason does this nation expect. . . . What can it expect but crime and listlessness." The similar syntax of each question he poses draws attention back to Blount's idea that written texts can "draw on the aesthetics of vernacular performance." Du Bois' passage takes on a verbal quality due to its "competing structures of creation and recollection." The repeated diction and syntax plays the role of recollection, which reinforces Du Bois' argument by giving it a sense of emphatic delivery instead of textual monotony. Returning to "Accountability," Dunbar's poem also exhibits these "competing structures" with its syntax. Three lines of the first stanza, for instance, start with "Him dat" but are each unique after the two words. Both texts, then, draw from qualities characteristic of verbal performance to strengthen the connection with their audiences.

In the first passage, Du Bois offers a view on African American crime, which appears applicable to his discussion. African American crime is steadily rising, so why should there be positive changes to their political status? He then goes to great lengths to deconstruct this previous statement, exposing it as a gross generalization that American society is eager to make. His subsequent pair of rhetorical questions is the tail end of this strategy of reversal that both Du Bois and Dunbar utilize. Du Bois encourages his audience to embrace his initial passage in the same way that the belated revelation of Dunbar's narrator sets up his poem in an agreeable way. Both authors ironically suggest that a great deterrent to the progress of African Americans is their own behavior, and more specifically, their criminal actions. They then go on to expose this as a trick, and to fall for it is to embrace the same kind of discriminatory behavior both authors criticize. The difference is simply the order in which they present the false argument. Dunbar's trick lies in the incongruity between the narrator's initial allegory and subsequent actions; Du Bois' trick is to more bluntly encourage his audience to fall for the same generalization that he goes on to expose as logically and morally bankrupt.

It is hard to ignore the fact that the stance each author takes is predicated on an extensive education, an education probably shared by their readers, but noticeably absent from the general African American population highlighted in their respective texts. In many ways they set themselves in a social class above the subjects that they refer to in these two works, which means that their politics are not at all without their own complications. Du Bois and Dunbar are willing to look at their own demographic in a fairly hierarchical way. Dunbar employs a vernacular somewhat distanced from his artistic and literary talent, while Du Bois writes an essay to promote patience and acceptance regarding a people who in all likelihood could not read it. That is not to render a comparison between the two authors as unjustified, but rather to recall that this analysis is tricky given their backgrounds as intellectuals often subjectively removed from their own topic.

Dylan Thompson, UO undergraduate English major, was awarded The Stephen Swig Essay Prize for his essay, "Questioning the Ambivalent Politics of Andrew Marvell: An exploration on the Authorship of 'An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers." His essay was written for Professor Benjamin Saunders' ENG 440: Seventeenth-Century Poetry & Prose course. The Stephen Swig Essay Prize, named for a distinguished UO English alumnus, is awarded each term for the outstanding student essay on any subject and comes with an award of $500. The winning essays are chosen from essays nominated by the English faculty.

By **Dylan Thompson**

Questioning the Ambivalent Politics of Andrew Marvell: An Exploration on the Authorship of "An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers"

Andrew Marvell is an enigmatic figure. The Norton Anthology of English Literature notes that, "While his earliest poems associate him with royalists, those after 1649 celebrate the Commonwealth and Oliver Cromwell; although he is sometimes ambivalent" (1696). Even this description, which attempts to reconcile the apparent inconsistency in Marvell's ideology by providing a date marking the shift, avoids what makes trying to pinpoint Marvell problematic. The Norton Anthology's classification of Marvell as "sometimes ambivalent" is a striking understatement considering the man's consistency in dealing with poetic dialogue and "equivocation within the realm of politics" (Bate xii). As Jonathan Bate points out in his introduction to the Penguin Classics Andrew Marvell: Complete Poems, "even as one side wins the debate . . . the voice of the defeated other lingers in the reader's memory" (xiii). This is why a poem that takes the form of an ode to Cromwell ("An Horation Ode upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland") can also include a sympathetic depiction of King Charles I about to be executed.

Still, it is common for some to read Marvell with an inflexible consideration for his apparent political allegiances. Because of this, the poem, "An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers," is often the subject of debate on whether the royalist sympathies expressed in the poem should be attributed to Marvell at all. Skeptics of Marvell's authorship typically claim that the tone, which undoubtedly elegizes a prominent royalist figure and possibly calls for vengeance, is inconsistent with Marvell's ideology, despite stylistic clues that are indisputably

"Marvellian" in nature. However, most of these critics choose not to substantiate their claims with anything more than their own ideological reasoning, claiming that the poem contains a "too stridently Royalist tone" for "the future servant of the English Republic" (Murray 36). This argument essentially ignores any possibility of a journey, unwilling to turn its lens from the ultimate destination. At the end of his life, Marvell's political accomplishments in Parliament "made him a hero for eighteenth-century Whigs, who believed in 'liberty' and 'progress' as opposed to old Tory loyalty to church and king" (Bate xv), but if the critic only allows for a reading of his poetry, sometimes decades earlier, under this context, interpretations will be slanted. The evidence that links "An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers" to Marvell's hand is profoundly greater than the evidence used to discredit Marvell's authorship. Unfortunately, these critics discard the poem without sufficient time spent to identify why the poem cannot be authored by Marvell. The debate over the poem is ultimately a product of its incompatibility with the way critics want to read Marvell, imposing their own unmalleable perceptions of him upon his poetry. Because the poem was not attributed to Marvell until nearly "forty years after [its] anonymous publication" (Chernaik 236), it becomes an easy target for pro-Marvell-as-Republican critics to reject, even though other poems, including a poem to Richard Lovelace, another elegy on Lord Hastings, and even "An Horatian Ode," show similar Royalist sympathies.

Nicholas Murray claims that "the strongest argument against [the poem being Marvell's] is . . . the declaration in the closing lines of determination to renew the civil slaughter." Indeed, the tone of the poem's final lines is passionately angry as the poem's speaker promises: "we hereafter to his honour will / Not write so many, but so many kill" ("Lord Francis Villiers" 125-6). While Murray holds that "Such passion . . . is uncharacteristic of Marvell's political temper" (36), he does not join other critics, like Warren Chernaik, who go as far as to say the "authorship is thus highly improbable" (137). Jonathan Bate supports Murray's claim about Marvell's political stances, arguing, "Whatever the ambivalence in his attitudes to King Charles 1, Oliver Cromwell, and King Charles II, it can be said for sure that Andrew Marvell had no sympathy for the cause of radical revolution" (xvii). The call for action touted in the poem would thus be incongruous with the rest of Marvell's catalogue. However, it must be acknowledged that Marvell is not shy about using militaristic imagery in his poetry. In "An Horatian Ode," a poem that Chernaik says "celebrates Cromwell's victorious return from his campaign in Ireland" (23), the speaker of the poem establishes Cromwell as a man of action:

So restless Cromwell could not cease
In the inglorious arts of peace,
But through adventurous war
Urgèd his active star. ("An Horatian Ode" 9-12).

