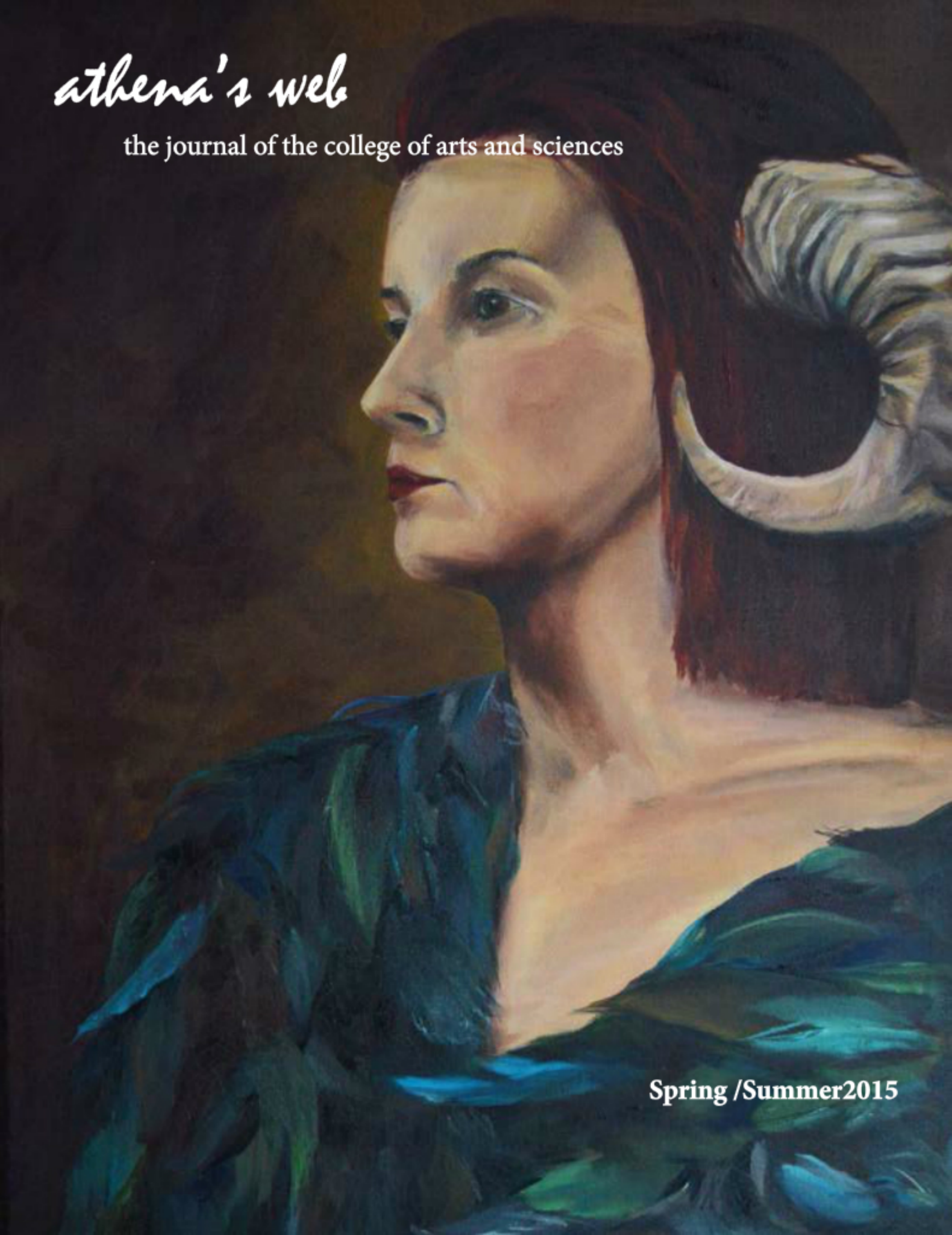


athena's web

the journal of the college of arts and sciences



Spring /Summer2015

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journal of the college of arts and sciences

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Athena's Web is an academic journal dedicated to publishing outstanding student work in the arts and sciences. The journal is sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences of Athens State University. Arts and Sciences students (including secondary education majors) are encouraged to submit academic and creative work to the editors for consideration.

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Cover page art by Brooke Alexander.
Masthead art by Tracy Szappan.
Typeface is Garamond.

Archives of all issues can be found on the appropriate page of the journal's website. The website also contains the submission guidelines, submission procedures, and information on all contests or events sponsored by the journal.

Athena's Web is published once per semester. Submission deadlines for each semester can be found on the homepage of the journal's website. While primarily an online publication, print copies of the journal can be ordered through the Editor's office. Athena's Web is a free and open publication. As such, we do not charge for copies of the journal, but a small printing fee will be charged by the Office of Printing at Athens State University which must be paid upon order.

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News and Announcements

Submissions are currently open for the Fall 2015 issue. Submissions received after the dealines listed below will be considered for the Fall 2015 issue.

November 30, 2015

Submission deadline for the Fall 2015 issue.

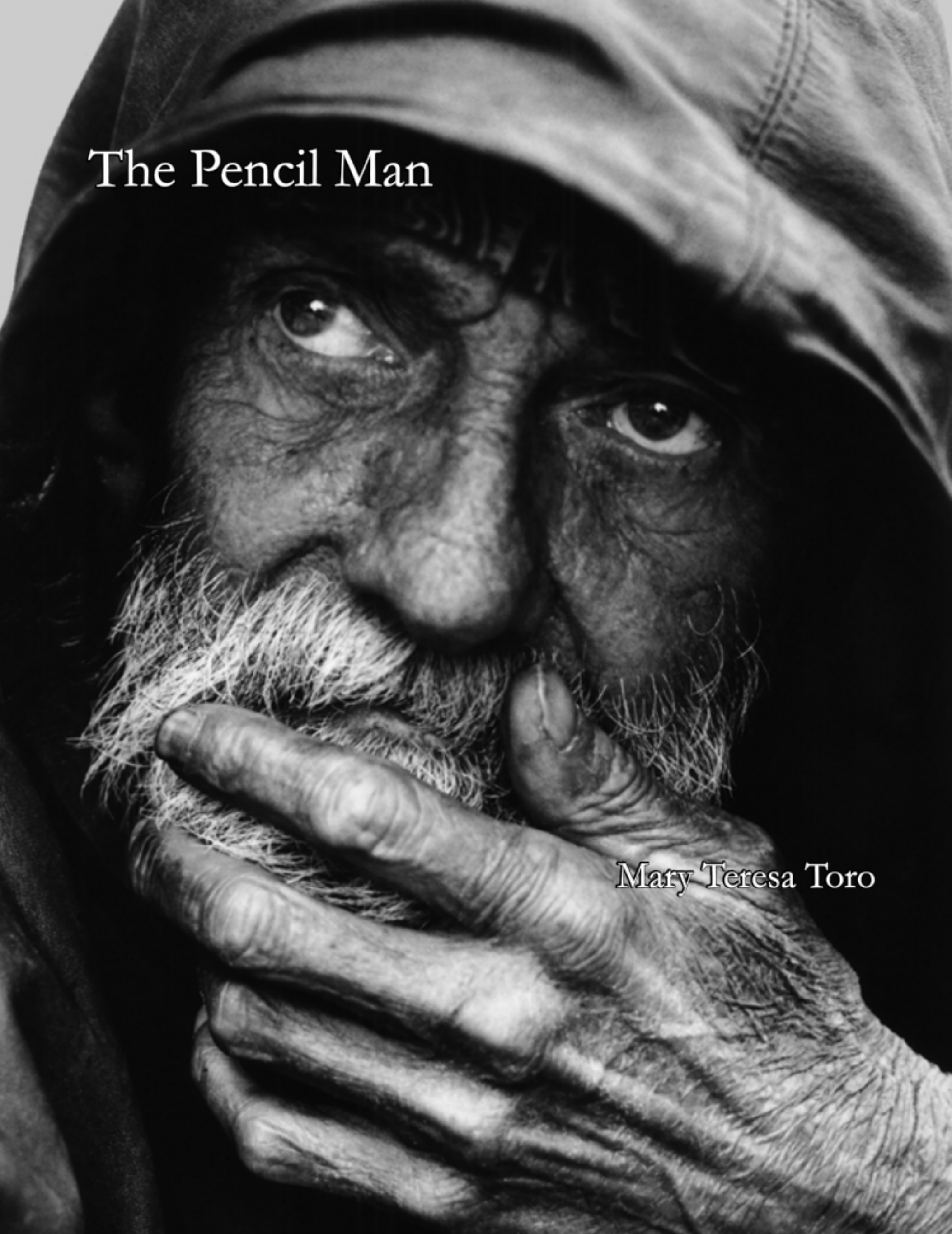
December 7, 2015

Release date for the Fall 2015 issue (online version).

December 14, 2015

Tentative release date for the Fall 2015 issue print run.

Note that the the above dates can be changed at the discretion of the Editor and the Editor-in-Chief. Changes will be announced on the News and Announcements section of the journal's website.



The Pencil Man

Mary Teresa Toro

I am five...

The man with vacant eyes and accordion
sits on a folding stool in front of
the department store,
his harnessed service dog alert beside him.
On the ground at the man's feet
are a cup full of pencils and a cigar box
full of change and a few dollar bills.

He will play you a tune or sell you a pencil,
taking on faith how much you pay.
The sidewalks are busy.
People drop coins and bills in the box
without taking pencils or stopping to listen.

The man and his clothes are clean,
his shoes shined.
He smells of Old Spice.
The dog is plump and healthy.

I am ten...

The man sits on the sidewalk, legs splayed,
a few pencils in the cup, a few coins in the box,
the accordion is gone.

His shirt and pants are dirty, dribbled with his last meal;
the dog lies next to him, wearily watching
the sporadic feet passing by his nose.
The man dozes off, snores; the dog sighs and closes his
eyes.

I am twelve...

The man lies on the sidewalk, huddled against the
building wall
the skinny dog beside him, its grizzled snout resting
on his worn shoes.
His pants are torn and dirty,
his shirt is stained and wrinkled.
He reeks of sweat and misfortune.

Infrequent passers-by veer away from them.
There is no pencil cup,
the cigar box is battered and empty.

I am fifteen...

The man and dog are gone.
I wonder what happened to the dog.

I am sixty...

I wonder what happened to the man.

He sits and he stares.
A smile plays on his lips as he watches the children play.
His small, gentle frame still, his legs crossed.
The familiar smell of old spice mixes
with the never ending cigarette smoke
wafting and swirling around.
The edges of his ever-graying hair
peek out from under the cap
advertising some car part store or deer processing shop.
And he sits. Content.
Humming or whistling some made up tune.
His life goes on around him.

The Quiet Man



Bridgette Pylant

Pain, enough to end you,
Lies - behind this perfect smile.
This upward curve I crafted long ago
to mask these crooked thirsty fangs.

This smile - if let go,
would disintegrate you,
turn me to stone.

These secondhand gloves
from a servant princess hide
Claws eagerly extended to punish any
that dare approach - for Your sins!

This poison I frequently poise to ingest
at the promise of release from you. . . You!
Prince of Pretenders!
One of more than the stars who've
pulled one over on the princess.
With your 'magic' that maims when the smoke clears.
Frog! Beast in the form of man!

Then You remind me, I'm
'no princess'
- So,
I take off the gloves.
Waste the poison on the pavement.

And I let the smile go.

Pain



Jennifer Bravo

The Return

Kristi Coughlin

What did the wizard say to you?
What wisdom did he impart?
Fixing all your problems with a clock shaped heart?
What secrets did he share?
Did he grant your wishes with his matchstick magic?
Did he awe you with his lightning fantastic?
Before he sent you home on a dream, on a cloud of smoke.
There's no place like no place and nothing at all.
Where did the slippers fall?

