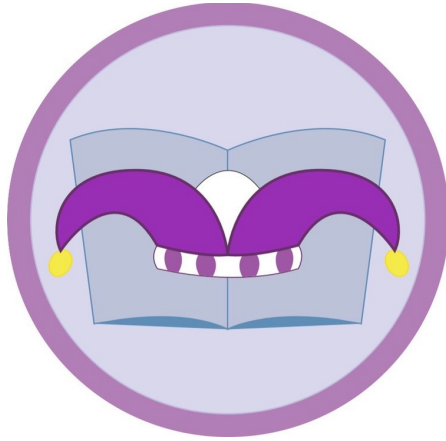


VOLUME 71



THE
MOTLEY



The Motley

Student Art and Literature at Spring Hill College

Volume 71, 2020

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THE MOTLEY CREW

Editor-in-Chief

Megan Lear is a senior Creative Writing major with a minor in Journalism. She will pursue her MFA in Creative Writing in Fall 2020. Keep up with her antics on social media @thisisntmegan.

Poetry Editor/Social Media Manager

Abigail Rhodes is a senior undergraduate student from Birmingham, AL. She will receive her degree in English in May then plans on moving to Orlando, Florida with her fish Alien, and less importantly, her fiancé, Drew. You can find her Twitter @abbeyroad0969.

Prose Editors

Anna Pellerin is a sophomore Creative Writing and English major with a History minor here on the Hill! She is from New Iberia, LA, and focuses on animal fiction prose stories in her writing. She is a Resident Advisor on campus and Senior Admissions Assistant in the Admissions building. You'd normally find her with her nose in a book, a pen in her hand, or pouring over homework!

Elizabeth Plasencia is a sophomore undergraduate student from Enterprise, AL. She is majoring in Creative Writing with a minor in English. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and drawing.

Graphic Designer/Assistant Editor

Olivia McNorton is a junior undergraduate student from Mobile, AL. She is a journalism major with a passion for just about everything but having a career in journalism. Reading, drawing, gaming, watching quirky foreign films, and listening to quirky music are what she mostly enjoys. Follow her on Instagram @oliviamadeline_28 if you want to see her post a few times a year!

Faculty Moderator

Brian Druckenmiller is the Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at The Hill and has prose featured in *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Cleaver*, *Hawaii Pacific Review*, *The Orlando Sentinel*, and *Silk Road* among other publications.

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JOHANNA MEISTER

Dots

If you look around, you will see
humans, in their skin
whole milk fat-free cream
Vanilla-sprinkles caramel-mocha
dark milk chocolate
black coffee

Look at them

Start at the top
-for some you will have to look up
-for some you will have to look down
and you will see
twisted, curled, and straight heads wearing
platinum, strawberry, dirty blonde
fire red, medium brunette, ebony black
bald

Look into their eyes
and you will see
through round, oval, or almond shapes
into a blue ocean, a green summer forest, or
Willy Wonka's shiny brown chocolate river

Look down
and you will find
curvy and lanky bodies,
you will see
arms like mountains made of steel,
arms that jiggle and wave,
short strong,
skinny long legs,
you will notice
belly buttons inside and out,
real boobs, fake boobs, no boobs

Look deeper,
inside now,
and you will meet
heaven's future residents, reborn mediators,
daydreamers, tree-huggers,
marxist communists, charismatic anarchists
democratic republicans, republic democrats

Keep looking,
get closer
and you will see
that if you look just close enough,
we are all nothing more
than billions of
dots

CAROLINE WEISINGER

Caffeine

Brew after brew, morning after morning
The coffee pot fumes its utter exhaustion,
whistles its scalding urgency
I perspire, panting with frustration,

Jane awaits the deliverance.
My wife, sprawled and tangled with those crisp, white sheets

Early morning sun on its tippy toes.
Peeking in through the slightly ajar bedroom window.
The hazelnut aroma flutters throughout our quaint cottage.

Jane smiles, while I, still anticipate *perfection*.
My eyes helplessly mesmerized by drip after drip,
each a richer brown than before.
Trembling, I caress the widened brim
of the dandelion-imprinted coffee mug she adores.