The poem is filled with a "characteristically Marvellian . . . tension between the contemplative and the active life" (Murray 39). If the poem is, then, a celebration of Cromwell, or, as Murray himself puts it, a claim that Cromwell's military actions "through adventurous war" are "inevitable, righteous, [and] ordained by a historical necessity to 'cast the Kindome old / Into another Mold'" (40), then the poem must be seen as a celebration of that action. Chernaik writes, "The 'Horatian Ode' appears to resolve the debate between action and contemplation in favour of action" (23). When reconsidering "Lord Francis Villiers," it seems as if Chernaik and Murray have contradicted themselves. True, the tone of the final lines of "Lord Francis Villiers" differ from that of "An Horation Ode" in that the former exhibits a speaker who personally calls for action and the latter simply uses a speaker that celebrates the action of another. Still, it is not farfetched to conclude that the same man that could pay tribute to Cromwell's "fiery way" ("An Horation Ode" 16) and call for "The forward youth that would appear" to "now forsake his muses dear" (1-2) in favor of his "unusèd armour" (6), could also convince himself to arms when he was a much younger man to enact "just vengeance" for his fallen friend ("Lord Francis Villiers" 127). The lines in "Lord Francis Villiers" are angrier in tone, but, considering the context, that anger is justifiable. The only major point of difference between the opening lines of "An Horation Ode" and the closing lines to "Lord Francis Villiers" is the question of who is being called to action against whom. The poem thus is not incompatible because it condones violent political action, but because it condones such action against Parliamentarians, an idea that strong proponents of Marvell as an unequivocal Republican cannot acknowledge. In order to avoid having to acknowledge the complexity of Marvell's lifelong and sometimes ambivalent political involvement, the easiest thing to do is to discard the poem that would make that ambivalence unavoidable.

Though it is difficult for the pro-Republican critics of Marvell to acknowledge, there is a possibility that "An Horatian Ode" is not a celebration of Cromwell at all, but actually an example of "crude irony" by a poet that was "hostile to Cromwell" (Hodge 117). The poem, "Tom May's Death," which is most often dated to have been written in November 1950, after "An Horatian Ode," supports the idea that Marvell could not have identified as completely pro-Cromwellian when writing "An Horatian Ode." The poem, which is recognized for its "mockery of May as a political turncoat," "seems to come from the pen of an avowed Royalist" (Murray 42). Both Murray and Chernaik reconcile this problem by claiming that Marvell is not mocking May for switching allegiances, but for his motives behind the switch, which are "petty and 'base'" (Chernaik 176), and "self-seeking" (Murray 42). Still, the poem certainly is a potential stain on what pro-Republican critics want to be an unblemished Marvellian catalogue.

As additional evidence, R.I.V. Hodge argues that alongside "Tom May's Death," the question of who Marvell's intended audience was supports the belief that "An Horatian Ode" is derived from Royalist sympathies. Hodge asserts that "Cromwell . . . would hardly have responded to the poem with offer of political office" and thus the poem "could not have been meant for his eyes." In fact, the poem was not even published at a time when it could have possibly been read by Cromwell. The only pieces of evidence that signal a possible audience for the poem are a subsequent poem by Robert Wild, which "comes particularly close to Marvell's words" when describing the death of King Charles I, and a poet, Fanshawe, "a zealous Royalist" who translated Horace's Odes, and is the "only other near-contemporary use so far found of the metre Marvell used for his own ode" (Hodge 117-18). These two pieces of evidence suggest that the small community

of readers that were fortunate enough to read "An Horatian Ode" near the time of its composition were hardened and overt Royalists. If so, the poem, and the depiction of Cromwell, was obviously identified by Marvell and his contemporaries as ironic and pro-Royalist. If "An Horatian Ode" is not a celebration of Cromwell's actions, and is actually still representative of Royalist sympathies, then the other significant argument against Marvell's authorship of "Lord Francis Villiers," that it is "too stridently Royalist" (Murray 36), is unfounded.

Of course, a critic attempting to read Marvell as a devout Royalist runs the same risk as one who allows for personal ideologies to impose strict Republicanism on his poetry. Thus, though the evidence does seem to support the idea that Marvell was, at the very least, comfortable with "An Horatian Ode" as a pro-Royalist satire, it is highly likely that Marvell was aware that his poem had the potential for "what L.D. Lerner has termed 'double-edged' and 'poised' readings, the first permitting alternative readings, the second reflecting dual attitude" ("Notes" 238). In this case, "Lord Francis Villiers" is still an exemplary case, in which Chernaik sees an "abusive statement by a violent partisan" (236). If true, the poem would be unique in its unequivocal statement of ideology. In actuality, the death is never blamed on Parliament but rather "inevitable fate" ("Lord Francis Villiers" 12), which might actually be the ambivalence Murray says the poem lacks, potentially arguing that "Parliament was destined by fate to victory" ("Chameleon" 70). However, reading the poem as solely political is ignoring its true subject matter. Though there is a harsh reference to "heavy Cromwell" who "gnashed the earth and fell" ("Lord Francis Villiers" 14), it should be noted that "the grief expressed is personal (and hence not blatantly political)" (Smith 12). Francis Villiers is first and foremost a friend to Marvell, who "had spent time with the extravagant Villiers brothers in Italy" (Smith 16). The poem is better understood when compared to "mourning elegies" than political commentaries (Smith 12). Therefore, even if a critic does not recognize the similarities between the call to action in "An Horatian Ode" and the lines that end "Lord Francis Villiers," the passion of the speaker can be explained. When the critic looks at the poem as an individual composition and not only while attempting to prove a pro-Republican argument, the unusual and personal passionate call for vengeance found in the poem can easily be excused as derivative of personal grief and not necessarily a consequence of a pro-revolutionary political statement.

In fact, both Greg Miller and Nigel Smith point out that the substance of "Lord Francis Villiers" is founded on a possibly homoerotic male friendship. The failure to specifically name Parliament as the killers of Lord Francis might hint that, like the rest of the Marvellian canon, the poet is hesitant to make an uninhibited and unchecked political statement. It must be recognized that even Parliamentarian sympathizers lamented the death. John Hall, a journalist, wrote, "the Lord Francis Villiers . . . dyed by a many wounds, which had been brave enough, had they been received in another cause" (Mercurius Britannicus qtd in Smith 12). Through this, we see that the viewpoint of the poem is "concerned not with a loyal subject but with a lover" ("Chameleon" 71). The speaker exclaims that "Never was there human plant that grew / More fair than this" ("Lord Francis Villiers" 39-40), and when he admits that beauty should not be praised ahead of "Prudence and valour," he reasons: "But he that hath already these in store, / Cannot be poorer sure for having more" (42-4). Villiers' bravery is upheld as a paragon, but the language never praises him for his political stance or his cause. As such, the poem certainly asserts that Marvell "loved the man," but he did not necessarily "love the monarch or the ideals for which the man lived and died" (Miller 31).