Did you find what you were looking for?
A lion of a man brave enough to tame the ghosts in your bed?
Strong enough to stop the whirling in your head?
A warrior is what you need.
A lumber jack made of tin to take you in.
His limbs like steely blades so as not to bleed at the strike of an ax.
What did you need?
A man of straw to embrace?
Soft and brainless to forget your mistakes and forgive you once more?
Here at the journey's end what does it mean?
Was it worth fighting for?
The emerald city gleaming green and white in the sun
An empire rusted to destruction
In ruins
Where were you when they needed you?
When the city was under siege?
While they were being turned to stone?
You're a long way from Kansas, a long way from home.
Now you're alone and the city is a tomb.
You are legend here.
The gnome king knows which way the wind will blow you.
Hold on to hopes that you won't land in the deadly desert
Where every living thing turns to dust
You must
Follow the path destroyed.

With the Wheelers on your heels squealing their jeers,
They shout their piercing ear splitting cries
“Dorothy Gail!”
They’re calling for you; they’re counting on you
To fail; to fall once more.
In the end was it worth it; worth fighting for?
Listen to the still small voice inside you whispering the way.
Listen to the still small voice calling your name.
Don’t let them catch you now!
Mombie is crying out from her throne
“Dorothy Gail!”
You’re a long way from Kansas, a long way from home.
Of all the severed heads she collects, your face is the one she wants
She will chase you to the ends of the earth for it.
Run!
Run, like the devil himself is chasing you now.
Don’t let the demons inside weigh you down.
Don’t lose your way or they will catch you and consume you.
Like a fire the smoke will choke out all the beauty and memories of the farm.
Hold it fast; the wizard can’t save you now.
Say the words that will take you back
Where the crickets chirp at dusk
Be forgiven
Remember the words that will return you
The words that will save,
Say them now before it’s much too late.
There is no place like no place and nothing at all.
Where did the slippers fall?

Upstream



Mary Teresa Toro

die
and
eggs
precious
we lay our
destination
arriving at our
until at last
quest for immortality
in our all-consuming
resisting fishermen's lures
avoiding hungry bears
overcoming obstacles
still we forge ahead
in the rapids
upon the rocks
beating ourselves
against the current
swim upstream
we

U
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*In Memory of Dennis Cotbran
1951-2015*

His brothers have come to clean the boat
And make it ready for sale.
To remove the spider's webs and the hornet's nests
To salvage the history of rods and reels stored in the hull well.
To rid it of lost hooks and partial plastic worms,
Dropped and forgotten.
Stripping it of its memories.
This will be no ancestral home to future fishers.
My babes will not lap at the water flowing underneath with their tiny hands
As I did, or as I dreamed they would do
He is too solemn to watch.
In the quiet he sits.
This is the first of the funeral pyres.
The death of a man's dreams.

The Sale Boat

Bridgette Pylant



Lester's New Job

Ben Montgomery



Lester Cornwell, you will wake up.

Doctor Lester Cornwell, the more positive part of Lester's mind reminded him.

No, not anymore. A doctorate doesn't matter at an automobile parts plant.

Lester pushed himself up with great effort. He had slept on his stomach and his pillow was covered in drool. He felt like a mess, but it hardly mattered to him. He even considered skipping his shower, but decided it would make him feel refreshed, at least.

Lester didn't know anything about cars, but had been assured it wouldn't be a problem in his new job. Lester's old job was as a physicist at a small-but-respectable university, before the world ran out of money and decided physicists weren't an expense that needed to be paid. Lester quickly discovered he had almost no other skills, and also found himself extremely grateful to have a job at all. He assumed the plant's human resources department had decided his physics PhD and references from engineers meant he had a degree of technical knowledge, and it was too late to backtrack now. The job market didn't care much for specialized intelligence. What it did have a shortage of was hands. He had hands.

His new job was good pay, he got weekends and evenings off (when overtime wasn't necessary), and the factory was close to his home. He didn't even have to drive; he could get to the factory in ten minutes on a bicycle. Lester rarely exercised, and he loathed this idea, but the pragmatist in him couldn't pass up free transportation.

The first thing Lester was supposed to do when he arrived at the factory for his first shift was to find Mr. Nutby, the supervisor for his sector of the factory. After several people craned their heads in vain and muttering things like "I just saw him..." he was finally pointed toward a very sweaty man with a pencil-thin mustache and a blue polo shirt.

"Name?" Mr. Nutby said with a tone that struck Lester as ever-so-slightly rude.

"Lester."

Mr. Nutby looked irritated. "Last name."

"Oh, Cornwell."

Mr. Nutby smirked, but then quickly straightened his face as if he tried not to smirk, but failed.

"I have two rules," Mr. Nutby said with a tone that was becoming smugger and ruder by the minute. "No music and no talking. Music is distracting and I don't want you all talking about me behind my back."

Lester had nothing to say back. Surely this man did not have this much power. Did every other authoritative figure here simply enable this paranoid behavior? The only sounds in the factory were the hum of machines and the drills and torches used by the workers. It wasn't exactly quiet, but without the spontaneous sounds of life, a brain could quickly tune the mechanical noise out. It might as well have been silent.

Mr. Nutby showed Lester to his station, seated between a thickly bearded man and a heavyset woman. When he sat down he discovered his seat faced a gray wall, which would have been bleak if not for the large, three-handed clock hanging directly in his line of sight. He also found a set of simple instructions for constructing his part of the engine on his workspace, and no sooner had he read them than the bearded man sent a half finished engine down the rollers to Lester's station. Lester attached his piece with relative ease and a sense of relief.

Good, he thought. I can do this.

Lester could not help but see the clock. It did not bother him at first, but it only took a few hours to master his job, and the true tedium of the work began to dawn on him. The seconds were agonizing. He ached for his laboratory.

But, the money was good, the hours were good, and the location was good. He would endure.

After two hours, Lester and the rest of the workers went on a ten-minute break, but breaks were worse than working because of the silence rule. Employees just sat at their stations, staring ahead quietly. Lester almost shuddered at the surrealism, but the other workers' empty eyes led him to wonder if he was the only one who was

disconcerted.

Two more agonizing hours went by, then lunchtime. Lester sat alone in the cafeteria. He tried desperately to think about something, but the four hours of monotony had sapped his creativity. All he could do was discreetly watch the other employees in the cafeteria. He could hear a few conversations here and there, but for the most part the room had an unsettling quiet atmosphere, as if years of sitting in Mr. Nutby's Zone of Silence had trained them never to speak.

Lester returned to his workstation after finishing his lunch. Two more hours went by, then another very non-relaxing break. He thought about whispering to the employees sitting on either side of him, but they had a strange un-approachability about them that shook Lester. He wondered how long it would be until he was the same.

Lester used to attend church with his parents when he was a child. When the pastor would dismiss the congregation, they would suddenly burst into conversation, as if it had been swelling up inside them. But, when the bell buzzed in the factory to end the work day, the only sound was the scuffling of chairs on the factory floor. Even when the workers walked outside to their cars and bikes, they were totally silent.

Do they even know each others' names?

Lester did not usually watch television, but the thought of reading exhausted him. He cooked himself a simple dinner, and slumped into an easy chair. Lester realized he already hated his job. But, the money, hours, and location were all good. He would not complain. He dreamed about silence, and woke feeling as if he had not slept at all.

Lester arrived at work, plopped dejectedly into his station and regarded the clock with disdain. Perhaps he could turn an enemy into an ally, he thought. Lester tried measuring how much time it took to attach his piece onto each engine. He noted the time on the clock and began welding his first piece. After he was done he noted the time again. After finishing a few pieces, he discovered the average time was almost exactly ten minutes. Perhaps measuring his day in ten minute "units" would be easier than simply watching the clock.

It helped immensely; his new method of measuring time was almost like a game, and anything remotely resembling entertainment was invaluable.

After lunch, however, Lester found his game was no longer fun. It now seemed just as tedious as his work, and he toiled the last four hours in the familiar crawling pace of his first day until the bell finally made its horrible buzzing sound.

Lester went home again and watched more television. He hoped the exhaustion he felt would pass soon and that he would have the energy to read again. He usually made friends in his first couple of days of work, but with Mr. Nutby's no-talking policy it was impossible. He had not spoken aloud in more than 48 hours.

Lester worked the rest of the week, finally arriving at his first weekend. The factory was open on weekends, and he would have to work them in the future, but he had gotten lucky his first week. His workdays were filled with crushing silence inside of grinding slowness. Time treated him so unfairly. His time at work dragged, his downtime slipped away. The weekend was fleeting, and Lester found himself at the beginning of a new workweek all too soon.

On Monday morning, Lester decided to try his game again. This time, he would make the units of time larger; he spotted an incomplete engine two steps in the assembly line before his, and made a note of it. When the engine arrived at his workstation, he mentally ticked off one time-unit. The larger units made all the difference; time certainly seemed to be going faster. Lunch came and went. When he came back, he tried his game again, thinking about each unit as if it were merely a moment.

At first, he wasn't entirely aware anything was different. But, as he watched the seconds on the clock, he was almost sure he could see them, like tangible things hanging in the air. It was like focusing on a single molecule of water in a stream and watching it travel for miles. He watched this second, his second, as it shimmered in the air around him. It was the most beautiful thing Lester had ever seen.

Black.

White.

Pain.

Pain.

Pain.

Lester could not see anything, but his head ached like he had a hangover. He felt something warm and wet on his eyes. He timidly reached a hand to it. It felt like rough cloth, and when he removed it he realized it was a damp washrag. His eyes adjusted, and he saw a rectangle of light in front of him. He was lying down. Mr. Nutby was also standing over him, accompanied by a woman in hospital scrubs. He explained to Lester in a thick, syrupy voice that he had suddenly passed out on the factory floor, his nose bleeding profusely, and that he would not be receiving pay for the time spent unconscious. He then ordered the nurse to administer an immediate drug test, and left the tiny factory clinic. When Lester passed the test, he thought he saw a shadow of disappointment cross the nurse's face.

Lester was angered by the way Mr. Nutby had treated him. He was certain what had happened to him had been Mr. Nutby's fault. If he'd just let them talk, or listen to music, he might not have been so desperate to make his own entertainment, and whatever happened to him might have been avoided. What *bad* happened to him? One moment he had been working, then *something* happened...and then he woke in the clinic. Lester felt the *something* was immensely significant, but he could not quite grasp the memory.

He did not feel as exhausted that night, probably due to the two-hour nap he'd had in the nurse's clinic. He finally felt like reading and cheerfully picked up his book. His evening slipped away from him, and Lester started his third day.

His work was less exhausting since his incident, although all the more tedious. He tried not to think about the time, and instead focus on his work, but it was a vain effort. The clock would not let him forget. He looked two engines down the assembly line from the place where he sat. He took a deep, calming breath and assured himself that the engine would be sitting in front of him at some point in the future. Oddly, he found himself surprised when it did. He tried again. Looking two engines down, he made a note of it, and then quickly ignored it. It came even faster this time. Each time he tried his game, the engine seemed to arrive at his workstation quicker than the time before. The air around him shimmered again, and a sensation of being waist-deep in a stream enveloped him. He watched engine after engine rush past him, and he was at the end of his workday after what seemed like mere moments. But, at the same time, he found he could remember his whole day as if it had passed by normally; he'd had a ham sandwich for lunch, and the plump woman who sat beside him sneezed during one of his breaks, and nobody blessed her.