I pour.
The steam warms my forever frigid, gaunt cheeks.
I wait.
The mug meets the brim of those soft, symmetrical lips.

She smiles.
Jane's emerald eyes gaze passionately into mine,
eyes fervent with longing emotion.
I notice her smile fading.
She slowly sighs.
A tear fades into her staunch, richly black coffee.

A knock loudly echoes.
Our worried eyes immediately intersect.
Trembling, she swallows the *final* drop.
My quivering lips meet hers.
The warmth from her caffeinated lips bring mine serenity.

She stays limp, a terminally failing body.
She hopes I understand why she must go.

The doctor intervenes, *caffeinating* her body with a cure.
One last breath and my Jane rests.
The shining sun scurries from our bedroom.

The coffee pot now drops only with tears, I no longer mesmerized

HALEIGH SPRAGG

Statue's Lament

Stone cold marble man
With a heart of gold,
They threatened to cut out his tongue
But he swore he never told
The tale of how he lost his hand
And part of his left knee,
The stakes were too high — they had his marble family

He wanted to take action
But he was frozen in his tread,
His counsel had informed him that his folks were likely dead;
But marble man wouldn't stand for that,
He couldn't stand at all,
His right leg was lost sometime during Rome's rise and fall.

Accountant's Love Song

My love is your disposable income
Withdraw when you need some
Don't bat an eye
And when you'd like to make a deposit
Just turn on your faucet
And pour into me

I'll take any old dollar
Any old cent
I have no preference of which president
You decide
I'll abide

Take my love out on loan
There'll be no interest
Economists tell me I've lost all my sense
I don't mind
I don't mind

Money makes the world go 'round
Love's currency's value
Never goes down
So make an investment
While there's no promised return
You can't put a number on our love's worth



“Indulging Cowardice” | Caroline Moran

ROSE ELLEN BUZHARDT

Insomnia

the walls are thin.
the house small.
sound travels the halls.
and
our secrets float through the rooms
 one
 by
 one.

one night i hear you crying.
 sighs heavy.
 shakes trembly.
escaped sobs sing to the house.

another night i hear you screaming.
 yelling for reason.
 yearning for freedom.
vibrant vowels hang in the air.

tonight i hear your praying.
 “My God”
 “Father God”
begging for someone that may never come.

i tell you this not to
 shame you.
 blame you.
but because the walls are thin.
the house small.
that is all.

CECILIA DUPEPE

A Poem About Fried Egg Sandwiches

My grandmother, all she eats is fried egg sandwiches.
Breakfast, lunch, and dinner, it's all eggs.

She spends hours in the kitchen
for the rest of my family.
She scrambles over spinach
Exhausts herself over caramel pies.
She touches none of it.
She only eats fried egg sandwiches.

I asked her, last night, for an explanation behind her cooking.
She listed several reasons for her diet.

Firstly, fried egg sandwiches only have three ingredients.
Egg, sandwich, and fried.

Secondly, fried egg sandwiches cure every ailment.
Every headache is a hole in the brain
that is the exact size and shape of a fried egg sandwich.
Every heartburn is saved
when the yolk, always goopy and golden, hits the bloodstream.
Every stomach ache is waiting
for the oil covered toast to sop up the miasma.
Fried egg sandwiches cured my grandmother's cataracts.

Thirdly, a fried egg sandwich is the most delicious food there is. Never has a single food been entirely made of gold like the fried egg sandwich.

Mouths water when they hear the crack, sizzle, pop, and slide into the plate.

Salty, creamy yellow surrounded by crispy, fat white, All that is surrounded by crunchy, buttery, soaked-up sandwich. Protein, carb, fat. Egg, sandwich, and fried.

The fourth and final reason my grandmother only eats fried egg sandwiches is

Because her grandmother only ate fried egg sandwiches.

She says, as well, that her great grandmother only ate fried egg sandwiches.

For centuries and centuries, women in my family have been eating fried egg sandwiches.

She says one day, soon, my mother will only eat fried egg sandwiches.

I asked if I, too, will only eat fried egg sandwiches.

