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The Molloy Student Literary Magazine

Volume 13 (2015-2016)

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Letter from the Editor

The Molloy Student Literary Magazine, sponsored by Molloy College's Office of Student Affairs, is devoted to publishing the best previously unpublished works of prose, poetry, drama, literary review, criticism, and other literary genres, that the Molloy student community has to offer. The journal welcomes submissions, for possible publication, from currently enrolled Molloy students at all levels.

All submitted work will undergo a review process initiated by the Managing Editor prior to a decision being made regarding publication of said work. Given sufficient content, *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine* is published twice annually in Spring and Fall.

Interested contributors from the currently enrolled Molloy student community should send work via e-mail attachment and brief cover letter (including a two-sentence biographical statement) to:
Dr. Damian Ward Hey, Managing Editor, *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine*: dhey@molloy.edu.

Enrolled students who are interested in becoming members of *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine* staff may e-mail letters of inquiry.

Excelsior!

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Due to reasons of space, not all accepted pieces may appear together in the same issue of the magazine. If, for example, a contributor submits multiple pieces and more than one piece is accepted, the Managing Editor reserves the right to choose which piece is included in the current issue. Accepted items that do not appear in the current issue may appear in an upcoming issue.

All decisions made by the Managing Editor regarding publication or non-publication of any particular piece or pieces are final.

The Molloy Student Literary Magazine

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Inspired Works Contest Winners

Emily Cruz
The Questions

(1st Place, The Molloy Common Reading Program
Inspired Works Contest)

Tell me I am no more than the mere color of my skin?
Do we not all have the same heartbeat within?
Are we not all sons and daughters from our mother's womb?
Will we not all one day return to our final resting place, the tomb?
Have you ever cried?
So have I
Have you ever felt lonely?
So have I
Have you ever loved deeply?
So have I
Then explain to me, why are we different?
I have hopes and fears just like you
Yet I am treated
As though I am less than human
As though I don't have a mind that wants to be freed from hatred
As though I don't have a heart that is only seeking love and comfort
Do you not understand that our colors may be different but our bodies
are the same?
Do you not know that I am you and you are me?
We are one
Can you not see that our colors are different but our spirits are the
same,
Both searching for some peace in this world?
I am more than this outer shell in which I live
I am more than the shackles that have entangled me
I am more than the words of contempt that have been whispered
in my ear
And I am infinitely more than the bondage that has consumed my life
So then, who am I?

See, I am a blazing fire that will not be extinguished
I am a mighty tower that cannot be shaken
I am a vibrant spark that has not been dulled
by the obstacles I have faced
And I am a tree that has remained rooted after the storms of life

So tell me once again, Am I simply the color of my skin?
Do I not deserve to freely live?

Chloe Chappa

An Analysis of the Effectiveness of the Non-Violent Civil Rights Movement

(2nd Place, The Molloy Common Reading Program Inspired Works Contest)

When discussing the Civil Rights Era as a whole, it is easy for one to say that the non-violent movement was successful on its own. After all, many of the names that are written in history textbooks decades later were a part of the peaceful side of the movement: Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, Rosa Parks. Thus, it is easy to neglect Malcom X and the Black Panther Party's importance in the violent part of the movement – which is a momentous error because, from an historical perspective, neither part of the Civil Rights Movement, violent or non-violent, would be possible without the other.

While John Lewis was an adamant proponent of the non-violent movement towards the Civil Rights Act, even he gives due credit to those who fought for the same cause with violence, such as Malcom X (*March*). One must have respect for the work that those protestors did even if one does not agree with them, purely because they gained attention and achieved results. Going back to the very beginning of the Civil Rights movement, it is clear that one of the major events to 'set the wheel turning' so to speak, was the murder of Emmett Till. Emmet Till was a fourteen-year-old boy from Chicago who, while visiting relatives from Mississippi, whistled at a white woman. He was beaten so badly before his death that the murderers were set free on the account that Till's body was unidentifiable. This act of atrocious violence was nationwide

news. And it was this very act of violence that acted as the straw that broke the camel's back for many African Americans. It created a conscious need for change, setting up the perfect opportunity for the beginning of an era. Violence, regardless of which side it came from, gained results for Civil Rights protestors.

Just as violence began the need for a movement, it became a means to an end for that era. July of 1967 was riddled with violence. Race riots had already erupted in Los Angeles, and were now beginning in Newark and Detroit. These riots were broadcast throughout the country. The violence was intriguing and engaging to the American people. It forced the government to fix corrupt policies and to take action instead of remaining passive and ignoring the injustices people faced every day. These riots, although they only lasted for a few days each, combined with another violent event in April of the next year to create a perfect storm. The gruesome riots and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1968. While some may argue that this is nowhere near the end of the Civil Rights Movement – and I would agree – this act is the last piece of national legislation regarding Civil Rights until the Reagan administration twenty years later, far outside the spectrum of the traditional Civil Rights Era. Thus, violence, be it on the side of those against integration and equality or those for it, was the main course of results for the Civil Rights Movement.

While violence produced much of the results seen from the Civil Rights Movement, it could not have stood alone. The non-violent movement is responsible for garnering support for the cause of Civil Rights activists, and more importantly, for putting into perspective the violence that was to ensue. The evidence for this is seen in an event that John Lewis himself was a part of: the Freedom Rides organized by the Congress of

Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), both of which involved John Lewis. On these freedom rides, those participating experienced relentless violence including verbal assaults and physical attacks. But the Freedom Riders maintained their non-violent ways. They resisted silently by not returning the hatred they received. They gained sympathy from the American people who had witnessed the violence they had endured. That sympathy would play a key part in justifying the violent methods to be used later in the movement. Once the protesters had this sympathy, they could use violent tactics without losing their support for 'senseless violence,' because it was now violence for a purpose. It is a very Machiavellian principle, found in Chapter Eight of *The Prince* in which Machiavelli discusses the importance of using cruelty 'well' (*Machiavelli*). The principle is that a ruler, or in this case a movement, must always justify a use of cruelty (violence, in this case) so as not to lose the support of the people. Thus, a movement towards equality that was built solely on violence would have lost the majority of followers and respect. But one with peaceful protests justifying the violence would keep supporters and, moreover, capture the attention of the government. While it is unlikely that the proponents of the civil right movement used a book known for its immoral and sometimes violence endorsing content to justify a non-violent movement, the concept remains the same. Without the peaceful protests, the violent ones would have been ineffective and counterproductive. Thus, it is the non-violent Civil Rights Movement that justified the violence that achieved results and legislation.