Lester tore books down from his shelves that night, flipping madly through pages to try to find something to explain the things that were happening. It was like being back at the university. But, no matter how much he read, he could find no explanation for what he did or how he did it. He was certain he could do it again, although he wondered if he should. It seemed unnatural, or uncommon at the very least. He looked forward to tomorrow for the first time since he started his job.

The next week was so easy, it almost made Lester feel guilty. Each day he sprinted toward his relaxation time in the evening with his new trick. His only regret was that he had nobody to share his new secret with. He'd had a few friends at the university, but everyone fell out of touch when the funding dried up. Plus with the muted communication climate at the factory, he wasn't making any new friends. Even his new-found ability could not grant him that.

Lester also tried, on occasion, to make time go slower in the evenings and on weekends, but he couldn't think of a game to play to get the process moving. He thought he almost had it once, but the technique took so much concentration that he decided that it defeated the purpose of relaxation, and gave it up altogether.

When Lester came into work the morning of his sixth month at the factory, he felt good about himself and his general lot in life. He'd just gotten his first raise, and had already thought of the things he wanted to do with it. He began to concentrate on the clock and the workstation two engines down from his.

Lester instantly knew something was wrong. He was moving fast, as if the stream had swept his feet out from under him and was carrying him helplessly away. He had never found a way to actively stop; he had just relaxed at the end of the day, and felt his perception of time return to normal. He felt panic rise in his chest. Days went by as if they were seconds.

Lester looked around for a way to measure time so he could anchor himself. His first instinct was to read the clock. This worked for a moment but the shimmering of the air made it impossible to read its face. He grabbed the bearded man next to him by the collar.

"Time!" he screamed. Like a chastised child, time behaved itself for a moment. The bearded man looked absolutely terrified.

Lester screamed again, angrier. "*Time!*"

The bearded man looked puzzlingly at the clock, then stammered "10 'til 2."

Lester felt as if he had breached the surface of a stream he was drowning in, gulping breaths. Time stabilized for Lester for a moment, long enough for him to see every person on the factory floor give a startled jump and look at him, but he felt himself slipping again. His head felt like it was going to split open, and he fell into black.

Lester awoke in the same clinic as he did six months ago, with the same woman wearing the same hospital scrubs and the same Mr. Nutby standing over him. Mr. Nutby had a strange, quiet fury about him. With a calm tone and perfect diction, the kind of voice that school principals use to tell students that they are in trouble, Mr. Nutby informed Lester that he was fired, but gave no reason, likely because it was illegal to fire someone for any number of reasons, but perfectly legal to fire someone for *no* reason. Lester was forced to turn over his uniform and badge and shoved out the door before he'd had time to adequately recover.

Lester gripped the handles of his bicycle furiously as he rode home. It was raining.

Because of course it is.

He cursed his time manipulation. If he'd just minded his own business at work, and not mess with things he knew he shouldn't mess with, he'd still have a job. Maybe if he didn't read so much and got out of the house more he wouldn't be so lonely. He might have even made a few friends. Every failure in his life seemed to grow tenfold and gnaw at him.

A brilliant white light blinded Lester. He heard the sickening sound of metal on metal. He felt the front wheel of his bicycle halt suddenly, then twist underneath and disappear. He felt the rest of the bicycle vanish beneath him. He felt weightless, then he felt pain in every part of his body. He was certain he was bleeding out of several deep gashes that had suddenly appeared on him. Lester realized, with a sick lurch in his stomach, that he had collided with an oncoming car and the impact had propelled him through the air.

Lester had had too much time to figure all this. He should have been dead in moments, he thought. He opened his eyes and saw the familiar shimmering of the air. The intensity of the moment must have caused him to slow time to an imperceptible crawl. Since most of the atoms in his body were in stasis, the pain had mostly numbed. It was little comfort since Lester knew that once his perception of time returned to normal, he would die. If the fall to the ground didn't kill him, he would bleed to death quickly.

Lester—Dr. Cornwell—tried to relax and imagined he was a blade on a ceiling fan. He tried to see how fast he was going and where he was at the same time. In his mind, he flew his trajectory over the car many times, trying

to find his position and his velocity at the same time. His scientific instincts screamed at him that this was impossible, but he pressed on. He was here, and he was going this fast. He was there, and he was going that fast.

Lester observed.

He felt his atoms and molecules and subatomic particles stretch apart and dissolve painlessly. Rather, it felt liberating, as if he'd been cramped in a glass box for 40 years. He looked down and saw his bicycle, crumpled under the car that struck him. He did not look with his eyes. He used true sight for the first time. He felt like he was in a river again, but instead of standing still or being swept away, he began to swim.

Lester did not make it far, though, because he saw little upstream. He saw his death, the death that was just moments away.

Using what can only describe as his strength, Lester swam upstream, pain invading every part of him, if there were, indeed, parts to him to feel pain. The pain was different than the pain he felt moments before-- this felt more like a terrible radio signal, torturing him to convince him to turn around and flow the correct way. After what seemed like eons of swimming against the current, Lester found the spot he wanted, and dove in. He felt himself stretch, like his mind was bigger than the size of the echoey chamber in his skull, like it had been his whole life. He felt his mind become as big as Earth, as big as the solar system, as big as the galaxy. He felt every lightning storm on every planet like they were neurons in his brain. He learned so much, and he would remember some, but he would forget so, so much, and that would haunt him.

Lester felt as big as the universe.

Lester felt like the universe.

Lester was the universe.

Lester's alarm clock woke him. He stuck his tongue out at it and rolled over to kiss Ilyssa's cheek and tell her to have a good day at the lab. She replied with a "Myoo tuh."

Lester whistled in the shower and, as he poured a cup of coffee, realized he was going to be late for his first day on his new job if he didn't hurry. He quickened his pace as he walked to the magnet school. The principal (and music teacher), with a calm tone and perfect diction, showed him to his classroom.

His first two classes wouldn't be held today, since they were in an orientation lecture in the auditorium, which would give him time to set up the classroom.

He flipped the switch and looked at the empty tables and large whiteboards. He thought about how he had been sad to leave the lab, but that he felt good about his career choice and his brand new teaching certificate, mostly because of Ilyssa's support. Besides, he'd have a connection to his friends at the lab through Ilyssa.

He couldn't have stayed, though. Not really. He cheated. Even with all he forgot, he knew too much without really earning the knowledge himself. The best thing he could do was to teach younger minds, so that somebody could make the same discoveries using a scientific method.

The Captain of the Nightingale

Vincent Christian



Based on the song "The Flowers of Bermuda" by Stan Rogers.

The sea was calm that day. Small caps of breakers dotted the distance, while great white puffs drifted lazily in the bright blue sky. A morning wasted in watching the water finally paid off, as the form of full, white sails finally distinguished themselves from the camouflage of clouds. "Thomas! Thomas I can see it!" I cried as I scrambled down the stairs, nearly tripping over the long skirts Aunt Elizabeth insisted I always wear.

"You're imagining things again," Thomas snorted, as he climbed the stairs to look through the spyglass himself. Thomas never did believe me. At thirteen, he was the older of the two of us, but despite this, he was neither so tall, nor smart, nor so grown-up as he liked to think.

"I am not imagining it!" I protested. "I saw a ship! And I know it's Papa's this time." I was certain of it too. Just because I'd been mistaken the last two times did not mean that I was wrong now.

Thomas rolled his eyes. "Sure you do, Lizzy," he said clearly doubting me. I wrinkled my nose in annoyance. I hated to be called Lizzy, a fact which my brother knew perfectly well, almost as much as I hated the fact that he never believed me. He bent to peer through the eye piece of the spyglass and asserted, "It's some other merchant ship. Father always flies a red banner from the center mast..." Thomas' voice trailed off as he studied the distant ship a while longer. Finally, he must have seen the streaming scarlet banner, because he hollered at the top of his lungs, "Aunt Elizabeth! Father's coming!" as though the sighting had been all his own. He ran down the stairs, claiming my discovery all the way as he cheated, using his long legs to outpace me.

Aunt Elizabeth, after whom I was named, was at breakfast with Uncle Henry. Aunt Elizabeth was our mother's sister. After Papa had taken Mama to the New World to prepare a home for us, we had come to live with Aunt Elizabeth and her husband Lord Henry. My aunt and uncle were nice enough, but they had only had sons, all of whom were now grown and serving in the Royal Navy. Without a daughter upon whom to lavish her extensive knowledge of proper feminine etiquette, Aunt Elizabeth had spent the months of my visit in the pursuit of molding me into a proper young lady. I found the routine perfectly annoying, but Mama and Papa had instructed Thomas and me to be respectful and obedient to our Aunt and Uncle and I, unlike my rowdy brother, tried my best to be mindful of this.

When Thomas tripped on the stairs, I ran ahead of him to the dining room. I stopped to listen beside the door post, and though I hadn't intended to eavesdrop, overheard the adults' conversation anyway. Aunt Elizabeth, who never held back her opinions, was voicing her thoughts to Uncle Henry. "Well I still can't believe she'd run off to Jamaica like that. As if marrying a German of all people wasn't improper enough! And now to take the children there, away from civilization and well-bred society. Eliza especially is coming along so nicely with her music and drawing; it would be quite a shame to remove her from her education right now. The child is nearly ten years old. That's such a crucial time in the development of a young lady."

"Yes, dear," Uncle Henry replied, without looking up from his paper. Most of the conversations Uncle Henry engaged in were carried on from behind a newspaper.

"To that end, I believe we should try to convince Captain Ehre to let us keep Eliza here so that her improvement might be further developed. Don't you think so, dear?"

Uncle Henry finally folded down his paper, peering at Aunt Elizabeth from over his spectacles with a skeptical look. "We?" he asked.

"Of course, 'we!'" his wife retorted. "Of course you must agree with me."

Captain Ehre, the German my aunt spoke of so disparagingly was, of course, my father. So naturally, thankfully, Uncle replied, "Of course I do not! And even if I did, you'd sooner convince Captain Ehre to leave behind his right leg than you would convince him to leave that little girl." Aunt Elizabeth started to object, but was interrupted by Lord Henry, "Furthermore, even if you managed to achieve the impossible and convince Captain Ehre of this scheme, your sister wouldn't so much allow him to set foot on Jamaican soil without Eliza. No, my love, you

might as well get used to the idea that our nephew and niece will be leaving soon. You'd best make use of the time you have to instill in them what respectability you can manage."

Aunt Elizabeth huffed, intent on punishing Uncle Henry into submission by being intently silent. Silence, however, could have been no more a punishment to Uncle Henry than a tea cake could be to a child. He was perfectly happy to settle back into his paper in peace, until that peace was broken by the clamorous entrance of Thomas, who had caught up. I followed, giving him a shove, as we each scuffled to be the first and loudest to announce that we had seen our father's ship on the horizon. Aunt Elizabeth scolded us down to a more proper tone, and once we had explained everything and begged to go down to the docks to wait for father, she overruled our request, on the grounds that, firstly, we had not yet breakfasted, and secondly, Father's ship would not arrive at the docks before at least mid-day, and finally, the docks were no place for children and it would be most appropriate for us to wait right here for Papa to arrive.

We sat down to breakfast, using the course of the meal to redirect our appeals to our uncle, who was always the easier target. As expected, he was more agreeable. After lunch, the four of us went down to the docks to await Papa's arrival. The shipyards were a bustle of activity. Big men heaved and tied on rigging ropes, while bigger men hefted cargo to and from ships. Uncle reminded us to stay out of the way of the workers. Amidst all of the bustle, I was quite glad to hold tight to Aunt Elizabeth's hand. *The Nightingale* was a large carrack ship, with three masts that supported the sails. She was a beauty, as Papa always said, and my favorite part was the carving of a mermaid that rested above her prow. Aboard, sailors were securing the sails and tying down what seemed to be hundreds of ropes. As they worked, the men sang merrily:

*And it's all for me grog, me jolly, jolly grog
All for me beer and tobacco
Well I spent all me tin on the lassies drinking gin
Across the western ocean I must wander!*

Aunt Elizabeth, frowning at the song, jabbed Uncle in the side, as though reminding him that children of good breeding should not be hearing songs about beer and tobacco and certainly not grog, lest we speedily transform into degenerates, and it would be all his fault and she told him so!