The elegy is not upon the death of the Royalist Francis Villiers, and the lament does not at any point want to mourn the loss of modern Royalist ideals. Instead, Villiers is highlighted as a lover, and moreover as a representation of medieval chivalry: both an object of Marvell's homoerotic fantasy – when Marvell swims in the image of "his sword and armour" being "all his glass" (52), and paints him as a knight "comely" and "terrible" upon his horse to "bold adventures find" (91, 93) – and as a dignified courtly lover, who "The matchless Chlora . . . only could his passions charm" (69-70). If anything, Marvell employs nostalgia for a world that is already long gone, and, even if the final call to arms is "an oblique statement of Civil War Royalist allegiance," which is hard to argue against, the hope for vengeance was in vain, "with the outcome possibly sealed even before it was finished" ("Chameleon" 71-3). If the war was already all but over, then the context dilutes some of the passion of the final lines. Marvell may have known this at the time of writing the poem, and it seems reasonable to believe a sense of futility allowed him more comfort to write passionately for his friend. Reading the poem from this perspective reveals a possible blindness resulting from bias from those critics who can only see it as violent rhetoric from an unrelenting Royalist (Chenaik 236). Marvell's anger is certainly excused, if not completely understood.

The reasons critics give for dismissing "An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers" from Andrew Marvell's canon are thus easily countered. It is impossible to know where exactly Marvell stood politically in 1648, but to claim unequivocal Parliamentarian ideology is impossible without either ignoring or severely molding the ambivalences and Royalist sympathies present in his poetry. It seems consistent to claim that Marvell was never a strident revolutionary, but he certainly is not afraid to use militaristic imagery in his poetry and, if "An Horatian Ode" is to be read as pro-Cromwell, it is hard to argue that the call to revolution is not, at the very least, similar to the end of "Lord Francis Villiers." Even in non-political poetry, like "The Unfortunate Lover," Marvell is quick to paint military images of a "tyrant Love" and his "winged artillery" (45-6), above "a spectacle of blood" (42). Thus, the final lines of "Lord Francis Villiers" can be seen as a variant on a common motif in Marvell poetry. Furthermore, even if the final lines of "Lord Francis Villiers" appear out of place among the rest of Marvell's poetry, the personal grief contained in the poem more than explains away the variation. M. L. Donnelly, in an essay asserting Marvell's "commitment to Cromwell and his cause" (154), explains away "Lord Francis Villiers" by saying it "lacks his usual poetic economy; some passages sound more like secondhand Donne" (157). Though Donnelly takes no time to specify what he means by this statement, it is a convenient way for him to get past the poem. If the poem were the only one of Marvell's to ever be criticized for lack of poetic tightness, this may seem like a valid argument. However, "The Unfortunate Lover" is another Marvell poem that is criticized for being "Melodramatic, lurid, even garish" to the point that some call it "probably the worst love-poem ever written by a man of genius" (Hirst 372). Derek Hirst and Steven N. Zwicker disagree and attribute the sometimes incoherent lyric to a "deep and enduring meaning for the poet" (Hirst "Abstract"). The deep personal connection that Hirst attributes to "The Unfortunate Lover" is coincidentally also present in "Lord Francis Villiers" and, if either poem actually does exhibit a lack of "poetic economy," which is debatable in itself, there is some evidence that may attribute that element to the tough subject matter the poem covers. Therefore, the arguments made to discount "Lord Francis Villiers" as a Marvell composition seem to unravel when the poem is given its deserved diligence.

On the other hand, there is an abundance of evidence supporting the idea that the poem is Andrew Marvell's. Even putting aside the fact that Marvell can be physically connected to Villiers, having spent time with him in Italy (Smith 16), which would explain his personal stake in writing the elegy, there is enough internal evidence in the poem to convincingly attribute it to Marvell. For one, the poem references John Milton's "Lycidas" in line 11, with the question, "Yet what couldst thou have done?" Michael Craze points out that "There was no poem that Marvell echoed more often than 'Lycidas'" before listing four examples in poetry confirmed to be Marvell's and assuring that even more exist (55-6). Furthermore, Craze highlights the word "distill," a Latin derivative, which he calls "a true Marvellian word," showing up in both "On a Drop of Dew" and "Damon the Mower" (56). Though the use of the same word certainly does not prove the same author, word choice is a stylistic clue, and in this case, the clues accumulate, building a strong case for Marvell's authorship. Considering that Marvell's poetry was not published until after his death, the fact that the poem names its beautiful mistress "Chlora" ("Lord Francis Villiers" 69), which is a name found in both Marvell's "Mourning" and in "The Gallery," would seem too much of a coincidence if the poem were not either written by Marvell, or a person privy to Marvell's writing and attempting to imitate him.

Still, the more convincing evidence is that images found in "Lord Francis Villiers" manifest themselves in Marvell's later poetry. In "Lord Francis Villiers," the poet constructs an "adroit simile" (Craze 57) about

Chinese pottery work:
As the wise Chinese in the fertile wombe
Of Earth doth a more precious clay entombe,
Which dying by his will he leaves consignd:
Til by mature delay of time refind
The christall metal fit to be releast
Is taken forth to crowne each royall feast (31-6).
Interestingly, the poem, "The First Anniversary of the Government under His Highness the Lord Protector" employs a similar comparison:
Their earthy Projects under ground they lay,
More slow and brittle then the China clay:
Well may they strive to leave them to their Son,
For one Thing never was by one King done (19-22).
The fact that "Lord Francis Villiers" was not a poem widely circulated definitely supports the case that Marvell would have expounded on an image in his future poetry. In both examples, the poet uses Chinese clay to symbolize that which is slow moving, and in both similes the ultimate reference is to royalty. The similarities of the two are, once again, difficult to pass as coincidence. Of course, none of the critics who discount "Lord Francis Villiers" as a Marvell composition spend enough time on the poem to try to explain the coincidence away, but because the poem is littered with connections to other Marvell poems, it seems highly implausible that the poem could have come from any poet other than Marvell. For a political and elegiac poem, it contains an unusual number of references to flora, including "human plant" (39), "twining vines" (74), and "modest plant" (81), of which the latter two reemerge in the poem, "Upon Appleton House" when Marvell commands "Bind me ye Woodbines in your twines" (609) and when conscience is likened to "that Heaven-nursed Plant . . . which shrinks at ev'ry touch" (355-58). For the lines in "Lord Francis Villiers" to repeatedly resurface in Marvell's other poetry, the poet would have had to have been intimate with it. If it was authored by anyone other than Marvell, that intimacy would be, at best, implausible. There are simply too many similarities (in style, voice, and form) for the poem not to be written by Marvell, and it seems disingenuous for a critic to not, at the very least, address these similarities when trying to discount it.
Then, why do critics find it necessary to remove the poem from the Marvell canon? For M.L. Donnelly, it seems obvious. He is attempting to argue for Marvell's complete "commitment to Cromwell and his cause" (154). He claims that the "single direct and bitter reference to Cromwell would have interest in [his] study only as evidence of the distance traveled" (157), but by denying evidence that seems to contradict his argument, it only suggests that his argument is not strong enough to survive the evidence. Discounting the poem is the easiest way for Donnelly to avoid it, and thus, his argument can move forward without having to address the problems it raises.
In an amusing bit of irony, Chernaik takes time at the beginning of his book to accuse John M. Wallace – who argues for Marvell as a loyalist, or a man who "kept faith with the existing government until it disappeared" (Wallace 7) – of excluding poems that do not fit "into his view of a Marvell consistently respectful of royal authority and dignity" (Chernaik 7). It seems possible that Chernaik is too close to his own writing to see himself make the same mistake. Though he recognizes the "qualities of 'negative capability'" in Marvell's poems (Chernaik 13), for the most part, he wants to see Marvell as a consistent Republican, especially by the time "An Horatian Ode" is written. The anti-Cromwell statements and the romanticizing of archaic chivalry in "Lord Francis Villiers" do not fit the image of Marvell that Chernaik wants to see, so he excludes the poem. Rather than address it head on, he dismisses it as written by "a violent partisan" (236), only giving it a single footnote of attention.
Therefore, despite the evidence that critics like Craze and Smith build up in favor of Marvell's authorship of "Lord Francis Villiers," it is dismissed by pro-Republican critics because it is not compatible with their imagined Marvell. In order to make their point, the poem becomes too much of a problem to even address. The debate over "Lord Francis Villiers" only continues because it complicates Marvell, despite the fact that, as Craze points out, those that see it as Marvell's only unequivocally royalist utterance ignore "the unequivocally royalist utterances in 'To his Noble Friend Mr. Richard Lovelace,' written six or seven months before" (56). It may be impossible to completely pinpoint Andrew Marvell, but for one side to argue without addressing the complications brought on by Marvell's seemingly opposite sentiments in other poems, is to ignore the duality that makes some of his poetry the greatest political poetry in English history. There is more than enough evidence to safely place "An Elegy Upon the Death of My Lord Francis Villiers" in the Marvell canon, and it can only be beneficial if the complications it arouses are addressed rather than ignored.