To further elaborate this claim, look to two major events of the Civil Rights Era: the Greensboro Four and the Birmingham Church Bombing; one event could be described as a starting point, the other as a turning point. The Greensboro

Four sit-in involved four college students sitting at Woolworth's counter every day – and not being served until six months into their daily protest. This sit-in sparked a fire in students throughout the South to stage their own non-violent protests – mostly sit-ins – many of which were effective, to some degree. They were successful in the fact that they gained an immense amount of support because involvement in them was relatively easy and noncommittal. But while this tactic worked in the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement to make small gains like integrating individual businesses and start a movement going, it would not have worked near the end of the movement to gain lasting results. The Greensboro Four's non-violence would have petered out in effectiveness. Thus, this is a starting point, a non-violent movement focused on garnering as much support as possible with very little legislative or drastic changes as a result.

However, events such as those surrounding the Birmingham Four would shape the latter half of the movement. While attending Sunday school, four young black girls were killed when a bomb planted by the Ku Klux Klan exploded at their Baptist Church (“About the Birmingham Church Bombing”). The riots that ensued in Birmingham caused the senseless death of two other youths. But this violence would lead to legislation. It would lead to change. Not six months after the bombing, the Twenty-Fourth Amendment was passed, abolishing poll taxes that had prevented African Americans from voting for decades. The Birmingham Church Bombing and its subsequent riots show the turning point in the Civil Rights Movement. As the movement shifted from non-violent boycotts and sit-ins to riots and bombings, the results of each event shifted from gaining support of the people to gaining the support of the government. This pattern of peaceful protest in the beginning justifying violence in the end characterizes the

Civil Rights Era. Without the non-violent protests to set off a spark the movement would not have begun, nor would it have gained the following that it did. But, without the violence towards the end of the era, the entire movement would have nothing to show for its years of effort.

Like Yin and Yang, the Civil Rights Movement had a specific balance. Had it been a movement made purely of non-violent methods, no lasting results would have been achieved, but had the opposite occurred the movement would have been shut down and not respected due to senseless brutality. Luckily, the movement created was neither of those things. It garnered support through non-violent means and used those means to justify the ‘necessary’ violence that would achieve results. One side would not have been successful without the other, and it is that fact that has led us to where we are today, decades away from poll taxes and segregation but still far from “not [being] judged by the color of [our] skin but by the content of [our] character” (From the “I Have a Dream...” speech by Martin Luther King, Jr.). So, as we stand on the cusp of a new era of fighting for social equality, I ask the young leaders of our new movement, the new John Lewises and Martin Luther Kings to look back on our past. Remember the previous Civil Rights Era. Remember that violence alone will do injustice to your cause and peace alone will accomplish a modicum of what you want to do. It is the combination of the two that will make all the difference. Neither side would have found success without the other.

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Katy Mormino
The Weekend

(3rd Place, The Molloy Common Reading Program
Inspired Works Contest)

I hate Fridays so much that sometimes I get cranky enough to throw things.

I don't know if everyone calls on me because they don't know.

I come to school in the same clothes every day; I just wear them in a different order.

I don't know if everyone calls me dirty because they don't know.

I eat free lunch every day, and I pile the food as high as they'll let me.

I don't know if everyone calls me fatso because they don't know.

I like my time at school most because things are always the same there.

I don't know if everyone calls me smarty-pants because they don't know.

I take my time in the bathroom, so I can wash myself the best I can.

I don't know if everyone calls me smelly because they don't know.

I try to do my homework at school because I don't have a computer to do it on.

I don't know if everyone calls me lazy because they don't know.

I get upset on Friday afternoon when we don't have time to get afternoon snack.

I don't know if everyone calls me whiney because they don't know.

I hope no one sees me sneaking off with the walkers after school.

I don't know if everyone calls me loner because they don't know.

Friday is a difficult day because a lot can happen in a weekend.

Friday, I think about how to arrange my outfit to be different for Monday.

Friday, I dream of my piles of food that I am leaving behind.

Friday, I think about stealing extra books to read even though it means I will have to carry them all weekend

Friday, I dream about restrooms as clean as the schools to wash in.
Friday, I think about finding the closest public library to dry to do my
homework online.
Friday, I dream that it's Monday for school breakfast.
Friday, I think about where I'm going to spend this weekend.

My teacher stops me as the other kids pass by to go to their
Parent-filled homes.

I look up at her and she knows.

She thinks I'm a mean, dirty fatso – a whiney, lazy, smelly,
smarty-pants loner.

I look down at my shoes, old and a little tight, scuffed from walking
the streets all weekend.

She smiles at me and hugs me.

She knows I am not a mean, dirty fatso or a whiney, lazy, smelly,
smarty-pants loner.

She knows I am just a kid like every other kid.

I look up at her and I know she knows I'm homeless.