The sailors lowered the gangplank, and Thomas sprinted forward to the dock and right up onto the ship. "Thomas Ehre!" Aunt Elizabeth called in a sharp tone, but Thomas did not even pause. I tried to run after him, but Aunt Elizabeth already had me by the hand, by which she pulled me back quite firmly, "No, you don't. Young ladies do not need to be running about shipyards unattended." I stretched onto my tiptoes, trying to get a glimpse of Papa. I was too short, and greatly envied Thomas' escape. Uncle Henry saw me stretching, and hoisted me up onto his shoulder so I could see better. "Henry!" Aunt Elizabeth gasped in an exasperated tone as she worked to make sure my petticoats did not get exposed.

From Uncle Henry's shoulder, I could watch as the matiners all snapped to a line of attention when one cried out, "Captain on deck!" Though it had been months since I had seen my father, he had not changed at all from the man in my memory. Thick boots of brown leather carried the proud, heavy stride of a tall man. The tailoring of his long, brown coat maximized the broadness of his chest and shoulders then tapered sharply to his waist. White trousers covered thick legs. A brown tricorne hat crowned his golden hair, from under which vigilant blue eyes seemed aware of every situation going on around him.

The men saluted my father as he passed, and I saw Thomas line up at the very end of them, poking out his chest as he too placed the side of his hand to his forehead like the other men. Papa stopped in front of Thomas, made a few adjustments to his stance, then suddenly scooped him by the back of the neck and pulled him into an embrace. Thomas stumbled into Papa's great chest, hugging him back. By now, I was scrambling to get down from Uncle's shoulders. "Papa! Oh, Papa!" Once my feet touched ground, I ran straight for Papa, leaping wildly for him

once I was close enough to do so.

Papa caught me; I knew he would, and he knew I knew. He hoisted me into the air, calling "My Bonny-Beth!" Nobody was allowed to call me Beth—nobody except Papa. He kissed my cheek again and again. The stubble on his chin tickled my face. I squealed with happiness and clung to his neck. I rode sitting in the crook of his arm all the way back to Lord Henry's estate, despite the fact that Thomas made fun of me for doing so, saying I was too old to be thus carried. But I didn't care, and Papa didn't care, and neither of us cared that Aunt Elizabeth very much did care.

The rest of the day was spent in chatter. Poor Papa was captive to Thomas and me each vying for his attention, both of us eager to tell him all we had done and learned since he and Mama had left for Jamaica. Thomas had been riding horses, shooting muskets, and had even gone hunting on the estate. I had been learning music and drawing, and Uncle Henry had let me go horseback riding too, without even making me ride sidesaddle. I am sure Aunt Elizabeth had glared at her husband at hearing this, but in my excitement I had forgotten that I was supposed to keep it a secret from her.

It felt good to be with Papa again. His laughter was so cheerful, and his deep voice jovial as he kept telling tales of the New World and the inn he and mother had built. I spent the afternoon on his knee, resting my head against his chest happily. Mother, he said, was now the prettiest innkeeper in all of the New World. I liked hearing Papa talk about Mama. He always affirmed what I knew: that Mama was the most beautiful, most wonderful woman in the world.

Thomas and I were sent to wash up for supper. When I came back downstairs, Thomas was crouching by the doorway to the parlor. It looked suspicious to me so I scolded him, sounding perhaps a bit more like Aunt Elizabeth than I'd like to admit, "What are you doing?"

"Shhh!" he hissed, then grabbed me and pulled me to crouch beside him so we could listen in.

It was Aunt Elizabeth talking. "The children are doing so well here," she was explaining. "Thomas has become quite the marksman. Given Henry's connections in the army, or even His Majesty's Navy the boy could go very far here. And little Eliza is making real progress in her education. If she continues to practice her accomplishments, she could easily obtain a fine marriage in five or six years. Surely you must see that they have real opportunity here in England. Henry and I would gladly keep our home open to them. Won't you at least consider leaving the children here with us? We could give them a better life, Johan."

Johan was Papa's first name, the name Mama called him. I cut my gaze to Thomas. I did *not* want to stay with Aunt Elizabeth, and I did not want a fine marriage, and more than anything I did *not* want to go anywhere without Papa and Mama. Thomas gestured for me to keep silent, and we listened on.

Papa's usual tone was a happy one. Papa was usually jocular and jolly. One could usually tell from Papa's voice that he was a friendly, agreeable man. The tone in which Papa replied to Aunt Elizabeth was none of these things. "Never," he said, deliberate and stern, "suggest such foolishness to me again." I had heard Papa speak like that only once, and that only when Thomas had raised his voice to our mother. And Thomas would never raise his voice to mother again. When Papa used that tone people obeyed. My brother and I both breathed a sigh of relief, both because there would be no more discussion of Papa leaving us behind, and because we had not been the ones in trouble. From then on, it was decided without doubt. We were going to Jamaica.

Though Papa had resisted Aunt Elizabeth's attempts to adopt us, he did permit her to convince him that we needed new clothes for the trip, something proper to a young lady and gentleman. I wished that he had resisted her on that too. I hated shopping. I hated having measurements taken; I hated standing for final fittings, and I hated the taking on and off of complicated skirts that the whole process entailed. Also I hated that Thomas got to go with Papa and Uncle Henry, while I was stuck with Aunt Elizabeth. That evening as we took inventory of our purchases, Aunt Elizabeth found a small pair of trousers. "These can't possibly fit Thomas," she observed.

“Can’t they? Hmm,” Papa replied innocently.

Aunt Elizabeth’s mouth twisted the way it always did when she found something improper. “Girls,” she said, “do not belong in trousers.”

“M’hmm,” Papa replied noncommittally.

“Captain Ehre! It’s bad enough to whisk a child off to a wild place like Jamaica, is a little decency too much to ask?”

Papa distracted her by picking up a pair of bloomers from the pile and holding them up in Aunt Elizabeth’s direction. “Are these for you? They look a bit big for you.”

My aunt’s face blushed red as she snatched the undergarments from my father’s hands. “Captain Ehre!” She often said my father’s name like that, much the same way she called Thomas or me by our full names if we were naughty. “If you must know, I’m sending them for my sister.” Mother wasn’t nearly so slender as Aunt Elizabeth. Papa had always referred to her as buxom, a word that made Aunt Elizabeth frown. She continued, “Just because she has to live among the heathen doesn’t mean she has to dress like them!” The town of Port Royal, Jamaica, was hardly heathen, but it was difficult for Aunt Elizabeth to believe such about anywhere not located on the English isle. Besides, Father had her in such a tizzy—father *always* had Aunt Elizabeth in a tizzy—that she could hardly be expected to think rationally. Uncle Henry was little help to her in the matter, as his only response was to chuckle from behind his newspaper.

We stayed with Aunt Elizabeth and Uncle Henry for another week while preparations for our voyage were made. Thomas and I were both terribly excited to go. This meant that we got into more trouble than usual. When the day finally came for us to get on the carrack ship that was to take us across the ocean, Lord Henry’s house was a bustle with servants helping to load up our luggage. Aunt Elizabeth was especially busy, making sure that everything was in its proper place so that nothing would be forgotten. In all the chaos, discipline was lax, so that Thomas and I slid down banisters and ran amuck all through the house until Papa finally came to take us to the ship.

The Nightingale was especially beautiful that day. She had been cleaned and prepped, and her sails seemed eager to return to sea. The uniforms of the sailors were washed and pressed, all looking quite keen as Father inspected them over. Thomas and I stood at the ship’s rail, waving to Uncle Henry and a teary Aunt Elizabeth as the ship was cast off from the dock and finally put to sea. It was only as we were leaving that I realized how much I would miss them. The departure was made more sweet, however, by our father’s presence. Once we were underway, Papa approached Thomas. “What are you wearing?” Papa asked with an unusual snap to his voice.

“...clothes?” Thomas replied hesitantly, uncertain whether he was in trouble or not.

“You are out of uniform, Midshipman!”

Thomas looked surprised at first, then his smile nearly grew too big for his face. Thomas had hoped that Papa would make him part of the crew, but I don’t think he actually expected it. He looked so proud one would think he had just been crowned king. “Oh, Father! Thank you! I don’t know what to- I can’t wait to- You don’t know what this means-” Father cleared his throat subtly, and Thomas straightened up. Assuming a more dignified look, he saluted Papa, with a hearty, “Yessir!”

The corner of Papa’s mouth curled into a smile that revealed his pride. “Good. You’ll find your uniform in the Captain’s quarters. Now hop to.”

With a pang of envy, I watched Thomas go. “Papa, I want to help too,” I pleaded.

“You want to help too?” he echoed in question. “And what job would you like, my Bonny-Beth?”

“I will shoot the cannons!”

Papa laughed. “You might have to work your way up to that job, little miss. Besides, you’ll get your pretty new dress all dirty doing such work.”

I thought about this for a moment and replied, “Thomas has trousers in his trunk that are too small for

him.”

“Does he?”

“Aunt Elizabeth said so,” I nodded.

“Aunt Elizabeth also says that girls do not belong in trousers,” Papa pointed out.

“Well... she can’t possibly know everything can she?”

With a hearty laugh, Papa replied, “No, I suppose no one can. But your Aunt does know a good bit, so don’t you be speaking ill of her. In this circumstance, however, I suppose we can make allowance. Go on. Go find something you can actually play in.”

I liked wearing trousers. It did feel a bit scandalous at first, but I could run and flip and slide down the banisters without my knickers showing. I loved the freedom of it. I came skipping back, circling around Papa with a giddy dance. Oh, if only Aunt Elizabeth could have seen me! “Do you think Mama would mind me wearing trousers?” I asked Papa.

“I don’t think it would be very fair if she did,” he replied, “considering she wore them on the way over herself.”

“Mother wore trousers!?” I asked. For some reason the idea shocked me. Father had always been the one willing to scandalize. Mama had always seemed more proper.

“Well you don’t think I’d let her climb all the way up there with her bloomers showing to all below, do you?” he asked as he gestured to the crow’s nest.

I looked up to the landing Papa had indicated. It was high, so very high, above the deck at the very top of the tallest mast. “Mama climbed so high? Really? Wasn’t she afraid?”

“She wouldn’t admit it if she was, but I doubt it,” Papa answered. “It shouldn’t surprise you. Your mother’s the bravest person I know—a great deal braver than I am.”

I doubted this, because Father was the bravest person in the world. But I did think it was nice of him to say, and I did like the thought of Mama climbing all the way up the shrouds like that. As it turned out, everybody had to work on the ship. I spent my days helping the cook and the doctor with chores, and practicing the skills which Aunt Elizabeth had taught me before I left. Papa said it would be a shame to let them go to waste.

It didn’t take long for the novelty of life at sea to wear off. There were long stretches of time that were dreadfully boring. The crew found ways to entertain themselves, often with cards or dice, but Papa didn’t allow Thomas or me to play with those. One day, we were so bored, that we fashioned a sled out of the lid of an apple barrel. I sat on the lid, and Thomas would shove me with a kick across the deck. Our antics drew the attention of the crew, and it soon became a contest to see who could send me the farthest. This was all great fun, but as the first mate and the bosun were stronger and could kick my sled half-way across the deck, Thomas was soon losing. It was his turn again, and he managed to send me a few yards before I bumped into a pair of large brown boots.