“Do you *like* fried egg sandwiches?” she asks.

“Not really,” I said.

She looked up from her plate with a beating expression,

“Me neither.”

Winter Roads

When I first tried ice fishing, I thought I'd be clever and use the same electric, Black & Decker drill that had built most of my cabin. The guys at the hardware store thought they'd fool me into buying a hand auger from them when I already owned the perfect tool for the job. That first morning, I stepped into the mountain air carrying my rod and my drill, already tasting the fish I'd have for breakfast. Seconds after I started drilling, the ice cracked and I dropped my drill into the lake. So I survived that winter without meat. When the snowplows finally made it up the mountain, I drove into the small town of Owl's Peak and bought an eight-inch hand auger.

I must have been using that same auger when he showed up. I started every winter morning the same. Auger in one hand, fishing pole and a bucket of worms in the other, I hiked a short trail through barren trees and dead bushes to my frozen lake. I carved my hole in the ice, set my auger on a snowbank, baited my hook, and waited on a tree stump by the shore, staring at the snow and ice and the little hole in the lake. Time stopped existing for a while. Once I'd caught a fish, I'd pack up and march back to my cabin. If the fish was small, I'd do it all again in a few hours for lunch. The whole process took about half an hour if the fish were feeling hungry.

The fish weren't biting the day he arrived. I must have sat on that tree stump for nearly two hours before I reeled in my breakfast. With one look at the fish I caught, I knew I'd be going back for lunch later. I didn't like fishing more than once or twice each day, even if that meant I ate a lighter dinner. I was terrified that I would overfish my lake. Better a few dinners without meat than a whole winter without meat again. My brother gave me a shotgun

for hunting when I moved here, but it was useless in the winter. The only things still roaming around in this cold were moose, a handful of wolves, and me. I tried to hunt moose one year, thinking I'd bag one and have food for the rest of the season, but I gave up pretty quick. They weren't hard to track down, but something about their stupid, brown eyes made it impossible to pull the trigger. I still see moose roam around the cabin sometimes. Maybe one of the bigger ones is the same one I chose not to kill all those years ago, all grown up and taking advantage of my hospitality.

It started snowing on my way back to the cabin from catching my meager meal. When I opened the door, I almost tripped over his little, snow-covered shoes in the doorway. He was sitting in a chair too tall for him, kicking his feet. I looked outside to see if there was anyone around, but it was getting harder to see as the snow kicked up. His footprints had already been covered by the snowfall, so I couldn't see which direction he'd come from.

“Hey, kid, how'd you get in here?”

He looked at me, but said nothing. He looked foreign, but how should I know?

“Do you speak English?”

Nothing.

“English?”

Nothing.

“Where are your parents, kid?”

Of course, he didn't answer. I don't know why I kept talking. I made my way upstairs, keeping an eye on him. Nobody in the bedroom, nobody in the bathroom, nobody in the room that I used for storage. I came back downstairs, and he was still just sitting there, kicking his feet back and forth. He had put a backpack on one of the coat hooks by the door. I took it off the hook and tried to see if his name was anywhere on it. When I didn't find anything, I decided to look inside. Before I even touched the zipper, the kid appeared next to me and yanked it out of my hands.

“Alright, calm down. I just want to know what your name is.”

He ignored me and sat down in front of the unlit fireplace clutching his bag. Maybe I wouldn't have been able to read his name anyway, but I wasn't exactly thinking straight having a kid sprung on me.

“My name's Stan.” I pointed at myself. “Stan.”

If he knew what I was saying, he didn't act like it. The kid sat in front of his imaginary fire. I found the best blanket I owned neatly folded in the closet. It still smelled kind of flowery. Lilacs, maybe? I don't remember. I hesitated, but then gave it to him anyway and decided to go outside to get firewood. On my way, I stepped on something slick and spongy in the doorway. It was my fish. I dropped it when I nearly tripped over the kid's shoes and I hadn't even noticed. I picked up my ruined breakfast and sat it in the bucket of worms. By the time I was back with the firewood, the kid was asleep in front of the empty fireplace.