Literary Criticism

Sammi Messina

“The Yellow Wallpaper”: Mental Health in the 19th Century

Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s famous work, “The Yellow Wallpaper,” is a renowned piece of literature in which the Jane Doe main character slowly descends into madness while trying to heal her fragile temperament under the medical instruction of both her husband and his colleague. As a response to the analysis from readers and critics of her piece that were concerned solely with the main character’s condition instead of the primary points she was trying to get across, Gilman herself explained, “It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being crazy, and it worked” (“Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper”). That said, the main character in Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” is effectively utilized to make a comment upon both mental illness and the treatment of it in late nineteenth century America through the characteristics of her continuously declining mental health throughout the story, the methods of the time that the physicians in her life use to treat her, and the ways that her family both respond to and affect her. The continual degradation of the main character’s mental state despite her husband’s and his colleague’s best efforts as certified medical professionals to help her highlights the lack of understanding regarding both the general treatment and understanding of the mentally ill in the 19th century; and, in turn, the way that her loved ones show their compassion for their suffering family member shows the true lack of understanding and struggle to do so – particularly regarding nervous women – during this time period.

Through the educated perspectives of scholarly writers and analysts such as Jane F. Thraikill, Regina Markell Morantz, and Charles E. Rosenberg, the understanding and treatment of mental health in both nervous women and nervous men in the nineteenth century is actually discussed within its *misunderstanding*. Because of the lack of absolute and accurate medical practices during the time

period, there was a drastic disconnect between how nervous men and nervous women were regarded and treated. Through the writings of Morantz, it is easier to comprehend the expectations of the standard nineteenth-century woman and all of the responsibilities she was in charge of that, should she become unfit to perform, had detrimental consequences both socially and in the home; Rosenberg, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and the U.S. National Library of Medicine, conversely, provide explanations and insight into the actual practices of the time when dealing with nervous patients, including elaborations upon Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell's famous "Rest Cures" and the use of institutionalizations. Gilman herself also comments upon her own personal experiences with neurasthenia as well as how her renowned piece of historical literature ties into the overall regards toward mental health at the time.

In order to understand fully the general response to mental issues in the nineteenth century, it is important to understand the actual mind of the main character in Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," as well as Gilman's inspiration for her traits and temperament. Throughout the story, the main character both describes and indicates various signs of mental illness throughout the story, describing herself as someone diagnosed with a "temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency" that is "not serious" before detailing the specific remedies her physician husband forces upon her, including scheduled prescriptions, ample in an airy space, and little to no social, mental, or physical stimulus. Critics and readers alike have speculated throughout the years that the specific mental disease afflicting the nameless protagonist is neurasthenia; however, in response to the aforementioned commentators, Gilman herself published an article in her own magazine, *The Forerunner*, in October of 1913 explaining both the inspiration for the short story and its relevance to Gilman personally:

For many years I suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to melancholia – and beyond. During about the third year of this trouble I went, in devout faith and some faint stir of hope, to a noted specialist in nervous diseases, the best known in the country. This wise

man put me to bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still-good physique responded so promptly that he concluded there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with solemn advice to 'live as domestic a life as far as possible,' to 'have but two hours' intellectual life a day,' and 'never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again' as long as I lived. This was in 1887. I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over. ("Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper")

Gilman proceeded to write "The Yellow Wallpaper" in only two days' time, three years after recuperating from the ill-advised treatments that had affected her so significantly, and modeled her main character after herself, while the physicians in the story were dually reminiscent of the doctor and his instructions that Gilman had personally been under the care of in 1887 (U.S. National Library of Medicine). However, the mentality and condition of the Jane Doe protagonist in "The Yellow Wallpaper" is not due only to Gilman's personal experience, but also because of the treatment of women in nineteenth century America overall. Gilman believed "...that the nineteenth-century home produced artificial gender distinctions between men's and women's bodies and minds" (Thraillkill), and she wanted to create both a character and a story that highlighted the substantial problems found within the medical practices and treatments that physicians used for nervous women at the time by manifesting a protagonist with traits reminiscent of herself.

The approach to mental illness in the nineteenth century was one of mostly vagueness that gradually progressed into various attempted medical treatments. Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell was one of the most notable and nationally renowned physicians of the time, who was notorious for his "Rest Cure" approaches toward neurasthenia; that said, Dr. Mitchell was also the "noted specialist" Gilman referred to in her aforementioned article in *The Forerunner*, and indirectly referenced his methods by putting her nameless main character through similar treatments that Gilman herself had experienced under his care (U.S. National Library of Medicine). Dr. Mitchell's famous

“Rest Cure” treatments were described as and consisted of the following:

The key elements of the treatment were isolation, complete physical rest, a rich diet of creamy foods, massage, and...complete submission to the authority of the attending physician. All physical and intellectual activity was prohibited. A patient was lifted out of her own social and familial milieu and transported to a neutral environment tended only by a nurse and her doctor. (Thraikill)

The methods of Dr. Mitchell’s almost directly mirror the treatments utilized by the husband and colleague of Gilman’s nameless protagonist towards her in their attempts to heal her temperament. In much the same style as Dr. Mitchell himself, Gilman’s main character describes her treatment regimen by saying, “...I take phosphates or phosphites--whichever it is, and tonics...and air, and...am absolutely forbidden to ‘work’ until I am well again”, in addition to being put up in a spacious--yet isolated--room and being “hardly” allowed “to stir without special direction” (202). Despite her desires to write, read, and/or have a little more general stimulus in her life while she tries to get better, she simply does what is expected of a nineteenth century woman and obeys her husband’s every command, convincing herself that he knows what is best even though she repeatedly mentions that she does not necessarily agree with his methods. During this time period, the distinction between physical and mental health had not yet been clearly discovered; because of that misunderstanding, physicians at the time believed that if the body was able to rest and heal, the mind would, consequently, do exactly the same. One of the most popularized methods of treatment during the nineteenth century also happened to be the more common usage of institutions and, consequently, institutionalizing patients. And while the methods that the main character’s husband and his colleague use--such as isolation, extremely limited mental and physical activity, and scheduled intakes of medicine – in Gilman’s “The Yellow Wallpaper” were not strictly defined as “institutionalizing,” they were common practices that were actively used inside institutions at the time. Charles E. Rosenberg describes the applicability of institutions during