Papa looked down at me sternly. Then he looked up to Thomas, the first mate and the bosun. “What, Saint Elmo’s name, is going on here?”

“Just a game, Captain Ehre,” the first mate explained.

“They started it, Cap’n!” the bosun said, pointing at us.

The first mate glared at him for ratting out children, but Papa’s attention landed on Thomas, who shrank from the seriousness in Papa’s voice. “I would expect you to know better, Thomas.”

“I’m sorry, Father... we were just playing.”

Papa seemed to ignore his apology. “You should kick from the hip, son.”

Thomas blinked. “I- what?”

“The hip, boy, the hip. How do you expect to get her any distance if you don’t kick from the hip? Beth, bring that over here.” I obeyed, brought over the lid and handed it to him. “Well, sit on it, lass,” Papa instructed. I

did so. I felt Papa's foot press against the back of the wooden lid. Instinctively, I tightened my grip. Papa shifted his weight, pushed his foot forward and shoved *hard*. The sled skidded across the deck and I squealed with surprise. From the foremast I sailed past the main mast, and the lid was still spinning when I came to a stop just shy of the far-away mizzen mast. I gasped to catch my breath, my heart pounding.

Once I realized I had stopped, I jumped up, grabbed up the lid and ran back down to the others. "Do it again, Papa!"

"Don't you people have work to do?" Papa asked. But we persuaded him to play a while longer, and he and Thomas might have managed to beat the first mate and bosun had not the cook caught us playing with his barrel lids and pitched a fit. That ended the game, but it had been fun while it lasted, and I was mighty proud that nobody could kick like Papa.

One day, being bored with galley chores, I took to following Thomas around to help him. He was not very appreciative of my efforts, and acted more annoyed with me than grateful. Finally, he decided to climb to the top of the foremast to get away from me. "I want to come too!" I protested.

"Well you can't," he snapped.

"I can too! I can climb it."

"No, you can't. You think you can but you can't."

Thomas never believed me. I hated it. "I can too climb it. Why couldn't I?"

"Because you're just a silly girl, Lizzy!" With that, he turned and climbed the ropes, leaving me on the deck below.

His words made me furious. So what if I was a little girl? I looked up the main mast, all the way up to the crow's nest high above. I'd show him. Mama had done it. I could too. At the base of the shrouds, I took a deep breath. Grasping the first rung of rope in my hand, I stepped up. Then again, then again, another and another. This wasn't hard at all! My confidence grew, and before I knew it, I was halfway up the rope ladder. I had climbed higher than Thomas now. "Thomas!" I called, and stuck my tongue out at him when he looked.

I had expected to make him mad, but when he saw me, he looked afraid. "Lizzy, what are you doing?!" he cried.

I looked down, and the sight made me feel sick. The deck was so far below. I screamed for Thomas, but he was over on the other mast, too far away to help me. "Climb down, Lizzy!" he called. I shook my head. I couldn't climb down. Nor could I climb up. If I moved, I would fall, so I stood there frozen, clutching to the ropes for dear life. I squeezed my eyes shut and started to cry. I heard Thomas call out father. My hands ached from clinging. My body shook and my stomach wrenched. I felt a tug on the ropes below and started to panic. Another tug, then another began a steady rhythm that drew closer and closer. Someone was climbing the rope. When he reached me, I felt his hands on either side of me, steadying me so I couldn't fall. I didn't have to open my eyes to know it was Papa.

I felt relieved to have him there, but also ashamed. I knew I had done wrong. He knew that I knew. He didn't say anything for a long time. Eventually, I calmed down and stopped shaking. I assumed that when I was ready, he would have me accept defeat and help me back down to the deck. When he finally did speak, his voice was calm. "Well," he asked gently, "are we going up or not?" I opened my eyes and looked down at the deck below, then up to the crow's nest. I was nervous still, but I knew now that I wouldn't fall. Papa wouldn't let me fall. I took a step up, and then another. Papa was with me all the way. When I finally climbed into the crow's nest, I was quick to hold on to Papa's waist for support. I looked out in every direction. The ocean lasted forever. We stayed up there until the sun began to sink towards the sea. It was the best day of the entire voyage.

When we came back down to the deck, I expected Thomas to yell at me, but he didn't. Maybe he knew that Papa wouldn't put up with it. Or maybe he knew that I wouldn't put up with it. Maybe he just didn't feel the need

to anymore. We never did speak of it, at least, not until we were both grown up.

One morning, while we were on the quarterdeck, Papa lifted his face to the wind and took a deep breath. "Smell that?" he asked us. "Blossoms. We're not far off now. I'll bet your mother picked them fresh today to guide us home." Thomas didn't smell anything, but I thought I could. Besides, if Papa could smell them, then I believed they were there.

The first mate was eyeing the horizon. "I don't like the look of those clouds, Captain Ehre."

Father seemed to agree with him. "We'd best make use of the weather while it smiles on us."

It was a busy day. The crew worked the sails, trying to catch every favorable wind available. We made good time. It was not yet dusk when the cry of "Land, ho!" came from the crow's nest. The sky was getting grayer, but we weren't far off. We'd be home soon, home to Mama and a hot meal and a warm bed. When it started to rain, Thomas and I watched the mariners hustle to and fro from under the stairs where we'd be out of the way. The mood of the ship grew more intense as the winds began to pick up. A sudden crack of thunder made me jump, and I clung to Thomas's arm.

Sailors began to run and shout, scrambling to secure the sails. The bosun called for Thomas to come help, leaving me alone. Growing winds thrashed my hair and the ship around. I heard Father's voice roar over the storm, "Hard to larboard!" The order must have come too late, for the ship shuddered with a jolt as we hit the rocks. Out of nowhere, the main mast seemed to explode into flames. Lightning had hit it, and it creaked with a mighty groan as it bent, broke, then came smashing down onto the starboard side of the ship.

A cry came up from below, "We're taking water!"

"Man the boats!"

"They be smashed, Cap'n!"

"The Captain's gig! Off the port side!" Father shouted. While crew mates ran by to carry out his orders, Papa ducked under the stairs and scooped me up. "Come on, Bonny-Beth. Time to go." Father handed me off to the bosun to get me settled into the boat as he shouted over the storm, "Where's Thomas?" The Bosun didn't know, so Papa turned back to find him. I watched as much as I could. When the mast had fallen over, Thomas had been caught. With the first mate's help, Papa pulled him free.

During this time, one of the panicked crewmen addressed the Bosun. "The boat's not big enough. We can't all fit..."

"Shut-up," the bosun muttered.

"We can't all fit, what'll we do? What are we going to do?"

The man was frightening me. The bosun snarled at him this time, "Shut-up! Can't you see you're scaring the lass? Just shut-up. Cap'n'll know what to do." This thought calmed me. Yes, Papa would know what to do.

Papa came, helping Thomas into the boat. "Hold tight to your sister, son."

The ship was sinking in the water, enough so that the gig barely had to be lowered to float. Papa helped the first mate cut the guide ropes. They turned the boat, and Papa ordered him to the rudder. My eyes began to scan the seats. Where was Papa going to sit? The sailor's words echoed through my head. *We can't all fit.* Where was Papa going to sit? *We can't all fit...* I started to panic. "Thomas!" I cried. "Thomas where's Papa-" The storm drowned out the rest of my question, but Thomas began to understand. We turned, looking to the back of the boat, to our father.

His blue eyes met ours and he spoke, but his voice was drowned out by the gale as I saw him tell us he loved us. Still standing on *The Nightingale*, Father put his foot to the stern of the gig and shoved. The boat lurched forwards. Nobody could kick like Papa.

Thomas and I screamed as we watched the boat draw away from the ship on which Papa stood. Even the first mate turned around and screamed after him. "Turn the boat around!" Thomas cried, and I joined in his pleas,

“Turn the boat around.”

The thunder paused long enough for Papa’s voice to boom across the wind. “To shore!” When Papa used that tone, people obeyed.

Despite our cries, the crew began to row to shore. The storm did not let up. But neither the clap of the thunder nor the thrashing of the boat could distract me from the image of Papa getting smaller in the distance. The closer we got to shore, the more wild the breakers became. Being over laden, the gig could barely hold its crew. Our lifeboat was partially flooded, and then capsized completely when a great wave struck it. My grip on Thomas was broken, and his on me. I was alone in the water, tossed about by wave after wave. Every time I managed to get a gulp of air, another wave took me under. I hit a rock and cried out in pain, then began to choke on the water I’d inhaled.

When I surfaced, I was about to hit another rock. I would have hit it, had not a strong arm circled around me, pulling me from it. I looked up. Papa! I clung to him as he swam with me towards the shore. I can’t remember what happened next, only that I awoke later, alone on the sand. I sat up and looked for Papa, but he wasn’t there. Perhaps he’d gone back for Thomas. I stood and started calling out for help. The winds were dying down, so I could hear Thomas call me as he came running. I ran for him, crying, “Did you find Papa?”

“Lizzy...” Thomas lowered his gaze, “Papa was left behind.”

“No! He pulled me out of the water, Thomas! He helped me to shore. Then he must have gone looking for you. We have to find him!”

Thomas looked hopeful. “Don’t worry, Lizzy. We’ll find him then.” We found the bosun first, and then the first mate. One by one the crew all trudged up onto land. I explained what happened, and they agreed to help us look for Papa. We searched and we searched. Finally, the first mate ordered the bosun to take us home to Mama. We didn’t want to go without Papa, but they promised to keep looking.

It was strange to arrive at our new inn without Papa, but Mama’s arms felt wonderful. She had made stew, but I don’t think any of us felt like eating. I was so tired, I must have cried myself to sleep. I think Thomas did too. In the morning, I awoke in the armchair by the fire. I could hear Mama in the kitchen as I sat looking up at the painting of her and father that hung over the fireplace. Mama insisted that Thomas and I eat some porridge, then we all went down to the port. The crew had searched for father all night, but hadn’t found him. Since the weather was calmer, the first mate and some of the crew rowed back out to the site of the wreck. They returned carrying Papa on boards. His body was shrouded in a sheet, and wrapped in the red banner that always flew from his mast.

The sailors on the dock removed their hats. Some began to cry openly as the search party carried my father’s body ashore. Through my own tears, I looked up at Mama. Her cheeks were wet, but as they carried Papa past her, she stood straight, proud, and saluted my father. The rest of the men followed her example. Father was right. My mother truly was the bravest person in all the world.

The crew had found my father’s body back at the ship. He’d drowned tangled in the mizzen ropes. I didn’t believe them at first. There was no way he could have been back on the ship. I knew he had saved me. Nobody believed me. They didn’t say so, but I could tell by the way they looked at me. They thought I had imagined it. Nobody would believe me—except Thomas.

After father’s funeral, Thomas took me aside and said, “I believe what you said, about Papa saving you.”

“Then you don’t think they found him back at the ship?”

“I don’t know. Bosun wouldn’t lie about that. But I believe you too.”

“How?”

“I can’t explain it,” he replied. “I just do.”

For a long time, I couldn’t understand it, until the day a sailor came to stay at our guest house, now named *The Nightingale Inn*, and was studying the painting above the fireplace. “Who is that man?” he asked Mama.

“My late husband,” Mama explained. “He passed away two months ago.” The sailor stared at the painting in disbelief. “Is something the matter?” Mother asked.

“Only that...” the man began, “only that, he pulled me from the water last night, when I had nearly drowned.” The sailor paid us extra for his room, and before he left, Mother asked him to carve his name on the wall beside Father’s portrait.