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Kamiiya Williams, UO undergraduate English major, was awarded The Stephen Swig Essay Prize for her essay, "Masking for Survival: The Broken Black Family and Generational Transfer of Masks in the Trueblood Episode of Invisible Man." Her essay was written for Professor Courtney Thorsson's ENG 468: Contemporary Black Fiction course. The Stephen Swig Essay Prize, named for a distinguished UO English alumnus, is awarded each term for the outstanding student essay on any subject and comes with an award of $500. The winning essays are chosen from essays nominated by the English faculty.

By **Kamiiya Williams**

Masking for Survival: The Broken Black Family and Generational Transfer of Masks in the Trueblood Episode of Invisible Man

During slavery, the slightest suspicion of discontent by a slave could spark fear of rebellion among slave owners that would cause them to whip, sell or kill a supposed unruly slave. Furthermore, slavery created a social system that necessitated masking, or "puttin' on massa," with an illusion of a happy slave. With the rise of nineteenth-century blackface minstrelsy, masking transformed into a commercialized form of entertainment, popularizing archetypes such as Mammy, Uncle, Pickaninny, and Sambo. Into the twentieth century, masking became a common trope in African American literary expression, where characters often perform "grins and lies" to survive in a white supremacist society. Whether to secure employment or navigate police authority, characters use masks to conceal their emotions, race, or entertain persons of power by performing racial stereotypes. In Invisible Man, Trueblood's racially degrading narrative about a black father who accidentally impregnates his daughter, provides one example of masking to entertain white expectations. Though Trubelood's masking places heavy strain on his family life and polarizes class division within the African American community, the strategy is nonetheless passed down to his sons and helps him survive an oppressive sharecropping system.

One of the ways in which Trueblood's episode in Invisible Man captures the profitability of a caricaturized black performance is through Trueblood's excessive use of those stereotypes in his narrative. Trueblood's narrative begins in the night, where he conveys his frustration with accepting that his daughter has been seeing a "young boy." The floor is so cold that the three of them—Mattie Lou, Trueblood and Mary— must all sleep on the same bed to keep warm. Trueblood lies in bed thinking about "how to git some grub for next day" and a young man his daughter recently began seeing. He begins to think about when he used to live in Mobile, listening to musicians play music as they travelled up the river on boats. From there, he compares the sound of the approaching music to the sight of a "wagonful of watermelons" (Ellison 54). He then reverts back to the music, comparing it again to a "plump and juicy" woman in a "red dress and a wide straw hat" (56). Next, Matty Lou calls out "Daddy," as she restlessly moves about in her sleep.

Following Matty Lou's uncomfortable stir, Trueblood begins to dream. In his dream, Trueblood goes to see Mr. Broadnax, a white man, to purchase meat. He climbs a hill to Mr. Broadnax's home and goes through the front door. He surveys the place momentarily and notices that no one is home; he then sees a door and enters. Suddenly, he's in a "big white bedroom," a "woman's room," and he sees a "white lady" stepping out of the glass door of a "tall grandfather clock" (57). Trueblood has the urge to run, but the woman charges at him, screaming and grabbing his neck. Trueblood throws the woman onto the bed to break her hold, but the woman miraculously vanishes and a flock of white geese emerge from the bed. Trueblood runs toward the clock, gets inside, and is elevated up a dark tunnel to a kind of "power plant" (58). He continues to run down the tunnel-like architecture, noticing a bright light ahead of him. The light electrocutes him, and he falsely reawakens "in the cool daylight" (59). Trueblood, surprised, wakes up in the act of having intercourse with his daughter, Matty Lou. He desires to remove himself, but is afraid to experience any satisfaction, or else he may be sinning. Yet, Matty Lou moves to get away and they both begin to experience sexual pleasure. Kate, Trueblood's wife, wakes up and sees what has happened. She assaults him, throwing stray objects at him and ultimately, striking his face with a sledge hammer, which he says caused the scar upon his face.

Trueblood's narrative is loaded with imagery and diction that signify popular archetypes in American imagination. First, he presents a fetish for watermelons, a myth that originated during slavery when slaves were often accused of stealing watermelons from fields, an accusation that left a lasting impression that African Americans unusually craved watermelons. Trueblood says,

"Then you hear it up close, like when you up in the second-story window and look down on a wagonful of watermelons, and you see one of them young juicy melons split wide open a-layin all spread out and cool and sweet on top of all the striped green ones like it's waitin' just for you, so you can see how red and ripe and juicy it and all the shiny black seeds it's got and all." (55-6)

Trueblood's detailed description of the melons work to create a sense of a momentarily suspended conscience caused by an irresistible fascination with the fruit. "Young," "sweet," "ripe," and "juicy" the diction here creates a seductive and alluring quality of the melons. In fact, Trueblood shortly thereafter employs the same language to describe a girl:

"Kinda like when you watch a gal in a red and a wide straw hat goin' past you down a lane with trees on both sides, and she's plump and juicy and kinda switchin' her tail cause she knows you watchin' and you know she know, and you just stands there and watches 'til you can't see nothin' but the top of her red hat and then that goes and you know she done dropped behind a hill—I seen me a gal like that once." (56)

In this passage, the girl's red attire and repetition of the words "plump" and "juicy" create an extended metaphor between the girl and the watermelon. Trueblood's similar description of the two makes his attraction to the melons further sexualized and abnormal. Furthermore, Trueblood, a married man and father (his young children listening), unashamedly reminisces about a sexually attractive woman he saw in the past, morally degrading himself. Additionally, the woman's inviting body language, "switchin her tail," knowing Trueblood is watching, suggests again a morally degraded female figure who craves sexual attention. This Jezebel caricature is one that Trueblood also uses to describe his daughter.