the nineteenth century as thus: “Institutions traditionally seen as expressions of reform and benevolence have increasingly come to be seen as modes of enforcing social control.” During this time period, women were expected to keep up a certain appearance and behavior in order to maintain what had become the “social norm” of the nineteenth century--the wife knew her place and carried out the duties of the family without hesitation, while the men went out and did the “real work” pertinent to providing for their families. So, when a woman became any form of a “nervous” woman at the time, it was more common to belittle the issues and demean their relevance than to create a large social fuss and get her the help she may have needed. In “The Yellow Wallpaper,” it is extremely convenient for the story’s main character to be married to a practicing physician of the time; yet, that also explains why he took her far away from their typical surroundings, including family and friends who would gossip about her failures as a woman, under the guise of worsening her condition rather than risking their reputation worsening. Although modern medicine is now well aware that the treatment of mental health – and physical health, for that matter – is not necessarily as black and white as physicians like Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell and the nineteenth century institution used to believe, that same simplistic ideology that they both encompassed, along with some of its underlying social implications, is what ultimately led the Jane Doe in “The Yellow Wallpaper” to her ultimate demise and impacted Gilman herself so substantially in her own life and wellbeing. After going through Mitchell’s treatments and discovering their negative and stifling effects for herself, Gilman actively decided to make a recovery from her own personal suffering by blending both “the literary *into* the medical, within the nascent discourse of psychotherapeutics” (Thraikill) in order to emphasize the blatant issues regarding the perception and treatment of mental illness in women as opposed to men. Ironically enough, Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell did not actually have any training or background in women’s diseases (Thraikill), further emphasizing the lack of understanding regarding nervous women and their mental health.

Many legitimate mental problems at the time were taken more seriously in nervous men than nervous women due to a false understanding that the standard nineteenth-century man led a much more strenuous and virile lifestyle than the “daily fret and wearisomeness of lives which, passing out of maidenhood, lack those distinct purposes and aims which, in the lives of men, are like the steadying influence of the fly-wheel in an engine” (Thraikill). The main character’s own husband even seems to fall victim to the same mentality, as the nameless narrator is quoted as saying, “John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him.” Since women were perceived as leading more delicate, less troublesome lives than men, any issues they dealt with were handled in a much lighter, somewhat careless way; and, because men were perceived as being able to handle more in their lives, the curative methods prescribed to nervous men that were physically and intellectually active were prohibited for nervous women to utilize due to a misunderstood fear of giving them even more stress than they already had. What was vastly misunderstood, however, was that women at the time had equal--if not more--responsibilities as their male counterparts during the nineteenth century; while the men went out and did the “difficult” and “manly” tasks that had to be done in order to *provide* for their families, women were both expected to and responsible for taking care of everything related to the home without any room for questioning or faltering in order to *maintain* said families. When she is first brought to the new estate she is supposed to rest in, instead of being concerned for her own well-being, the protagonist can only think, “It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way! I mean to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!” (204) as well as fret over not being able to take proper care of her child or even be in the same room as he. Regina Markell Morantz explains the expectations of the nineteenth-century woman as such:

Health reformers...promoted the active assumption by men and women of the responsibility for the own health, the health of their families, the health of society at large. ...Since

colonial times traditional verities had suggested that woman's place was in the home. But women had experienced family, home and work as an integrated, stable whole. The heavy burden of household production and the immediate concern with economic subsistence left them with little time and less inclination to question their duties. ...Good health became a prerequisite to woman's new place in the world.

With all of the responsibilities placed upon the standard woman of the nineteenth century, it was important for her to maintain her health overall in order to be able to successfully carry out all of her tasks on a daily basis. That said, however, whenever a nineteenth century woman was not in a healthy enough mentality to adequately maintain the home and herself in the way she was expected to, there weren't many legitimate opportunities available that could assist her due to that aforementioned lack of seriousness regarding nervous women at the time; and, with the consideration that the main character's husband was one of the previously mentioned health reformers of the nineteenth century, he tended to regard her primarily as his patient, and secondarily as his wife.

The nervous woman in the nineteenth century was a creature regarded with misunderstanding, irrelevance, and insignificance. Mental health during this time period was, overall, poorly understood and vague in its own degree; however, there was a distinct separation between what was perceived as a nervous condition in a man as opposed to a woman that led to inaccurate treatments and overwhelming social pressures, which caused demises similar to the one that the nameless narrator in "The Yellow Wallpaper" faced. Charlotte Perkins Gilman herself nearly experienced a demise of her own health, but instead chose to recognize the fault in the treatments she was receiving under heralded nineteenth century physician Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell and wrote a short story meant to highlight the problems with remedial mental health practices during the time that would later become one of the greatest and most profound pieces of literary history. Gilman was able to overcome her personal battle neurasthenia enough for her to be able to openly emphasize through literature the need for better treatments regarding

mental illness in general by making “an appeal for a sex-neutral medical model, engaging the reader...at the somatic level” (Thraikill).