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Ten years have passed since my father died. I have still not obtained the respectable marriage Aunt Elizabeth had hoped I would, but Mama says I’m the prettiest innkeeper in all the New World and that’s enough for me. Last night, a family stayed in the inn whose young son asked me why there were so many names carved on the wall around my father’s portrait. The wall was now covered with such names. I sat down, let him climb into my lap and said, “I’ll tell you a story about the bravest man who ever lived. He was the Captain of *The Nightingale...*”

Addiction:
The Writer's Marijuana

Brooke Alexander



Addiction:
The Actor's Alcohol



Brooke Alexander

Conjoined Doublemint Twins





Rachel Quinlivan

Rachel Q

Leo



Linda Howe

Capricornus



Linda Howe

Grand Pipes



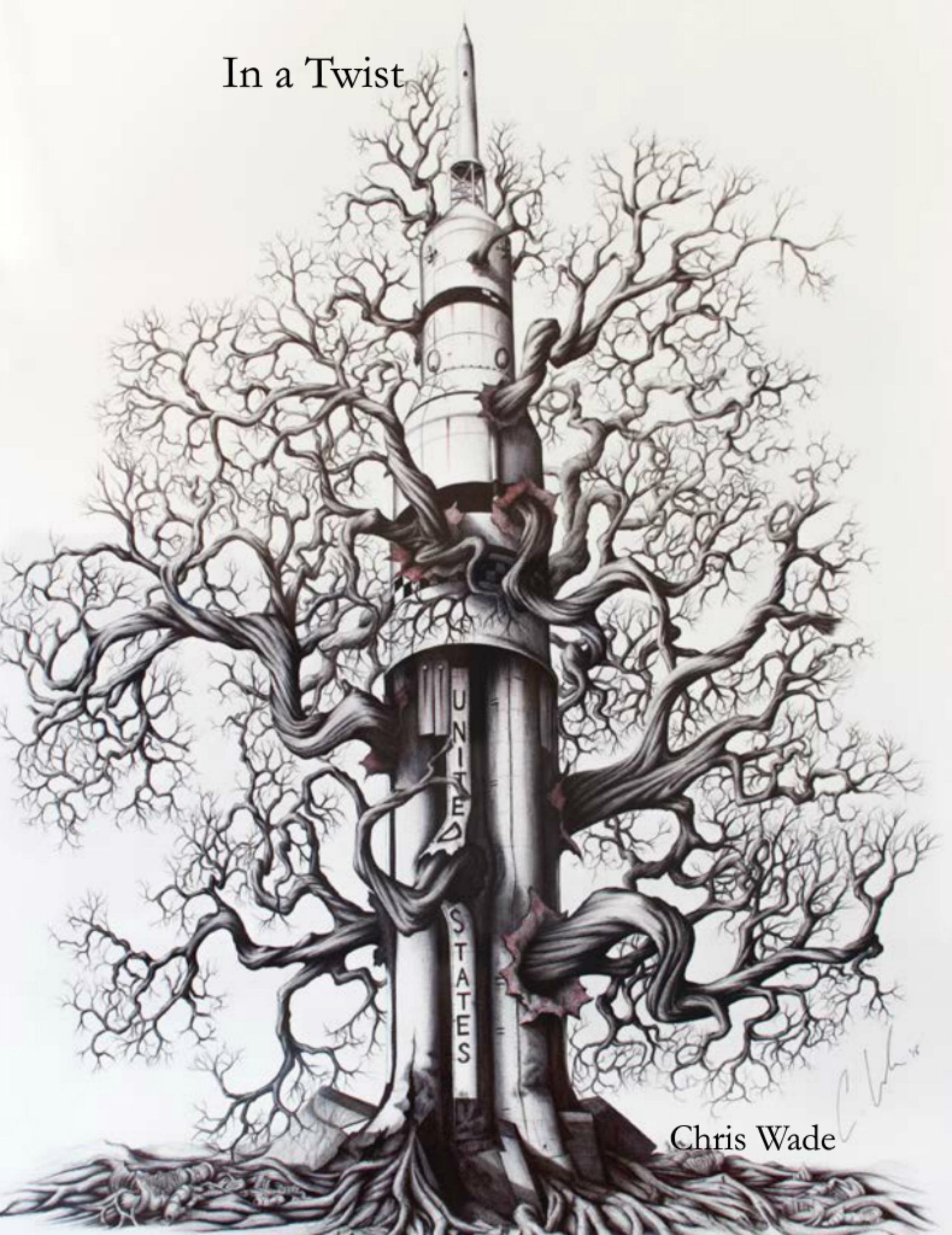
Vincent Christian

Lady of Sorrows



Vincent Christian

In a Twist



Chris Wade

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Homophobia and the Bible

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Homophobia, based largely off of teachings of the Bible, has been alive for millennia. It has placed a dark, luminous cloud above the gay and lesbian community. It has plagued homosexuals with great pain and grave despair. It has placed a multitude of high mountains and deep valleys among the paths of progress for gay and lesbian individuals. In the last forty-five years, the gay and lesbian community has made great strides in breaking up this cloud of homophobia. Homosexuality is no longer classified as a mental disorder within the *Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders*. The percentage of the American populace that supports equal rights for gays and lesbians is now greater than the percentage of those who oppose equal rights for gays and lesbians. Same-sex marriages are now recognized by the United States Federal Government as equal to opposite-sex marriages. U.S. federal employees can no longer be fired for being homosexual. Despite the gains of the gay and lesbian community, homophobia continues to thrive disguised as religion.

At the beginning of the Common Era, theorists of Jewish and Christian faiths designated immoral sexual conduct as the cause of the present social disorder (Fone, 2000). The homosexual relations among the pagans were especially damning (Fone, 2000). In order to discourage homosexual behavior, these theorists turned to religious texts to find proof that such behavior was destructive (Fone, 2000). They found what they deemed to be proof within Hebrew Scriptures which had been interpreted based upon the opinions of scholars (Fone, 2000). These scriptures have long since been used to justify prejudice and discrimination of homosexuals by followers of Jewish and Christian faiths.

One widely quoted example of such scriptures can be found in Genesis 19 of the Holy Bible (Fone, 2000). It has been accepted by many followers of the text as a story depicting God's intolerance of homosexual behavior among men (Fone, 2000). The story of Sodom begins with two angels arriving to the city of Sodom where upon they meet Lot, a foreign resident of the city (Fone, 2000). Lot welcomes the two angels into his home to stay during their visit (Fone, 2000). Before night comes to pass, a mob of local men come to Lot's door demanding he bring the two visitors out

to them so they may "know" them (Fone, 2000). Lot then offers his two virgin daughters to the mob in place of the visitors (Fone, 2000). The mob refuses his offer (Fone, 2000). One of the local men informs Lot that since he is a foreigner he has no right to welcome outsiders into their city (Fone, 2000). The angels then smite the angry mob with blindness so they can do no harm (Fone, 2000). The angels then tell Lot to take his family and leave the city, for they are going to destroy it and the people in it for their evil ways (Fone, 2001). Once Lot and his family have left the city, the angels carry out their promise of destroying Sodom (Fone, 2000).

It has been accepted by many religious leaders and followers that the angry mob was intending on raping the two visitors when they said they wanted "to know them" (Fone, 2000). According to Fone (2000), "to know" is an interpretation of the translation of the Hebrew word *yadha*. Forms of this term were used 943 times in the text of the Old Testament (Doyle, 1998). In almost every instance the term is translated as "to become acquainted with" (Fone, 2000). In only ten instances does it translate to imply sexual activity and most of these instances it only alludes to heterosexual activity (Doyle, 1998).

It is unclear what the author is attempting to convey with the use of the word "yadha" in the story of Sodom. One theory is that the citizens of Sodom viewed outsiders as a threat; therefore, they were angry that Lot, an immigrant to the city of Sodom, allowed two strangers to come into their city without the approval of the other male citizens (Fone, 2000). When they demanded Lot to bring the visitors out so they can know them, they wanted to become acquainted with them so they could determine whether or not the two outsiders were a threat to them. If they were determined to be threats, they would then kill them (Fone, 2000). The angels destroyed the city because of how it treated strangers (Fone, 2000).

According to psychotherapist Dr. Ralph Blair (2013), the story of Sodom has nothing to do with homosexuality, but has much to do with gang-rape. Blair (2013) states that the men of Sodom went to Lot's house in an attempt to dominate and humiliate the

two strangers by publicly raping them. The reasons for God's destruction of Sodom, Blair (2013) notes, can be found in Ezekiel 16: 48-49. These passages describe Sodom as prideful and successful, but not helpful to the poor (Blair, 2013). They describe the arrogance of Sodom as the reason God chose to destroy the city (Blair, 2013). Doyle (1998) points out that Ezekiel's placement of pride at the top of the list of Sodom's characteristics was not coincidence. He notes that pride towards God is an attempt to place one's self above God (Doyle, 1998).

Carden (1999) declared in an article published in the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* that within the story of Sodom, religious leaders should point out to their congregations that the inhospitality shown by the Sodomites is rape, not homosexual behavior. He distinguishes between rape and sexuality by stating that rape does not, by any means, constitute sexuality; therefore, when a man forcibly penetrates another man it is not done as a means to achieve sexual pleasure, but as a way to assert dominance and power over the man who he is penetrating (Carden, 1999). Carden (1999) argues that current Western terms should not be used to describe ancient, non-Western behaviors. Doing so, Carden (1999) states, leads to misinterpretation, such as defining the act of a male raping another male as homosexual behavior.

Carden (2000) points out that the events which occur in Sodom in Genesis are very similar to a lesser known story in Judges 19-21 which occurs in Gibeah. As in the story of Sodom, two travelers accept hospitality of an immigrant resident (Carden, 2000). The travelers are a Levite and his concubine (Carden, 2000). Like in the story of Sodom, the foreigner's home is stormed by a band of local men demanding the foreign resident to bring his male visitor out to them (Carden, 2000). He refuses the demands of the men and, as Lot did, he offers the band of men two young virgin females instead (Carden, 2000). Unlike what had occurred in Sodom, the band of men are willing to take one of the females, the traveler's concubine (Carden, 2000). The men are given the concubine whom they gang rape all through the night (Carden, 2000).

According to Carden (2000), the differences

between the story of Sodom and the story of Gibeah have provided to Biblical followers what is thought of as the sin of Sodom: homosexual behavior (Carden, 2000). Many have interpreted that Gibeah was not destroyed because the band of men accepted the offer of the young virgin female, and Sodom was destroyed not because of inhospitality, but because the men refused the offer of Lot's daughters (Carden, 2000).

The story of Sodom is only one of six passages that have been deemed "Clobber Passages." The Clobber passages are verses within the Bible that are commonly used to justify homophobic beliefs. Although each passage can be interpreted differently based upon context and word meaning and are therefore inadequate for justifying homophobia, they continue to be used to suppress gay and lesbian individuals. A number of religious groups have recognized the faults in interpreting such passages as anti-gay and now openly welcome gay and lesbian individuals into their congregations. However, a majority of religious groups do not recognize any fault in how the passages are traditionally interpreted and do not openly welcome gay and lesbian individuals into their congregations. In order for the gay and lesbian community to be able to completely clear away the dark cloud of homophobia which looms overhead, the church will need to accept that the Clobber Passages do not condone the treatment of homosexuals as unequal to heterosexuals. In the past, the church has changed its views on social issues, such as on civil rights for African Americans, women's rights, and divorce in order to accommodate modern culture. If the church was able to change in the past then it can do so in the present to accommodate gay and lesbian persons.