Like the ambiguous female figure, Matty Lou surfaces as a hypersexual, promiscuous woman in Trueblood's absurd narrative. Matty Lou's calling out "Daddy" while she sleeps prompts Trueblood's suspicion that she "musta been dreamin' bout somebody" and he "gits mad wonderin' if it's that boy" (56):

"I'm realizin' that she's a woman now, when I feels her turn and squirm against me and throw her arm across my neck up where the cover didn't reach and I was cold. She said somethin' I couldn't understand, like a woman says when she wants to tease and please a man. I knowed then she was grown and I wondered how many times it'd done happened and was it that doggone boy. I moved her arm and it was soft, but it didn't wake her neither. Then I turned my back and tried to move away, though there wasn't much room and I could still feel her touchin' me, movin' close to me." (56-7)

Matty Lou's turning in her sleep awakens a sexual desire in Trueblood. He no longer sees her as a daughter, but "a woman" and even though Trubelood cannot decipher her sleep talking, he interprets the ambiguous words as sexual teasing. Matty Lou's actions and Trueblood's reflections create intense sexual tension in the scene. Trueblood struggles to resist his daughter's mature body, ("I turned my back") but their tight sleeping arrangement makes it impossible for any resistance. The story suggests that Trueblood's hypersexual nature does not even stop him from sexualizing the body of his daughter, performing the expectations that black sexuality has no limits, hence the extreme taboo of incestuous desire in the narrative. Furthermore, his fantasies about how many times Matty Lou has had intercourse and whether or not it was with the young man she has been seeing, suggests a kind of private jealousy, rather than fatherly concern. Similarly, Matty Lou is positioned in the mask of a Jezebel—she lusts for her lover even while she is sleeping and can't help but to imagine her father to be him. Her seductive gestures and teasing whispers suggest an uncontrollable sexuality.

The appearance of a seductive white woman in Trueblood's dream signify another American taboo—black men sleeping with white women. Trueblood's dream about a white woman alludes to the notion that black men cannot suppress their fantasies of sleeping with or being seduced by white women—not even subconsciously. This myth supported fears among white populations that white women were under the constant threat of being raped by black men and justified unlawful lynching of black men. While the narrative holds many oversexualized archetypes, Kate is the only character who is completely stripped of all sexuality.

Trueblood portrays his wife Kate as Mammy, the "beloved black servant," marked by her unfaltering loyalty to her white employers (Jackson 95). In popular culture, Mammy happily obeys her master and nurtures his children, yet abuses her own children and emasculates her husband (Riggs 1986). Working within the household, Mammy was often portrayed as sexually undesirable, typically overweight with her hair tucked underneath a scarf. Kate's violent reaction to Trueblood's incest fits the Mammy caricature. "Swingin' her arms like a man swingin' a ten-pound sledge," Kate's "rusty and gray" skin, sweaty smell and animal-like "grunt" robs her of any femininity (Ellison 63) and reduces her to a "wild woman" (61).

Mammy, Jezebel and a number of myths that developed during the nineteenth century appear throughout Trueblood's story. There are others such as Trueblood calling himself a "cotton-picking machine," signifying a common belief that African Americans were supremely suitable for field labor, their highly pigmented skin enabling them to work long hours in the sun and the assumption that the black male body possessed superhuman strength. This propaganda helped to propel institutional slavery, but also reduced African Americans to the quality of their bodies, ignoring their intellectual value to society. He also twice compares himself to an animal—a "jaybird" (63) and a "dog" (64). This assemblage of images, myths and archetypes allows Trueblood to effectively arouse Norton's excitement and appeal to his expectations.

Some may say that Trueblood's story is indeed true, but Ellison plants more than a few clues that such is not the case. For example, though Trueblood says that his face was cut by Kate's axe at the time he impregnated Matty Lou, his wound is "raw and moist" (46). Though the Invisible Man clearly recalls that Matty Lou and her mother appeared to have "far-gone pregnancy" (47), it is improbable that the wound would still be fresh if potentially caused nine months prior to Norton's arrival at the residence. To further illustrate this inconsistency, twice Ellison presents imagery of gnats circling the wound: "he [Trueblood] lifted his handkerchief to fan away the gnats" (51), and "flies and fine white gnats swarmed around his wound" (54). There are other subtle clues that Ellison plants within the episode, particularly the use of eye contact. The children's eyes are "deceptive" and Trueblood smiles at Invisible Man "behind his eyes" as he tells the story to Mr. Norton. From Invisible Man's reflections, Trueblood was known as "the one who told the old stories with a sense of humor and a magic that made them come alive" (46). And when Trueblood begins his story, "he cleared his throat, his eyes gleaming, and his voice taking on a deep incantatory quality" (54). Trueblood's dramatic preparation and storyteller reputation makes the story appear more of a fictional tale, purposefully designed to entice listeners, rather than a confessional. Despite these subtle indicators of a manufactured narrative by an experienced storyteller, the relationship between Trueblood, Matty Lou and Kate also provides insight to Trueblood's mask.

The Trueblood episode in Invisible Man provides some insight into how the performance of racial archetypes by black men affected intra-racial dynamics, particularly the strain on black marriages. When Trueblood first appears around the cabin, Invisible Man observes that "he came and said something to the women . . . but they appeared to regard him sullenly, barely speaking, and hardly looking his direction" (49). When Matty Lou and Kate notice Mr. Norton and Invisible Man approaching, they "turn and run frantically behind the house, their movements heavy and flat-footed" (50). The women's "heavy and flat-footed" retreat from the cabin suggests a settle disapproval and rejection of Trueblood's exploitation. Furthermore, Trueblood mentions to Mr. Norton and Invisible Man the affect that his storytelling has on his family life: "Except that my wife an' daughter won't speak to me, I'm better off than I ever been before. And even if Kate won't speak to me she took the new clothes I bought her from up in town and now she's getting' some eyeglasses made what she been needin' for so long" (67-68). Though the dynamics may be unnoticeable to Invisible Man, Kate and Matty Lou's refusal to speak to Trueblood has most to do with his exploitation of them as Mammy and Jezebel.

Ellison also explores the generational effect of Trueblood's mask. Though Matty Lou and Kate leave the scene, Trueblood's children stay to watch their father perform. "Crouching behind their eyes, waiting for him to speak," Trueblood's children have no other place in the episode other than their close observation of their father's performance. They do not speak but their eyes indicate an intense interest in their father's skillful acting, and observing the financial reward he receives every time. From the children's point of view, Trueblood is their most immediate example of how to earn money and take care of the family.

Lincoln Perry, also known as Stepin Fetchit and for his role as Sambo in a number of films, followed in his father's footsteps. Perry's father was a minstrel performer for the Rabbit Foot Company, a famous black minstrel troupe based in Tampa, Florida. Like Kate, Dora Perry, did not approve of her husband's choice of work. In his biography of Lincoln Perry, Mel Watkins writes, "Despite the distress his jaunts may have caused his wife or the burden and hardship they may have placed on the family, he was idolized by his son. From an early age, young Lincoln displayed and urge to follow in his father's footsteps" (Watkins 12). The intense interest that Trueblood's sons have for their fathers shows the same generational effect of masking, particularly between black fathers and sons. The sons admire their father's mask and the apparent success it brings, but more importantly, it suggests a passing down of masks from fathers to sons. The black male performer learns how to perform from his father, who likely learned from his father before him. By watching Trueblood entertain white audiences, they learn to become entertainers themselves. Ellison may also be suggesting greater implications of the impressions entertainers leave on boys in general. After all, when Lincoln Perry reached the peak of his career, "nearly every black shoeshine boy in America began copying his lazy drawl and slow, shambling gait" (11). Moreover, Invisible Man's grandfather and the vet at the Golden Day, defeated by their own political and economic disempowerment, advise him to use masking to his advantage. The transference of this lesson from older men to younger men pervades the novel.