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Vignettes

Eve Kaczmarczyk

Warped Time

The months, weeks, days, hours, seconds go by. I strain to carry the heavy, bulky luggage uphill for the fifty feet from the car to the line. As I lumber in the heat, beads of sweat drip down the nape of my neck and down my back. I can feel the burn of the judgmental stares from those who arrived just shortly before me. Their eyes follow me but their offers to help are nonexistent. Their silence speaks loudly enough. Determined to be next on line, I quicken my pace. Awkwardly and gracelessly, I push through to finally make it. One, two, three... Tenth on line, not bad. I catch my breath as the line starts to move. The too-tired worker takes my ticket and up the stairs I go. I stare down, careful not to trip from the dizziness I feel at the realization that I am here. The empty sea of navy blue felt chairs shouts out to me. I make my selection and the lucky winner gets to be mine for the next five hours. My busting-at-the-seams backpack is my only companion, filling up the seat beside me. Passengers fill in, but I don't see their faces, just bodies passing by. Eventually the motor roars to life, filling my ears with the all-too-familiar noise. Not soon enough we take off. Slowly at first, then picking up speed, the bus swerves in and out of lanes. I watch as the dashed white lines disappear then reappear as we pass a car going for a leisurely spin. I look out the window, noticing the white clouds that form striations like a tiger's stripes in the sky. The sun radiantly shines through the windshield, blinding passengers. Thoughts pour into my mind as time seems to slow down. The endless conversation with myself occupies me for the hours to come. Could it really have been only two weeks? I was sure it was longer than that. Months, maybe. Marveling, I wonder how time does it. It slows down when we're apart. It's as if it crawls to a sluggish pace, dragging on. Yet time flashes by when we are together. A brilliant moment. And in a burst of a flames, it's gone. What a tricky thing time is. But time goes. And that's one thing that won't change. I count down the hours, so reluctant to pass. Just three

more to go. The scenery flashes by and, as time passes, light fades. The trees form a dark barrier against the even darker sky. The moon, once dull in the background is now bright and center stage. A full moon, how fitting. Whole and strong, the crater in the sky stares back at me, resembling the togetherness I can almost feel. My small yellow iPod on shuffle blasts songs into my mind to distract me from how long I have left to travel. I doze in and out of sleep, jostled every so often by the bumps on the road. Not truly able to focus on resting with my mind racing on what's to come. My pretzel-crossed legs could use a good stretch by the fourth hour. The thought of the initial too tight I've-missed-you hug takes over and my body is shaking. My heart leaps and I await the future. The bright lights blind me as we near the destination. Groans from passengers as they awaken from slumber is heard. Every second closer I hear my heart beat louder and louder till it hurts my chest. I repeatedly check the clock even though it doesn't change. By the fifth look, I've memorized the time, but yet I look a sixth time just to make sure. The anticipation so strong that I'm about to jump out of my seat. As it is I'm stretched almost standing up, craning my neck to see the bus station. The seatbelt stretched to its limit digs into the soft skin around my navel. I'm sure there is a crazed expression apparent on my face, but I could care less. The only thing I care about is the person waiting for me on the other side of the door. After a lifetime has passed, the bus, excruciatingly slow, comes to a stop. The screeching noise leaves my ears as my eyes search the lit building. Searching, searching, face after face. Colors blur past me as my eyes scan and detect the figures. And then I see the person I have been waiting for. A wide smile bursts across my face, straining my cheeks, joy filling my heart. I see the light blue button down shirt, and dark grey dress pants. I see shiny black hair and a brilliant smile. I see him.

Joseph Ostapiuk
A Night on the Subway

I stepped upon the subway train as I usually had at this time of the night, when the populace had grown thin and the countenance of the few who stood vacantly was blank and pensive. The car was empty when I looked down its whole, and at its very end a light sputtered on and off infrequently, like a candle which struggles to cease, but stays alit for what seems like an eternity. As the doors shut, the train began to rattle and rock down the tracks as it normally does when there are no voices to muffle its mechanical clatter. Looking across to the decrepit and murky windows across from my seat, another train rattled beside mine, pressing along the adjacent track with the same loud clamor and veracity; though through its decrepit and murky windows, by chance, I caught the eye of some pale and gentle creature. Her eyes looked painted upon her gentle face, caressed by her gentle hair and her gentle frown. She seemed to be drowned in her own thoughts as she stared emptily to the floor, where some somber dream of what never-was was playing before her eyes. As soon as I had seen her, our trains parted, and her pale and gentle countenance fell quickly into the abyss, seemingly gone from sight forever, as if she had never been there at all. Slowly stopping, my train skittered and screeched to a halt when the doors opened and the distant sound of nothingness crept into the empty car. Slowly, and without sound, an old man, of about seventy, shuffled past the doors and towards the end of the row of seats without ever lending the slightest of glances my way. He wore what seemed to be an old and ragged outfit which had somehow survived forty winters before, and carried with him a heavy burlap blanket which brought with it a heavy musk as he had passed. Lumbering to the corner, he huddled himself upon the seats and drew the blanket over his body in a slow and painful manner. His body never moved in the slightest as his mere breathing seemed to have ceased as the train once again began to hurdle down the tracks. Even in the routine shuffling of the car, his body remained still and

motionless while his frame was completely covered by the burlap blanket. When the train once again skidded to a halt, he remained still and soundless, like a mummified man who had been cold and silent for a thousand years before. Drawing my attention from the mummified man, I once again listened for the distant sound of footsteps walking towards the car, but could hear nothing but the sound of trains rattling down their worn and beaten tracks. Suddenly, a young couple stepped through the doors before they had shut, and sat in the opposite corner of the motionless man. Though they had been facing each other, I never heard a word uttered from their lips as they sat down in the furthest seat from me, absorbed into one another inexorably. As the train once again rattled around the bend, its dirty and smoggy windows let in brief flashes of light which gloomily fell around the pillars the train raced by. As the light flitted through the car, I caught the brief scenes of the lover's smiles passing between one another and the lifeless body of the old man; the loving eyes of the couple and the breathless air of the old man; the clasped hands of the lovers and the dead and frozen countenance of the old man. The train passed through a dark corridor for a few moments when, emerging on the opposite side, I had noticed that the couple was no longer in its seats at the end of the car, and looking towards the motionless man, he too was gone from sight. I stared deeply into where they had sat and just as if they had never been there at all, their seats were vacant, and with their vacancy- a terror of the heart struck my core- a chilling in my bones permeated through my body. "Had I dreamt them all along?" The train rattled and screeched to a halt when the doors opened to the long and empty terminal. Staring at the door with a shiver down my spine- a desperation in my eyes- its passageway void and endless fixated my gaze entirely and without distraction. Suddenly, they shut, and with a sigh of relief, I settled back into my chair- when looking to my opposite side- a man sat stared blankly at windows across from him. Nearly falling from my seat, I tried to exit the train when it once again began to move. Turning wildly around, I noticed the man had too disappeared from his seat, and I once again sat down in my seat as the train rattled around the bend. As it skittered to a halt, I thrust myself from its

opening and hurried to the stairs from the subway. Without looking back, I ran up the steps and thought to myself, “What peculiar people ride the subway at this time of night.”