While he was sleeping, I went out to the greenhouse to scrounge something up. The greenhouse was the first thing I built out here. I thought I could start growing food while I finished the rest of the cabin, plus I could sleep in the greenhouse for warmth. Most of the crops I chose that first winter died. The tomatoes, squashes, herbs, and peppers died the first week. Only the potatoes survived. The guys at the hardware store say potatoes will outlive us all. When I made it out to the greenhouse, snow had started to pile up on the roof. Some of it would slide off on its own throughout the day, but I'd have to scrape it off myself after breakfast. I found some peas, lettuce, and potatoes that looked good enough to harvest. It wouldn't be an exciting breakfast, definitely not a tasty one, but the kid would have to get over it. He shouldn't have made me drop my fish.

He was still sleeping when I came in, but the smell of food cooking over the fire woke him up. I kept a few basic spices in the house, and I tried to make our breakfast a little more interesting. I

wasn't used to cooking for two people anymore, but I don't think either of us minded the small portion given the contents of the meal.

I wasn't sure what to do with him after breakfast. We sat there staring at each other for a while. Eventually, I remembered the snow piling up on the greenhouse, and I used it as my excuse to leave. I grabbed a large broom and a stepladder from inside the greenhouse, and I knocked off as much snow as I could. I was able to get most of it, but there's one spot at the very top of the roof that I could never reach. I thought about climbing on top of the greenhouse to go get it, but I figured I was too heavy. Leaving the kid inside made me uncomfortable. He was a stranger, and I was giving him full reign. But I didn't own much he could break, and there was even less worth stealing. He wouldn't make it very far with anything he took in this weather anyway.

He was asleep again when I made it back inside. I sat there staring at him for a while, trying to figure him out. I built my little cabin as far up the mountain as the state would allow. There were a few other houses in the area, but none were close enough to call neighbors. Even so, I didn't know if any kids lived in those houses. Seemed unlikely that he'd be from here anyway since he didn't speak. He turned over in the blanket on the floor and my stomach growled. It didn't matter where he came from. He was here now, and I'd have to keep the kid alive until winter was over. The roads were useless once the snow got in full gear. It would be hard enough to explain to the police why the kid was in my cabin. It'd be a hell of a lot harder to explain why there was a dead kid.

I had to catch two fish for lunch. He was sitting at my table when I came back, just like he belonged there. When lunch was finished, the kid and I ran into the same silence we'd hit after breakfast.

"I might have some board games in the closet," I said.

I went to the closet and found an old Monopoly box tucked in the corner. It was missing some of its pieces, but anything was better than a staring contest.

“You don’t have to speak English to play Monopoly, right?”

I went on to explain the rules anyway. Was that stupid? They have Monopoly in other countries, right? Anyway, the kid beat me, no contest. Every round we played. I even tried cheating, and he still beat me with a silent smile stretched across his face.

That became our life for a little while. I fished, we played board games, I cleared snow from the greenhouse. The kid never spoke. He barely made a sound at all. The first time I heard anything come out of his mouth was about halfway through winter. I had gone outside to clear snow from the top of the greenhouse again and thought I’d get the kid to help. I figured he’d be small enough to climb on top of the greenhouse to get that last bit of snow, and I thought he might as well help out if he was going to be living in my cabin. He watched me climb up the ladder and knock as much snow off as I could, then I handed him the broom and pointed at the leftover patch at the top. He climbed up and started knocking at that last bit of snow. Before he could finish, a strong gust of wind rushed by and knocked him off. He sailed off the greenhouse into a snowbank, and everything went silent. I trudged through the thick snow, afraid he’d hit his head on something beneath the surface, but he was laughing when I found him. I didn’t get him to help with the greenhouse after that.

The morning after my failed greenhouse experiment, the kid was standing at the door fully dressed when I woke up.

“You moving out?”

He stared at me, and then opened the door to leave.

“Look, you can’t go out there alone.”

I followed him outside. When he went out the door, he turned left to head toward the woods.

“You’re going the wrong way. Lake’s over there.”

He kept going.