Trueblood's episode also highlights polarizing class division in the African American community, which is one of the ways, in addition to interracial prejudice, Trueblood is reduced to his circumstances. Invisible Man informs readers that Trueblood was "well liked as a hard worker who took good care of his family's needs," around the school campus that Invisible Man attends (Ellison 46) and that occasionally he led the singing spirituals with a "country quartet" for the school's official Sunday gatherings when "special white guests" would attend (47). The Invisible Man remembers that the officials and students were "embarrassed" by the songs they sang and that there was a strong "attitude of contempt blunted by tolerance" for the "black-belt people, the 'peasants'" (47). From Invisible Man's point-of-view, even before Trueblood began selling his disgraceful story, he was not welcomed, but merely tolerated by the classes of blacks above him, which makes sense as to why Trueblood "couldn't get no help from nobody" (52). Furthermore, the exchanges between Trueblood and Invisible Man indicate more uneasy tension between the two classes of men. Trueblood, quite often, looks to Invisible Man for understanding, but Invisible Man constantly rejects him. When Mr. Norton questions Trueblood, Trueblood "looked helplessly" at Invisible Man but he "looked away" (51). When Mr. Norton requests that the men move to a shady area, Invisible Man recalls, "We followed him. The farmer placed his hand on my shoulder, but I shook it off, knowing that I could explain nothing," (52). Invisible Man thinks that Trueblood needs an explanation of what Mr. Norton wants from him, yet Trueblood having performed this same ritual "many, many times" needs no explanation. Ellison attempts to display in the exchanges between the men and the background on the pre-existing tension between the classes, a cry from poor classes of African Americans to be accepted by their middle class counterparts, more accurately, to be helped by the other. The lower class is constantly rejected by the middle class of their same race, putting them at the mercy of people like Mr. Norton who will help them for an exchange of racially degrading entertainment. Perhaps Ellison could be suggesting that if the upper classes were to help the lower classes, Trueblood's circumstances would be improved and he would not need to perform in order to survive. Furthermore, Trueblood's performance affects all classes of African Americans, so while extreme poverty may only directly affect Trueblood, his endorsement of American caricatures does not. Invisible Man privately wonders, "How can he tell this to white men . . . when he

knows they'll say all Negroes do such things?" (58).

One of the ways in which Ellison shows that Trueblood's ambitions are motivated by need of money is by juxtaposing the social statuses of the "sharecropper and the millionaire" with material imagery (52). Invisible Man watches Norton remove not just a wallet, but "red Moroccan-leather wallet from his coat pocket. The platinum-framed miniature came with it" (69). The Invisible Man also notices the shoe wear of two men: "I stared at the two pairs of shoes before me. Mr. Norton's were white trimmed with black. They were custom made and there beside the cheap tan brogues of the farmer they had the elegantly well-bred appearance of fine gloves" (68). The class dichotomy revealed by Invisible Man's attentiveness to detail is a constant a reminder that sharecroppers sought upward mobility. Symbolically, when Norton offers Trueblood a $100 bill, it is only one instance when Trueblood has profited from his story, since he delivers the story "as though he had told the story many, many times." For as many performances Trueblood has seemingly given, Ellison suggests that many transactions have transpired at the Trueblood residence. Trueblood's crafty story does lead to significant economic gain. Formerly impoverished and unemployed, Trueblood now "got more work now than [he] ever did before" (53).

Upon first realizing Trueblood's calculated mask, it is easy to dismiss him as a greedy character. However, Trueblood's opportunity is limited and his story indicates a long term search for economic stability. He recalls that he went to the school "a long time ago looking for some book learning and some points on how to handle my crops" and when he returned, he "thought they was trying to he'p me, on accounta I got two women due to birth 'bout the same time" (52). However, Trueblood receives "no help from nobody" until he begins to sell his story (52). Not only does the white community pay Trueblood for entertaining their myths, but the black bourgeois "offered to send us clean outta the county, pay our way and everything and give [him] a hundred dollars to git settled with" (52). Trueblood's exploitative story is the only thing which gets people to attend to his economic needs. Twice he repeats of the cold "Everytime I think of how cold it was and what hard time we was having I gits the shakes," and at the opening of his tale, "You see, suh, it was cold and us didn't have much fire. Nothin' but wood, no coal. I tried to git help but wouldn't nobody help us and I couldn't find no work or nothin'. It was so cold all us had to sleep together; me, the ole lady and the gal. That's how it started, suh" (53). Memories of the extreme cold and the constant declaration of helplessness are the most plausible parts of Trueblood's testimony.

Additionally, Trueblood seems to preface his fabricated story with a true story—a plausible story of economic disempowerment and desire to improve one's standard of living. Though "the motives hidden behind the mask are as a numerous as the ambiguities the mask conceals," economically crippled by race and class prejudice, it's clear that Trueblood's motive is primarily financial. Trueblood's mask, no matter how degrading it may be, allows him to provide basic necessities for his family, that Invisible Man immediately notices upon arriving at the residence: "bright new shingles" (46) patch the roof of Trueblood's cabin; the children play in "stiff new overalls" (46); Matty Lou and Kate "dressed in new blue and white checked ginghams" (47); Trueblood wears "new blue overalls" and "his shoes were tan and new" (50). Of course, we learn from Trueblood that he is also able to buy Kate a new pair of eyeglasses. Despite all of the new materials Trueblood is able to purchase, the income is not enough to take him out of the poverty in which they live. The "collection of shacks and log cabins . . . bleached white and warped by the weather" and "sun-torched shingles" on roofs still present a striking image of poverty, suggesting that though Trueblood is enabled to survive such poverty, he has never truly escaped it (46). Perhaps, Trueblood's story illustrates some of the real challenges black sharecroppers faced in the early twentieth century.

From the end of Reconstruction until the 1950s, "blacks were disproportionality found in sharecropping, the most oppressive condition." In this system, sharecroppers paid a landowner for the use of his land, for the purpose of cultivating and "sharing" crops with the owner. The landlord also charged for the use of food, seed, and fertilizer with interest. After harvest time and crops were sold on the market, tenants had no way to verify the price that the crops were sold for, so they could not determine their share of the profit. The landlord "kept all accounts on credit and supplies advanced to the tenant" and "tenants were not allowed to question or even check the accuracy of the landlord's accounting for crop proceeds, advances, and interest charges" (Fusfield and Bates 33). Many sharecroppers, after paying their landlords, did not have any money left over to purchase food, clothing and other essential goods, leaving them "entirely dependent on home raised produce plus cash advances or credit arranged by the landlord." This system left them constantly indebted to their landlords, striving to merely make ends meet. Leaving this cycle of debt was not easy as "state legislation made it virtually impossible for share tenant and cropper families to leave the land except in the fall after harvest time," which is why, perhaps, Trueblood declines the school's offer to send him out of the county. Furthermore, tenants who owed money to their landlords could be prohibited from moving until they paid off all of their debt (33). With high interest rates and charges for farm goods, landowners were able to make higher profits at harvest time by economically enslaving their tenants.