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The Freudian Grip

K. L. Riley



In the realm of literary theory, much discussion is given to the question of meaning. Does the authoritative source of meaning stem from author intent, the text itself, or reader interpretation? While theorists contemplate this question, conclusions range from one explanation to another, sometimes favoring more nuanced considerations of the interplay between author, text, and reader all while factoring in various intertextualities. While the primary goal of theory involves the exegesis of meaning from texts, the relationship between texts and theory often becomes more complex. Not only does theory serve to decode meaning from texts, theoretical application can also succeed in encoding meaning onto texts, forever changing the way a text is read, studied, and evaluated. One of the most striking theoretical revisions came with the work of Sigmund Freud in his analysis of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While theorists have since argued both for and against the accuracy of Freud's interpretation of *Hamlet*, it cannot be denied that Freud's application of the Oedipal Complex to the play has dramatically altered the way in which modern audiences encounter Shakespeare's most famous tragedy.

Before Freud, theorists had frequently observed and analyzed Hamlet's excessive delay in carrying out the vengeful mission given to him by his father's ghost. Writers like Goethe attributed Hamlet's delay to the continuous intellectualizing by the protagonist which restrained him from taking physical action. Critics opposed to this interpretation, however, note that Hamlet is fully capable of decisive action in almost every other instance of the play (Stearns 268). In his famous commentary, Freud posits:

Hamlet is able to do anything but take vengeance upon the man who did away with his father and has taken his father's place with his mother—the man who shows him in realization the repressed desires of his own childhood. The loathing which should have driven him to revenge is thus replaced by self-reproach, by conscientious scruples, which tell him that he himself is no

better than the murderer whom he is required to punish. (Freud)

Freud emphasizes the fact that Hamlet acts boldly in the killing of Polonius and even craftily in the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. It is only in taking vengeance on Claudius that he balks. Freud attributes much weight to this fact, likening *Hamlet* as being “rooted in the same soil as *Oedipus Rex*” (Freud). Freud only differentiates that while *Oedipus Rex* explicitly demonstrates the complex, the Oedipal tendency of Hamlet remains repressed in his subconscious.

Other scholars who have supported the Freudian interpretation manage to raise convincing evidence. The fact that Hamlet is less upset by his father's death than his mother's remarriage is curious and lends some weight to the idea of extreme attachment to his mother (Gottschalk 85). Notably, Hamlet's famous suicide soliloquy occurs before he is even aware of his father's murder but while he is lamenting over his mother's new marriage (Stearns 269). An Oedipal Complex also offers some explanation for Hamlet's extreme treatment of both Polonius and Ophelia. As Paul Gottschalk explains:

The neurotic's tendency to react to adult situations as if there were identical to the painful oedipal experience of childhood also explains Hamlet's hostility to Polonius and Ophelia, who certainly receive harsher treatment than they deserve, but no more than a child would wish to dole out to the interfering father and the neglecting mother. (85)

While reception of Freud's interpretation of *Hamlet* has been mixed, the fact remains that since *The Interpretation of Dreams*, one can hardly discuss *Hamlet* without reacting in some way, positively or negatively, to Freud's commentary. While debate continues as to whether Freud's Oedipus theory was drawn from out of *Hamlet*, or inscribed onto *Hamlet*, what is clear is the way in which Freud's handling of the play has left its mark on the piece. Modern audiences can hardly read the play without reference to Freud's ideas, and modern productions demonstrate the profound influence

Freudian psychoanalysis has had on our perception of the work.

In his study on modern film adaptations of *Hamlet*, Philip Weller observes a recurring portrayal of Freudian mother/son romantic themes throughout the twentieth century. Laurence Olivier's 1948 version of *Hamlet* was heavily based in Freudian analysis, as Olivier studied Ernest Jones's *Essays in Applied Psycho-Analysis* (Jones was a student of Freud), in preparation for the film (Weller 120). Olivier's film involves several impassioned kisses between mother and son, especially climaxing during the closet scene in which "Olivier abandon's Shakespeare's words entirely... Hamlet and Gertrude look into each other's eyes for a moment... and then... Lock into a lover's embrace and kiss" (Weller 121). A 1969 version of the film directed by Tony Richardson involves the two lying together, while a 1980 BBC version also puts the two together on the bed so that "we can see that her dress is hiked up, revealing quite a lot of her white stockings (Weller 122). The more recent 1990 version directed by Franco Zeffirelli also places the two on the bed, shows Gertrude being straddled, and includes an open mouth kiss (Weller 123). Post-Freud adaptations have made much of the closet scene between Hamlet and Gertrude, portraying it very differently in the wake of Freud's influence than one would expect to find in a pre-Freud production.

Post-Freudian representations of the closet scene have worked on the assumption that equates Gertrude's closet with her bedroom. Theatre historian Jerry Brotton explains why this portrayal could be inaccurate:

The problem with this approach to the closet scene is that it privileges modern theoretical perception of the scene (predominantly driven by Freudian-Lacanian analysis), over and against the historically specific sense of what Gertrude's closet actually signified within the context of the play's original production. (164)

The sixteenth-century idea of a closet differs greatly

from the post-Freudian image of a bed chamber. In accordance with Elizabethan architecture, a closet functioned as "a space of intense and dynamic social interaction, partitioned off from the rest of the household, a secret place where public affairs were conducted" (Brotton 165). Rather than a bedchamber, closets functioned as a sort of study, a place where deep contemplation and discreet conversation could take place in regards to weighty matters. While the secluded nature of such a space could raise concerns about sexual misconduct (Brotton 165), the image of a closet as chamber with grand beds and rich linens is the result of Freudian influence, rather than historical accuracy. This shift in depiction, however, serves to demonstrate the profound effect that Freud's ideas had on changing our perceptions of *Hamlet*. The idea of Hamlet's Oedipal Complex has become so ingrained in modern conception of the play that set designs and character action has changed over time to conform to Freud's theory.

As modern theorizing has demonstrated, readers possess a certain amount of influence in creating and sustaining textual meaning. Readings such as that of Sigmund Freud serve to revolutionize a work to the point that generational perceptions of a text shift dramatically, effectively rewriting earlier versions of the text. Modern audiences no longer read Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but instead are introduced to a *Hamlet* in which Freud shares a certain amount of authorship. Theoretical interpretations, then, not only have the power to derive meanings from texts, but can also influence modern perceptions of those texts, effectively rewriting them in the minds of subsequent audiences. A sixteenth-century viewer of *Hamlet* might be very shocked, perhaps even appalled, to find what a twentieth-century director has done with Shakespeare's work. Likewise, a twenty-first century reader cannot escape the revising influence that Freud's work has had on the play, and can never see *Hamlet* as its premier audience would have. Whether or not Freud's interpretation of *Hamlet* can be sustained by evidence from the text itself may be debatable. What cannot be denied however is the effect that Freud's reading had on the play itself. As demonstrated by numerous modern film adoptions of *Hamlet*, the modern characters, plot, and even setting of

the play were written not only by Shakespeare, but by Sigmund Freud as well.

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*A Doll's House:
Haunted by Ghosts*



Jennifer Bravo

Henrik Ibsen is easily identifiable as one of the most controversial playwrights in history with his famous door slam in *A Doll's House* catapulting society into a new age. Predictably, as with any new experience, this resulted in a great deal of conflicting responses to the play, many of which were negative. In light of such responses, and due to the lack of legislation protecting an artist's work, Ibsen was forced to write an alternate ending for *A Doll's House* to be used in its production in areas outside of his control if he was to keep the play, in its entirety, an original work. Although no credible source explicitly states that Ibsen's subsequent play *Ghosts* is a reply to the critics and negativity surrounding *A Doll's House*, many parallels exist between the two in support of such an argument. *Ghosts* offers a plethora of evidence supporting the notion of its creation as a sequel to the alternate ending of *A Doll's House*, including secrets and lies, moral and physical illness, and the double standard of the sexes so prevalent in the original work.

The National Library of Norway offers proof of Henrik Ibsen's completion of an alternate ending to *A Doll's House* in response to the controversy surrounding the door slam, along with his disdain for such an ending. The Library states that upon "publication of *A Doll's House* a veritable sport developed in writing continuations and parodies of the play," which would not have been approved by the playwright ("Alternate Ending"). In a letter to "the Danish newspaper *Nationaltidende*, dated 17 February 1880, Ibsen" explains his choice of writing an alternate ending to the play:

I sent ... the draft of an alteration to be used in case of necessity. In this version Nora does not leave the house. Instead, Helmer forces her into the doorway of the sleeping children's nursery, the parents exchange a few lines, Nora sinks to the floor and the curtain falls. Its use is absolutely contrary to my wishes, and I hope that it will not be used ... But if there is a threat of suchlike in my case, I prefer ... to commit such violence myself, rather than surrender my works

to treatment ... by less careful and less skillful [sic] hands than my own. ("Alternate Ending")

The next work of Ibsen's to be published only two years after *A Doll's House* is the play *Ghosts*. In *Ghosts*, the main character is a widowed mother who attempted to leave her husband when her child was young, but was convinced, or rather forced, to stay for her duty as a wife and mother.

In addition to this obvious allusion, secrets and lies abound in *Ghosts* as they do in *A Doll's House* with Nora as well as Mrs. Alving being racked with the guilt, fear, and shame that results in keeping secrets and telling lies in an effort to keep the truth hidden. In *A Doll's House*, Nora hides the loan and spends years working and scraping to repay it, but Krogstad still threatens to expose her for breaking the law in the first place. Once the truth is revealed to Torvald, he berates and chides Nora for her actions without giving thought to her motives in doing it or her reasons for keeping the incident from him for so long. In *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving does everything in her power to hide the sins of her husband from the world, even sending her only child away for most of his life. She also covers up Mr. Alving's affair that resulted in an illegitimate child – a daughter which she employs and has to face every day. Both Nora and Mrs. Alving are essentially betrayed by the men they trust to protect them – Nora by her husband, Torvald, and Mrs. Alving by her husband and Pastor Manders. Both characters spend years alone with their secrets in an effort to protect the ones they love with no reward, only punishment for their sacrifice. Ibsen chooses to have this secret-keeping and sacrifice not pay off in the end when neither woman can hide the truth forever. Moreover, when the truth finally comes out, each woman is faced with a life-changing decision about how to handle the repercussions of the mistakes of the men in their lives.

Illness of one kind or another is also a prevalent topic of concern in both plays. In *A Doll's House*, Nora believes herself to be the carrier of a moral illness just as Dr. Rank and Torvald have described Krogstad, who committed the same legal infraction as herself. In his article, Daniel Brooks states that from his debut

in the play, “Rank introduces a parallel between physical and moral sickness, a topic motivated by having just seen Krogstad in Torvald’s office” when he arrives at the house (“Infection” 15). “Torvald and Rank both employ repeated use of the language of infection to describe the origins of immorality,” according to Brooks, resulting in the implication that immorality is contagious which Nora takes literally (“Infection” 16). This idea of moral “infection,” Brooks argues, plays the primary role in Nora’s ultimate conviction to leave Torvald at the end of the play, stating that “her decision is less an act of defiance against her husband and society than an attempt to save the lives of her children” (“Infection” 17). Similarly, in *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving deals with the physical illness of her son, Oswald, as a result of his father’s carelessly immoral lifestyle. She attempts to hide the truth from Oswald for as long as she can, but she eventually chooses to tell him because he has begun to blame himself for his unfortunate health issues. However, she reveals the truth to Pastor Manders first, along with the information she has been keeping about her husband’s illegitimate daughter, Regina, and the identity of her true parents, because telling one truth unravels all lies connected to it. Despite all of her efforts to protect Oswald from the sins of his father, her attempts prove futile and Mrs. Alving is left with the consequences of her husband’s actions, being “forced at the play’s close to decide whether to murder her invalid son” (Kelly, “Pandemic and Performance” 20).