“The only thing through that forest is the road, kid. And the snowplows won’t make it up here for a few more weeks.”

He kept going.

“I’m telling you there’s nothing out here, now quit playing around.”

He kept going.

I followed him for nearly twenty minutes through snow up to my knees. He finally stopped about twenty yards in front of the road, turned, and looked at me. He was in front of what was normally a ditch (they dug them real deep here to account for all the runoff when the snow finally melted) but now it was so full of snow that you could walk right on it.

I couldn’t figure out what he was doing. It was just snow. The ditch was full of it, the road was covered with it, it was falling all around us. But it wasn’t just snow. There was something dark barely sticking out above the white blanket. Something dark and round, maybe connected to a pole? It was a tire on an axle. The rest of a car was hidden away beneath the pristine snow.

I covered the kid’s eyes and did my best not to look. Somehow a frozen tire barely peeking out of the frost was too gruesome. There was a moose on the other side of the road, rooting around in some dead bushes, looking for food. Then the kid made a sound for the second time. He started crying and he didn’t stop until we made it back to the cabin.

The kid’s family had been too brave or too stupid to stay at the bottom of the mountain. They decided to risk the winter roads, and they lost. They all lost. Except the kid. He must’ve marched through the snow until he found a house. My house. He was lucky, sort of. He could’ve wandered aimlessly through the snow, never finding anything or anyone, eventually passing out from exhaustion or hypothermia or both. Maybe he would’ve liked it better that way.

That night, the kid sat a picture of a man and a woman down in front of me.

“Where’d you get that?”

He pointed at the man in the photo.

“That’s me,” I said.

He squinted at me.

“Look kid, it’s an old picture.”

Then he pointed at the woman.

“She’s gone.”

I pointed at my ring finger. He pointed at the woman again.

“Gone.”

He kept pointing at the picture, over and over. I snatched the picture from him and threw it at the fireplace, but it landed on the hardwood floor instead. The kid grabbed the picture before I could reach it and shoved it in his bag. If he wanted it that bad, he could have it.

The kid started fishing with me pretty soon after he showed me where he’d come from. I taught him how to use the auger, what bait to use (mostly just worms honestly), how to bait a hook, and the best place to carve your fishing hole. He probably didn’t understand a single damn thing I said, but he caught on quick. I let him use my spare fishing pole even though it was too big for him. I was glad to have the company. Now, the kid and I left early every morning. I carried my auger, he carried the bucket. We both carried fishing poles. We carved our holes in the ice and sat side by side on our tree stump by the lake.

Once, near the end of the winter, the kid dropped the auger before he could finish making a fishing hole. It bounced first and then slid across the ice until it came to a stop toward the center of the lake.

“Well? Go get it.”

The kid tip-toed across the frozen lake, slowly edging closer to the auger. He was about fifteen feet away when I noticed some leaves were starting to grow back in. It must’ve been March, maybe almost April. Then he was gone. The auger was still sitting on the ice, but the kid was nowhere to be found. I hadn’t heard the ice crack, but I heard him splashing around in the freezing water. I should’ve stayed calm and crawled slowly over the ice to pull him

out, but I panicked and tried to run to him. I heard the ice crack this time. I went under a lot deeper than the kid. My hands sank into cold, slimy mud on the bottom of the lake. There was something sharp sticking out of the mud. It poked its way through my glove and gouged a hole in my hand. I tried to kick off the bed of the lake, but my boots got stuck in the mud. I tried to push through the water with just my arms, but they were getting numb. Finally, I kicked my feet hard enough that I pulled my boots out of the mud and resurfaced. I didn't hear the kid splashing anymore. I looked around and didn't see him at first, but then I found him. He was sitting on the tree stump, shivering and holding the auger.

After the initial shock from falling in, the water stopped feeling cold. I only knew the water was freezing because my limbs started slowing down. The hike back to the cabin was a lot less pleasant than it was most days. I had to force my legs to keep moving. I could barely pick my feet up.