Understanding the sharecropping system helps to better analyze Trueblood's character with consideration of his circumstances. In a perpetual state of debt, with three small children and two pregnant women to provide for, and the desperate need for money and lack of help, the only way he can meet those responsibilities is by performing degrading stereotypes. Perhaps Ellison expects us not to fault Trueblood for playing up caricatures, but rather the system that necessitates his mask.

In all likelihood, Matty Lou is pregnant by the young man she's been seeing and not her father. Kate and Trueblood may have gotten into a physical fight, but not because he slept with Matty Lou, but rather because Kate is enraged about being portrayed as Mammy. (Since Trueblood's scar is so apparently fresh, it indicates a recent altercation between the two, rather than an old one, and Kate's "flat-footed" storming off the lawn, still indicates tension between the married couple). It's quite possible that the school did not offer to help Trueblood before he began exploiting his family, because of his unwed pregnant daughter and class prejudice. Tensions of class suggest that Matty Lou's state was disgraceful to the civilized orderly image that the educated classes were trying to project. Nonetheless, the Trueblood episode is one of the numerous ways that Ellison brings about questions about "illusion and reality," and how being able to manipulate both was an essential survival skill.

Trueblood's story shows an American reality that poor men reduced themselves, their wives and children to degrading archetypes in order to provide basic needs. The episode explores how such a system destroyed family structures, creating tension between men and women, as well as how sons often inherited their father's masks. At the causes of it all, is little to no economic and political power for poor African Americans to shape their own life and identity, leaving them at the mercy of an oppressive society. Crippled by class and race prejudice, the episode simultaneously show the advantages and disadvantages of "puttin on massa" in the twentieth century. While the mask did seize some economic security for Trueblood, his relationship with his wife and daughter suffers, and his children appear predestined for a similar life. In order to keep his income flowing, Trueblood is forced to wear two faces.

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Alexandra Carthew, UO undergraduate English major, is the winner of the 2013-2014 A. Kingsley Weatherhead Shakespeare Essay Prize. Her essay, "Love and Servitude in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure," was written for Professor Lara Bovilsky's ENG 208: Shakespeare course. The A. Kingsley Weatherhead Shakespeare Essay Prize, endowed by a generous grift from Gloria Lee in honor of her husband the late Robert Lee, is awarded annually for the best essay written by an undergraduate English major on Shakespeare's work and comes with an award of $500. The winning essays are chosen from essays nominated by the English faculty.

By **Alexandra Carthew**

Love and Servitude in Shakespeare's Measure for Measure

When Angelo demands that Isabella put on "the destined livery" of female sexual servitude in Measure for Measure, he perversely inverts the traditional Petrarchan figuration of the lover as the servant of the beloved (2.4.138). In Shakespeare's time, love was thought to engender certain madness within those who had been stricken by cupid's arrow; they would wander around unkempt, and neglect all other considerations beyond their beloved. People in the period would even affect this romantically rumpled disposition to perform being a lover. Within the Petrarchan tradition of romantic love, as exemplified by the collection of Italian sonnets Astrophil and Stella, the lover is the servant of the beloved. The beloved was often figured as a cruel and unattainable woman in the Italian sonnet, and this literary tradition prevailed in the literature and conscience of Elizabethan and Jacobean England as well. The lover became powerless before his or her beloved, and the beloved person was vaulted into a position of mastery above their lover.

In Shakespeare's Measure for Measure, Angelo finds himself unexpectedly infatuated with Isabella, an aspiring nun and the sister of a man whom he intends to execute. When describing his feelings for Isabella, Angelo insists he is a lover; he tells Isabella "Plainly conceive, I love you," and he proceeds to bribe her to give him her "love" in exchange for sparing her brother Claudio's life (2.4.141,144). Angelo may imitate the discourse of a lover, but he does not comply with the traditional ideology of romantic love. Angelo is unwilling to accept the servile disposition of love and affection; he violates the Petrarchan tradition as he intends to violate Isabella to serve his own desire for power and authority. Angelo adopts the manner of an unyielding and exacting master of Vienna in his occupation of the Duke's office, and this disposition is mirrored in his romantic interactions with Isabella. Angelo attempts to force Isabella into the servile role conceptualized for the lover, regardless of Isabella's own wishes or desires. This attempt to force Isabella into wearing the "destined livery" is a symbolic rape, an attempt to coerce Isabella into playing a predetermined feminine, submissive role to Angelo's masculine, dominant desires. He justifies this symbolic rape, a precursor to his intended physical rape, by rhetorically rendering both inevitable. Angelo makes this power play because he is left shaken, confused, and potentially emasculated by his desire for Isabella if he adopts the servile role of a lover. Before he laid eyes on Isabella, he was a man described with blood as "snow broth," whose appetites were "more to bread than stone" (1.4.57, 53-54). He is a man obsessed with control and mastery, whether it be over his own body, the body politic of Vienna, or Isabella's body. Rather than conform to the Petrarchan mold of the emasculated and servile lover, Angelo affirms his masculine control over the situation by projecting his own expected servile position as the lover onto Isabella by virtue of her gender and his masculine and political authority.

Angelo's inflamed lust mingles with his characteristic need for control, and once Angelo has decides to relinquish his formerly perfect control of his own bodily desires, he redirects his consuming need to control onto Isabella's body. Angelo's word choice reveals his desire to dominate Isabella, using his position of masculine authority to subjugate her into feminine servitude. When Angelo demands Isabella put on the "destined livery," he is referring figuratively to her "destined" submissive Female role as a uniform Isabella must inevitably don. Livery was a term for a servant's uniform, and Angelo attempts to fit Isabella's will to his desires by demanding she suit herself to fit his desires. Angelo declares Isabella ought to "Be that you are: / That is, a woman. If you be more, you're none" (2.4.134-135). As Angelo presumptuously declares that Isabella ought to behave as a woman, he is assigning the submissive nature that he demands she embrace to the entire female gender. Angelo's rhetoric implies that if Isabella does not submit to him and embrace her servile female nature, thus becoming "more" than a female, then she will be "none." Characterizing Isabella as "none" if she will not behave as "a woman" reduces her to a state of non-being if she does not acquiesce to his blackmail. It is also a rhetorical attempt to persuade Isabella that she has no other option but to comply with his will and "be a woman." Angelo's use of the word "none" is likely a pun on the word "nun" as well, a classically Shakespearian wordplay.