Taylor Windle

One Response Never Given

There once was a young girl, and she was going for her Sunday walk in a park. She was absolutely beautiful inside and out, and she had such a strong, positive energy about her that was infectious to all those she came in contact with. She saw the world for all of its beauty and goodness and strove to only release good back into the seemingly harmless environment in which she lived. People would sometimes take advantage of this girl's kindness, but she didn't mind. She saw herself as someone strong enough to handle the cruelty because she thought that these people had a right to relieve these feelings, using her for as the dumping ground in the process. She was truly a people's person.

On this particular day, the young girl was walking somewhere and she was stopped. She was stopped by an older woman, kind in appearance, who inquired if she could share a moment or two with the young girl to ask her a question. Naturally, the young girl responded, "Of course!" and went to sit down on a nearby park bench with the elder woman. They sat and chatted for a bit, doing the usual introductions strangers do when first meeting, and then the older woman said:

"I'm going to ask you a question now and I want you to answer as truthfully as you possibly can. Take as long as you need to answer and list as many things as you need to. Can you name all the things that you love most in this world?"

No one had ever asked the girl this question so she took a moment to sit in silence and reflect.

The girl thought about the physical world surrounding her first. She thought about how much she adores the smell of rain, how much she loves falling asleep while basking in the sunlight, taking long drives to view points or look outs and just being able to take in all the beauty our planet has to offer. Then she thought about simpler, more personal things like her love for ice cream and getting to curl up

in her warm bed after a cold day. She also thought about how much she enjoys giving people gifts and seeing the smile that spreads across their faces when they open it. She remembered that she absolutely loves writing and receiving letters, she thought about the warm feeling she gets when she gets to catch up with family and friends, and how much she absolutely loves helping others. The girl told all of this to the older woman and, to the girl's surprise, the woman's smile faded.

Every time I ask this question, one response is NEVER given. Now, although all of your answers are very touching, honest, and true, you are leaving out the one thing you should love most of all." She lifted her hand and placing it on my shoulder said, "you. You must love yourself. Your love for all of the wonderful things you listed off to me will never reach its full potential until you learn to love yourself. Love yourself darling, learn to love yourself first" and with that, the old woman stood up and walked away leaving the young girl sitting on that park bench somewhere in a park.

Poetry

Matchbox Memories

Caitlin Abdo

Little crates huddled in corners
Beside marble badminton tables
Now covered in dust bunnies
That dance on vinyl

And piles of old Vogues with Twiggy
In baby-doll dresses and oversized earrings
Glazed over stories of Elizabeth Taylor
And her most recent lover – Richard Burton, I believe

They're stuck together by dried soda pop
And seventy decades of memories
Just beneath a white pane window
Where she sits in his old chair

Watching time pass
And mold grow
And lilacs bloom
And rot

And children fall
And cry
And bleed
And heal

But mostly she watches the fawn
Wiggle in and out of the tree line
That sits forty feet from her
And she reminds herself

Of the things she can still remember
Like the old match box cars
And how he raced them by the deli
Before the automobile became a commodity

And she remembers all the things she did in those forty feet
Between civilization and nature
When her legs still loved her
And carried her from place to place

Before time and glaucoma
Had drained the salt and sight from her eyes
When she could still cry for sorrow and loss
Now the most familiar emotions

As her rusted walker scrapes the wood floors
Until they resemble her own wrinkles
And talk to one another
Telling different sides of the same stories

Theresa Mary Bissex

Everyday Love

I fall in love every day.

With the morning sunrise that brings new adventures –
the glorious daily epics, the grand endless duties.

We all have our Odysseys.

Each day we may become Giant-slayers, if we have the stomach for
it.

I fall in love every day.

With the hearth-joy of a shared breakfast –
the warm amber smell of tea, the warmth of hearts beating together.
The wisest words are spoken.

Laughter acts as a red herring to the crumbs that sneak beneath the
blankets.

I fall in love every day.

With the stories of strangers whose voices I never hear –
laughter is composed on one, a lifeless canvas envelopes another.
Their eyes hold volumes.

The scents of perfume and coffee bounce against each other, like this
jungle of personalities.

I fall in love every day.

With the smear of ink on a child's crumpled masterpiece –
his eyes glisten, his cheeks tint, his voice lilts inquiringly.

I truthfully say it's beautiful.

He presents one of the most complex and wonderful mysteries.

I fall in love every day.

With the pristine sanctity of a voice –
speaking the soul's language, spanning the limits of time.

Melody returns to its Bestower.

Flying on the wings of Echo, the voice sows joy.

I fall in love every day.
With our beautiful imperfections –
the wrinkle, the blemish, the crooked smile, the quirky gait.
They announce our uniqueness.
Yet they are invisible, unjudged by eyes of charity.

I fall in love every day.
With the happiness of friends –
the unparalleled, unselfish joy of kindred souls.
Their laughter makes the air glow.
We share our hearts; we are stripped of insecurity.