Ibsen exposed the inequality of gender roles in both plays, which would be surprising if it were not for the fact that his disagreement with the double standards in place at the time greatly affected his work. In her article, “Ibsen,” Sarah Elliott remarks that “*A Doll’s House* ... [is] the terrible revealing of a man’s estimate of a woman and of the relations between them” (93). This revelation is obvious throughout the play with Torvald’s pet names for Nora, his view of her as weak and ever in need of his guidance, protection, and assistance, and his absolute appall and ferocity at her actions to save him. Granted her actions were performed outside of the law, yet one could argue that he was more upset at her doing something without his permission that might

affect his reputation than anything else. This conjecture finds support in his response to Nora’s revelation when he calls her “a hypocrite, a liar – worse, worse – a criminal!” (III). He then proceeds to blame her for what might happen in his life as a result of her attempt to save him saying, “You have ruined all my future,” then treats her like a horrible degenerate, accusing her of having “No religion, no morality, no sense of duty” (III). All of this condemnation by Torvald for her one infraction committed in an effort to save his life, which she’s spent years paying for (in more ways than one) all by herself. Torvald then decides that they will not even remain in a relationship, stating that “it must appear as if everything between us were just as before – but naturally only in the eyes of the world,” then tells her that he will not allow her around the children for fear that she may corrupt them (III). He reveals his true colors and possibly sums up their entire marriage when he states, “From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance” (III). Nora is treated much worse for her actions because it was not her place as a woman to do any of the things that she did without the permission of a man. No matter how good her intentions were, she must remember her place in society and the home. Torvald has no concern for his wife, but for the outward appearance of happiness in life and marriage, which he makes perfectly clear in his response to her actions and revelation.

Additionally, in her article, Elliott points out the double standard of marriage that Ibsen depicts in *Ghosts*, stating that “marriage, is founded on a single-standard morality ... [for] the woman only to live up to the ideal. The man may break every law of morality and decency; the woman must do as Mrs. Alving did” (93). What’s worse is that it was not Mrs. Alving’s choice but that of Pastor Manders who forced her to return to her husband after she had left him, making her “a martyr, sacrificing herself,” as identified by Dimitris Vardoulakis in his article, “Spectres of Duty: Silence in Ibsen’s *Ghosts*” (53). Where Nora suffers from her secret struggles to pay back the loan over the years throughout her marriage and then eventually leaves her husband, Mrs. Alving suffers during her marriage,

then after her husband's death, and for the rest of her life as well as her son's life. Left with the mistakes that her husband made while she was practically forced to remain married to such a liar and a cheat, Mrs. Alving becomes a liar herself to protect her family. Ibsen also displays his opinion of Pastor Manders quite clearly if one simply identifies the connections. In the beginning, Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving discuss the Orphanage being established in her husband's name, and she very much resembles Nora when she gives in to anything Manders wants, repeating such submissive replies such as "yes; just as you think best" (I). Here, Mrs. Alving communicates her belief that Manders, though not her husband, is still above her in station, a man of God, a protector to be trusted. When he originally inquires about obtaining insurance for the orphanage, Mrs. Alving replies a resounding "Of course we must insure them," then allows Manders to completely dissuade her from her decision (I). He also hearkens back to Torvald from *A Doll's House*, when he reveals his great concern for the way others might view the purchase of insurance on a building that should be given to the protection of God. He states plainly that "my own mind is quite easy about it, it is true. But we should not be able to prevent a wrong and injurious interpretation of our action" making it perfectly clear that he, like Torvald, is more concerned with what others might think than caring for what should be done (I). This is basically what had happened when Mrs. Alving reached out to him for help in her effort to leave her husband years earlier. Pastor Manders, not wanting to deal with the scandal of divorce, sent her back home to Mr. Alving which did not solve the problem, but led to the whole web of lies that metaphorically burns down just as the orphanage does at the end of the second act.

In addition to the myriad of connections established above, a great deal of similarities can still be found in a closer reading of both plays suggesting that Mrs. Alving is just an older version of Nora with a slightly different family life. Still, despite the small differences, both characters are examples of what the majority of women were subjected to at the time in which Ibsen was writing both plays. Ibsen's creation of *Ghosts* immediately following *A Doll's House* with all of

its scandal and the parallels between the two including secrets and lies, past relationships, attempts to dissolve marriages, moral and/or physical illness, children suffering for parents' mistakes, and the actions, thoughts, and choices of the characters all support the theory that *Ghosts* is in fact the sequel to the playwright's alternate ending of *A Doll's House*. Ibsen himself encourages the connection stating that "After Nora, Mrs. Alving of necessity had to come" (qtd. in Kelly 19).

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The Twins of the House of Usher

Jensie Britt



The works of Edgar Allen Poe are extremely popular and well-studied. Among the many reasons for their popularity and critical study include how fascinating, dark, and complex the tales can be. One of his most popular stories that embodies these characteristics is “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The complexity and mystery of this Gothic masterpiece resonates clearly with readers. Within that complexity lies the interesting theme of the twin, double, or mirror image. More specifically, the idea of the twin is so inherent in this story that the mirroring is essential, and one part cannot survive without the other.

“The Fall of the House of Usher” tells the story of the narrator’s visit to the house of his childhood friend. His friend, Roderick Usher, has been experiencing a drop in physical and mental well-being and believes that the narrator can aid him. The narrator is made very uncomfortable with the condition of the house itself, the mental condition of Roderick, and the condition of Roderick’s sister Madeline’s health. In the end, both of the Ushers die, the house is destroyed, and the narrator somehow manages to survive the ordeal. Throughout the story, there are many symbols of mirror images. These mirroring symbols create the theme that one part of a set cannot exist without the other, and the tone suggests that all pairs are doomed.

The first example of mirroring is that of the House of Usher. In the story, the House of Usher refers not only to the actual house, but it also refers to the bloodline of the Usher Family. When musing on the house and the family of his troubled boyhood friend, the narrator describes the connection between the manor and the bloodline:

It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviat-

ing transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.
(Poe 663)

It is then clear to the reader that not only do the family and the house share the same name, but they are so interchangeable that they are practically the same thing. Or, rather, they are two parts of one whole. In this example of mirroring, the house represents one image of the family because the family has always lived there. The singular family bloodline which has no branches is directly rooted to the house. This mirroring is essential. As Roderick and Madeline become very ill, the house seems to become ill as well. Some of the terms that are used to describe the house are words such as decaying, reeking, and sickly. At the end of the story, the entire family bloodline dies when the twins die. As a result of the bloodline dying, the physical house also ceases to be. Since the whole of the House of Usher cannot exist with either the family or the house gone, neither can exist independently of the other. Thus, the death of one causes the death of the other.

The House of Usher is mirrored in another way as well. The actual mansion is visually reflected in the tarn around it. Upon first seeing the house, the narrator remarks on the reflection it leaves on the tarn:

It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled luster by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than

before—upon the remodeled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows. (Poe 662)

This immediate and literal image of mirroring alerts the reader to the persisting theme. It also informs the reader that the mirroring is not a pleasant one. The image of the mansion reflected in the tarn fills the narrator with even more terror than does looking at the house itself. In describing the house and its reflection as being so terrifying, Poe sets the dark tone of his story. At the end of the story, as the house is destroyed, it is only fitting that it is swallowed up by the tarn. Again, one part cannot exist without the other part.

Perhaps the most unsettling aspect of the mirroring exists within the twins of the story. The reason the narrator visits the house is to visit and help his old friend Roderick Usher. The narrator soon finds out that his old friend has a sister, Madeline, that the narrator never knew about. He also finds out that Roderick's illness is directly related to Madeline's health:

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. (Poe 666)

The narrator discovers after Madeline's supposed death that she and Roderick are twins. This, in accordance with the theme, explains that Roderick is ill because Madeline is ill — if they are mirrored images, one cannot survive while the other does not. Indeed, after Madeline's death, she comes back to ensure that her twin dies as well.

Another example of mirroring occurs during the narrator's reading of the *Mad Trist* of Sir Lancelot Canning. When Roderick is fearful that something terrible is happening, the narrator reads from the *Mad Trist* to calm him down. However, each action point

in the story corresponds to real events occurring in the house. John H. Timmerman explains that each "step of Ethelred to force the entrance to the hermit's dwelling has its mirror in Madeline's clangorous escape from the dungeon. Meanwhile, a storm descends upon and envelops the mansion, mirroring the swirling collapse of Usher's rationality" ("House of mirrors: Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher'"). Even though the *Mad Trist* and the events of Madeline's revival are not directly dependent upon each other, their mirroring and correspondence continues the overall theme and tone of the story.

The relationship of the twins is an interesting one. Since the death of the twins causes the destruction of the other mirror images (the bloodline and the house as well as the house and its own reflection), they demand more analysis. In his article titled "The Twin Motif in 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" William Bysshe Stein describes Madeline as "a visible embodiment of the alter ego" (111). "She stands for the emotional or instinctive side of her brother's personality which has stagnated under the domination of the intellect (here the tarn is a dramatic image)" (Stein 111). Stein's interpretation makes sense, and it certainly follows the theme of Roderick's twin being a reflection of him. However, there are interpretations that further explore the root of the problem. Specifically, there are interpretations that state that the twins had an incestuous relationship. In "A Reinterpretation of 'The Fall of the House of Usher,'" Leo Spitzer describes them as "twins chained to each other by incestuous love, suffering separately but dying together..." (352). He goes on to say that they "represent the male and female principle in that decaying family whose members, by the law of sterility and destruction which rules them, must exterminate each other; Roderick has buried his sister alive, but the revived Madeline will bury Roderick under her falling body" (Spitzer 352). Although this interpretation is an uncomfortable and controversial one, it certainly explains the deep connection between the twins. It also explains why the bloodline does not have any branches. And again, this agrees with the idea that if they cannot thrive, they must both die.

The theme of mirroring is prevalent through-

out the story. From the house and the bloodline sharing the same name to the actual twins, the story is absolutely dependent upon the idea of mirroring. It also certainly would not be as thrilling and horrifying without the mirroring setting a clear tone. From the first mention of the house's reflection in the tarn as being even more terrifying than the already terrible house, the reader is constantly made aware of more examples of mirroring. Each time something is mirrored, the outcome is never pleasant. In fact, the most climactic and tension-filled point occurs as the narrator reacts in horror and disbelief as the story he is reading is mirrored by noises and events happening around him. However, the relief is given when all of the mirroring comes crashing down around the narrator, and all of the twins and images are destroyed. As Stein clearly states, the "two levels of reality in the tale are brought into perfect conjunction, and the twin motif is the structural device that controls the final synthesis of form and, inevitably, of tone" (111).

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Contributor Notes

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Jennifer Bravo is a Tennessee native who recently moved to Huntsville from Los Angeles where she completed two Associate degrees in English and Social and Behavioral Science. She is currently in pursuit of an English degree from Athens State University with a minor in religion. Upon completion of her degree, she plans to attend graduate school. Jennifer has a passion for literature and communication via the written word and enjoys writing poetry and literary analyses.

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Mary Teresa Toro lives in Ardmore, Alabama, with Frank, her husband of 46 years, and Sarah, her daughter. They share their home with Foxie, an aging Pomeranian, and Bitsie, a weird little dog which resulted from the chance meeting of a Shi Tzu and a Dachshund.

Chris Wade is a recent graduate of Athens State with a major in Art.



Cover Contest Winner

Satyr Queen

By Brooke Alexander

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Spring/Summer 2015

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