Angelo frames his demand by stating that if Isabella is a woman, as she is "well expressed / By all external warrants," then she should "show it now / By putting on the destined livery" (2.4.136-138). "Warrant" is glossed by the OED as "a token or evidence of authorization," as well as "conclusive proof," and "a writ or order issued by some executive authority, empowering a ministerial officer to make an arrest, seizure, search, or to execute a judicial sentence" (OED). Angelo thus demands that Isabella prove her womanhood by suiting herself to his sexual desires, thus putting on the "destined livery" of female servitude. Angelo's use of legal language to describe Isabella's femininity underscores the business-like nature of his proposed transaction; Isabella must exchange her virginity for Claudio's life. Angelo attempts to portray love as his motivating emotion, but Angelo's unromantic description of Isabella's feminine features as "warrants," reveals his motivations are instead tied to power, control, and authority. This language reveals an underlying justification that Isabella's feminine body serves as a "warrant" for Angelo's arrest or seizure of it, taking control of her body as an authoritarian male figure.

Angelo's desire for control and abuse of power can be further seen in the same Act, after Isabella threatens to expose Angelo's indecent proposal. Angelo responds smugly, "Who will believe thee, Isabel?" and goes on to state "my place i'th' state, / Will so your accusation overweigh / That you stifle in your own report, / and smell of calumny" (2.4.154-159). Thus Angelo uses his position of authority to silence Isabella, insisting that publicly denouncing him would merely damage her reputation because people would believe her a slanderer. The threat and act of character assassination is a centrally important theme in the play, and all the characters seem acutely aware of their reputations. Angelo attempts to master Isabella's will by any means possible, using rhetorical appeals to gender and abusing the power of his position in the state.

Angelo is not the only man in Measure for Measure that propositions Isabella with the language of servitude; in the final scene of the play the Duke invokes this rhetoric to preface his own proposal to Isabella. While the Duke's proposal is similarly unromantic, unlike Angelo the Duke figures himself as Isabella's servant. After revealing his elaborate ruse and removing his friar's habit, the Duke tells Isabella,

"Your friar is now your prince. As I was then
Advertising and holy to your business,
Not changing heart with habit I am still
Attorneyed at your service." (5.1.374-377)

The Norton Anthology glosses "attorneyed" in this case to mean "engaged as advocate," depicting his service to Isabella as one of legal rather than romantic nature. The Duke proposes marriage to Isabella later in this very scene, again using contractual rather than romantic language. The Duke never expresses romantic feelings nor uses language linked to love, instead stating, "for your lovely sake / Give me your hand, and say you will be mine," and later asking, "If you'll a willing ear incline, / what's mine is yours, and what is yours is mine," (5.1.485-86, 529-30). The Duke frames his initial proposal as for purely Isabella's sake, hardly expressing any romantic sentiment of his own. In his second proposal, the Duke reminds Isabella of the material benefits she will gain if she agrees to be his wife, stating she would share the riches of his Dukedom. The only potentially romantic sentiment the Duke offers Isabella is his declaration of his service to her, which could be interpreted in the romantic Petrarchan tradition. However, the Duke's service to Isabella could have been in reference to his position as her sovereign and his duties to her as her lawful prince.

Both the Duke's proposal and Isabella's subsequent silence are ambiguous, and no clue in the text is given

as to Isabella's reaction. The silence can be figured as her response, with Isabella using monastic silence as a form of resistance. Or Isabella may be merely deliberating, or even still perhaps the Duke is so caught up in his speech that he has not yet given her an opening to respond. Or perhaps Isabella dramatically swoons with delight at the proposal. The tone of the scene is up to the dramatic choices of each acting company that performs it, and whatever direction the scene is taken serves a powerful guide for the interpretation of the entire play and its character's motivations.

A proposal motivated purely by love, however, seems out of place in the play, which revolves around reputation and public opinion in regards to sex far more than actual sex. The Duke wraps up the play by ordering the marriages of Claudio, Lucio, and Angelo to the women they have unlawfully slept with. The Duke describes these marriages as a form of recompense to the wronged women and a way to force men to take responsibility, as well as a measure to repair the unchaste women's reputations.

Once such ruined woman the Duke seeks to validate through marriage is Mariana. When the Duke announces he still intends to execute Angelo after Angelo and Mariana's wedding, Mariana sues for Angelo's life and declares "I hope you will not mock me with a husband!" (5.1.409). The Duke responds by stating that marriage was only intended to "safeguard" her "honour," because the premarital sex they had might have "choked" her "good to come," (5.1.411-413). The Duke goes on to say Mariana's short-lived marriage to Angelo would help to "buy" her "a better husband," (5.1.417). This reveals that his concern was never the passionate love Mariana felt for Angelo, and he reinforces his pragmatic viewpoint when he declares that she ought to "never crave him," representing the severing of emotional love as a simple task (5.1.418). The Duke asserts that his bosom was never pierced by the dribbling dart of love in the beginning of the play, and while many acting company's have decided to imbue the last scene of the play with the Duke's romantic sentiments, perhaps this cold sentiment holds true to the end.

The Duke firmly illustrates his concern with correcting past sexual misdeeds and ruined reputations through marriage. In his review of a performance of the play for The Shakespeare Quarterly, Michael Friedman asserts that this is the Duke's motivation for his proposal. The Duke conceived the plot that required Isabella to ruin her reputation by publicly declaring herself unchaste, and this is symbolically akin to the way Claudio, Lucio, and Angelo besmirched their lover's reputations. The Duke's proposal of marriage can be interpreted as a way to repair Isabella's reputation and recompense her, identical to his will force Claudio, Lucio, and Angelo to marry their respective lovers as reparation (454-64).

The untraditional figuration of love and servitude in Measure for Measure is a stark contrast to the traditional figuration of love in The Tempest, where young Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love at first sight and immediately find themselves in each other's service. Ferdinand says to Isabella, "The very instant that I saw you did / My heart fly to your service" (Tempest 3.1.64-65). Ferdinand represents this romantic service as natural and instantaneous, according to the ideology of Shakespeare's time that love originated from the visual experience of the beloved. Ferdinand makes this speech to Miranda as he performing laborious acts of service for Prospero, forced to be Prospero's servant briefly to aid Prospero's larger scheme. Ferdinand declares that as royalty he would rather have a fly lay eggs in his rotting flesh than bear the undignified service of log-lugging for Prospero. Yet he rationalizes his servitude to Prospero in the name of his heart's service to Miranda, stating it is for her sake he is "this patient log-man" (3.1.67). For Ferdinand, unlike Angelo, servitude in the name of the beloved is something noble and desirable, which renders his ignoble labor for Prospero bearable when he declares it in Miranda's honor. Miranda, unlike Isabella, returns Ferdinand's affections and desires to serve him as well. She first shows this desire to serve by eagerly attempting to assist Ferdinand in bearing the load of the logs (3.1.22). In the same scene, Miranda declares that she wants to be his wife, and tells Ferdinand, "You may deny me, but I'll be your servant / Whether you will or no" (3.1.85-86). Her willing servitude for her beloved, which does not depend on reciprocity, is in perfect accord with the Petrarchan ideal of love. Fortunately for Miranda and Ferdinand, they are delighted to be mutually in one another's service, and their fates in the are play happy ones in accord with traditional ideologies of love and servitude.

The image of love tied to servitude occurs thematically within many of Shakespeare's works, and he represents the Petrarchan ideology of love differently in each. In Measure for Measure, Shakespeare creates great drama by inverting the expectations of the lover/beloved dynamic. In The Tempest, Shakespeare creates a charming account of young love by adhering to the model for love of his time where lovers fall willingly into one another's service at first sight.

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