I fall in love every day.
With the thrill of pure romance –
the warmth of a helping hand, the scent of a close-by strength, the
comic curl of a grin.
Storybook imaginings crumble.
They are surpassed by true thoughts shared by soulmates.

I fall in love every day.
With the prosaic trials that bring joy if we let them –
the helpless heartache, the familiar frustrations.
Tears are unreasoning, but pain is its own translator.
The thorns make the roses all the more beautiful.

I fall in love every day.
With the glorious intricacies of human nature –
the faces of strangers, the steadfastness of friends, the selfless love,
the liberating sorrow.
They are plot points in a story that has never been told and never will
be again.
Each life is extraordinary, unprecedented, and irreplaceable.

This is love as it was meant to be.

Helen Daly
Soul-Searching

Today was dark and your pictures were gone,
And my memory failed with your image;
It seems time and space ran to an unspoken place,
And left me to grieve without visage.
The tears they just come because that's what they do
And my heart still feels like it is breaking;
The pain in my chest is like a noble arrest,
Until I understand it's of your making.
But no one believes it; they just can't conceive it,
The unknown is enveloped with fear;
If only they knew what this spirit has been though
To pierce the thin wall of the "Here."
The present it is – to the past and it gives,
Some souls recognition of the wrath;
That we feel on this earth, when death comes to curse
Our hearts so deeply entwined 'til the last.
Some will deny it and many can't buy it,
But when it's quiet, you may hear your name whispered,
And believe it's a mirage, an auditory barrage;
An un-validated spirit's existence.
For we know when it's true and will attest without a clue,
The essence of those that our hearts have allowed;
Until comes the day, above all earthly dismay,
We meet on the other side of the lightened shroud.
When those bumps in the night, or a side-glance brings fright,
Or, the technology is newly amiss
I know it is you, just trying to come through,
Your soul's rendition of a kiss <3

Helen Daly
Swan Song of a Soul

Some days i don't know if i'll go,
But i don't know how she can stay
The heat is too hot and the pain too wrenching
As it melts my soul away

To draw a breath and then think of death
Is a strange idea to relate
For how can one, who cannot overcome
Inspire within such a state

And the happy days, seem so far away,
When there is laughter that veils a frown
It's funny to me, that a smile of glee,
Can cover a mask of down

And i've thought of the ways, and it turns into days
When i considers the options that be,
But i don't take a step, lest i prematurely be met
With the reapers grasp upon me.

Sure, i go and i talk, and i relate all the pain
Which goes back to my childhood days
There was something amiss, in a whirlwind that persists
Which held my happiness at bay.

And i turned to chemical comfort, after trying to stuff
All the sadness that was inside
And it robbed me of life, after years of strife
And i continued on the painful ride

Anything was better, sure any drug could fetter
A different me to show the world
As if i was acceptable, or worthy or credible
To be part of their lives, unfurled

Well, it sometimes gets better, then clouds up, seems forever
The me that i see in the glass
If only i could love her, embrace the soul above her
i might save this little girl from the past

I cannot speak to what the future holds
But i do so wish i could know ...
what becomes of the past in tomorrow's looking glass
Is only as the wind blows ...

And she mustered her courage, battened down not to perish
And saw the storm through to the last ...
She learned that the beauty she could now see through the pain
Was her soul's swan song of the past ...

Alyssa Gutierrez
A Long Summer in Denmark

It was a long summer in Denmark, on the Jutland peninsula
Under the cerulean sky, my city shoes acquainted with soil
As they followed a sleepy village road, it was Havrisvej
There sat the Pedersens' long red farmhouse, of sturdy brick
Inside, mahogany wood creaked under wool-covered footsteps
Chevron linens spread across the children's beds, preserved in time
but the children had long since grown and gone away

My leather jacket was soon replaced by a practical barn coat
A young man took my hand, and he was much taller than I
He guided me across the fields, sharing his life and memories
And the swallows nest, a secret tucked away in the tool shed
Tall grass danced, dotted with blue flowers, with each wind gust
And the white mare retreated to her stable at evening's arrival,
Each of those sunsets bringing the wheat closer to harvest

The stillness of the farm acted with its own resounding force
We draped old quilts over ourselves, as the sky faded to black
There was no light, but the focused beam of the moon
There was no sound, but the symphony of crickets
I imagined the forest nearby must be alive and well in the night
I pulled the quilt a bit further up to my chin, for protection
From the cold (and maybe I had a tiny fear of wolves)

I awoke to the breeze on my face, like a sweet mother's touch
I had my hand in the young man's, sharing my life and memories
We pushed our way through the tall grass, as the sun peaked
It struck me, a mixture of childlike wonder, and mature readiness

(Why did I feel like I was at home, in such a foreign place?)
I felt a wholeness, comfort radiating through my woven fingers
Love

It was a long summer in Denmark, on the Jutland peninsula, I was in
love

Eve Kaczmarczyk

Distance

They say distance makes the heart grow fonder
And so it is true
Ah yes the heart, which pulses and pounds as it yearns for you
The core of the soul, the almighty blood-pumping, life-giving core
Each beat, whispering your name
The red blood deliberately rushes through each artery
Delivering oxygen to the body to sustain life
But the warm crimson blood is cold without you here
Each cell carrying a piece of you with it
The heart swells with affection and appreciation
The heart is absorbed with desire and devotion
As the distance lengthens, the heart grows larger and larger with love
for you
Love to share with you

But what about the rest of you?
What about the lips that welcome yours?
Soft lips that are deserted, without yours brushing mine
Distance makes the lips go dry.
What about the eyes that lock your gaze?
Brown eyes, which search for you in everyone
Distance makes the eyes disappointed.
What about the stomach that fills of food when we cook together?
The stomach that shrinks, deprived of the meals we share
Distance makes the stomach empty.
What about the fingers that link me to you?
Delicate fingers which are bare, robbed of yours laced through mine
Distance makes the fingers unprotected.
What about the hands that are meant to clasp yours?
Fragile hands which are cold, parted from yours to hold onto
Distance makes the hands grow numb.

What about the arms that embrace you daily?
Graceful arms that form a hollow circle, without your chest
Distance makes the arms grow weaker.
What about the legs that walk with you for miles?
Strong, muscular legs that no longer have a companion
Distance makes the legs feel lost.
So what about the rest of you?
Distance makes the rest of you feel abandoned and aching
Distance makes the rest of you lonely.

Eve Kaczmarczyk
The (Un)Lucky Clover

I am nothing but a meager clover.
Every day I pray the wind won't knock me over.
I am a clover, green and growing.
Please be careful with the rocks you are throwing!
I am a clover, thin and short.
My tiny stem offers all my support.
I am a clover, delicate and fragile.
I suppose you can say I'm not that agile.
I am a clover that they say brings good luck.
Well I'd say you'd have better luck with a duck!
I am a clover, but I am not lucky.
And if you try to eat me, I will taste yucky.
I am a clover, but I don't want to be found.
In fact, please leave me in the ground.
In the ground where the green grass sways.
I love to feel when the strong wind plays.
Powerful. It blows and blows still yet I hide.
I could really use more flowers by my side.
I am a coward. Afraid of being found.
Yes, there are tons of pretty flowers around.
Let me be. Oh please leave me.
Go look for something next to me!
Spare me from your long, hard quest.
I really don't like to be stressed!
I am not lucky I swear.
So please leave and take care!
I just want to be left alone, and not have to worry.
And I don't want to be taken in a hurry.
This is my home, I like it here.
Please don't let me disappear!
Here, where the soil is moist and the sun always shines.

I would really hate to be confined.
Here, where I see the flies and bees buzz by.
I just want to look up at the bright blue sky.
Here, where the clouds gaze down upon me.
I hope from down here I can still bring you glee!
I conceal myself in the green grass that towers over me.
Praying I am not plucked free.
I wait anchored in dirt every day.
And still I have not been taken away.
I thank you for letting me stay stuck.
I promise you, I will not bring you luck.

Joseph Ostapiuk

I Fell in Love

I fell in love when you left
With your farewell kiss still upon my lips

I fell in love with your disappearance
The night caressed me in the dark

It was the moon's crooked smile
That mocked me as it slipped
Across its starry throne

I fell in love with the ashen colored sky
And the ruins of the temples of Aphrodite

I fell in love with the nightingale
And his sacred saddened song

But even his voice sinks in me
Like a silent
sinking stone

I fell in love with the silence
So I could forget
How long these nights get
Without you

Joseph Ostapiuk
Midnight Rosemary

I know how this goes
I won't let the moon deceive me

Because the night's not playing Beethoven
And the stars just aren't aligned

The rose stands shivering in the distance
And the streets are all vacant

There's this absent call in the wind
Where your voice should be

I know how this goes
I'm just another cigarette of yours
That dies in the rain

I'm just an empty ember
Who's lost his flame

And perhaps I'll last a moment on your lips
Or an hour, just the same

But still I'm here
staring at your windowsill
And I just can't help yearning for a glimpse
Of your grace so pure and still

Because these warm nights revolve around you
And these tired eyes are lost without you

I know I could never rise to the occasion in your eyes
It's just another matter I could never master

It's just I never could decide
What it was I was after

And now, too soon, the mysterious flames of morning
Come rising over the horizon

And each phosphorescent moment
Tears through the fragile dome of night

The stars go disappearing
And the voices go laughing in the distance

As I stand here like a knight without his token
Searching past the children playing in the sun

Where I go following
Another night that's gone

Lauren Spotkov

Changes

The world is ever changing.

New ideas are discovered, and change comes with them.

These ideas get people to think differently. Be different and sometimes become better.

Things change, and people change too.

We tend not to realize these changes in our lives until after they happen or until the seasons change, and sometimes we miss that too if we are not paying attention.

For the most part, we look back just to realize that everything is different and miss everything in between.

It is a rarity that we have moments that we know while they're happening that we will remember them forever.

That usually happens after the fact, and we are left wishing that we appreciated the time more and the people that we spent our time with more.

Except we tend to forget that our experiences are shaped by who we experience them with.

Those people are the ones that impact us and sometimes change the way we see things.

We look at life from a different view.

We develop new ideas and new ways of looking at things.

Because in the end, even though the world is constantly changing, it changes because we do.

We become different people, in a different world because we see it in a different way.

In the end, it is not because the world changed it's because we did and because people change people, and that is the secret of it all.

Experimental Fiction

Sammi Messina
A World on Fire

The world was on fire.
Just his world exclusively –
just enough to burn.

She started the fire;
she bought matches with “Hello”,
and lit them with “Bye.”

It started off warm,
Her smile as bright as a flame –
his, tinder for it.

She sparked within him
a near arsen-like passion,
consuming them both;

But she, however,
merely fanned the growing flames
apathetically.

His love always seemed
to burn much brighter than hers;
yet, he never saw.

Though all but he could
see the disconnect,
the sparks blinded him.

She brought her guards, though,
shielding herself from the heat
and remaining cold.

Her cold fostered chills,
freezing the home around his
one, lowly fireplace.

And despite how hot
he had strived to burn for her,
he couldn't melt her.

Her frost overtook
him; she extinguished his flame
with a stray wind gust.

She found her solace
in a much brighter bonfire,
turning his to ash.

His own fire then roared
in response; his flames singeing
his whole universe.

He could only see
red; shimmering and violent
with burning hot rage.

Yet in his fury,
he couldn't distinguish the
world's extremities;

His world was on fire;
just his world exclusively,
but, he had frozen.