When we got back, I stripped the kid down and wrapped him in a blanket. The only outfit he had was the one he showed up in, and now it was soaking wet. I started a fire for him and changed my clothes. He was still shivering, so I wrapped him in another blanket. Then a third blanket. Then a fourth. I tried to wrap the hole in my hand but kept getting distracted by the kid's shivering. I was out of blankets, so I sat down next to him. I waited there, adding logs to the fire occasionally, until he was finally warm.

Things went back to normal for about a week, then I woke up to a deep, rumbling sound one morning. Snowplows. They had finally started making it up the mountain. It would've been spring in Owl's Peak for a few weeks now, but it was still a winter wasteland this high up. We would have to wait a few days, maybe a week, for the plows to finish their job. The road had to be clear both ways before we could leave. I looked in the mirror for what felt like the first time that winter, but I could barely see through the mess my hair had become. The kid watched me as I trimmed my hair and beard, then he pulled a chair over and sat down in front of me. I'd been cutting my own hair for a while now, but I'd never

cut anyone else's and people didn't see me often enough to tell me how bad I did on my own. I did my best and the kid smiled when I was done.

It took three days for the roads to be clear enough that we could leave. I let the kid sleep in that morning as I tried to get the truck started up. I knew it would take a while since it had sat there all winter, so I took a break every two or three tries. The truck would be fine once it started to get more use from me taking crops back and forth to the farmer's market in a month. The birds started singing again, and I could hear the slow drip of melting snow and icicles everywhere I went. Fresh flower buds tried to peek through thawing bushes, Canada Jays searched for worms in the hard ground. When the truck finally started, I almost didn't notice.

He was awake and packing his bags when I came back inside. No matter how good or bad I did taking care of the kid, I knew this place would always be a nightmare for him. But just before he walked out my door for the last time, he smiled.

The roads were clear of snow, but they were still slick. I had to go slow to make sure the kid made it. The trip down into Owl's Peak ended up taking almost two hours. I parked in front of the local police station. The Owl's Peak jail served as little more than a drunk tank for the patrons of the Black Birch Saloon. The four officers in Owl's Peak would be telling this story for years. We got out of the truck, and the kid grabbed my hand.

A woman, somewhere in her thirties, tried to grab the kid away from me when we walked in, but my grip was too tight.

"Who do you think you are, lady?"

"I'm his aunt. Who are you?"

She snatched the kid away this time.

"Are you okay? Did this man hurt you, Isaac?"

"His name's Isaac? Seriously?"

I don't know what I was expecting, but it wasn't Isaac.

"He's my friend," the kid said.

His name was Isaac and he could speak perfect English. Why didn't he just tell me?

I turned to leave, but one of Owl's Peak's finest stood in front of the door.

"We're going to need you to give a statement, sir," he said.

I tried to push through him, but he was built a lot sturdier than his beer gut led me to believe. He grabbed my shoulders and forced me down into an old, wooden chair.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

I had to wait while they questioned Isaac. There were only two chairs in the lobby, so I sat next to his aunt. She didn't say anything to me, but she didn't try to hide the dirty looks she gave me. She made a point of getting up and hugging Isaac in front of me when he came out. Then it was my turn. They sat me down in an interrogation room that looked a lot more modern than you might expect. It was like it belonged anywhere but Owl's Peak. A pretty officer with light brown hair came in to question me. We had had drinks together on more than a few lonely nights at the Black Birch.

"Are my tax dollars paying for fancy rooms like this?"

"We both know you don't pay taxes on the few dollars you get from the market, Stan."

"You know, I thought my friend from the lobby would be in here to do the questioning. I think he's starting to like me."

"Please state your full name for the record."

"C'mon, Rebecca, you know me."

"State your full name for the record, or I'll go get Officer Davis from the lobby."

"Stanley Wilson Brown."

"Good. Now, tell me everything."

She leaned forward across the table, pushing the stack of files she brought over to the side. So, I told her everything. I told her how the kid showed up randomly, how he fell off the greenhouse, how the car was in the ditch by the road, how we both ended up in the lake. I told her everything, all while she furiously took notes and matched my story with Isaac's.

"As far as I can tell, your stories match up, Stan. You did

good.”

“Well, I live for your approval. Can I go now?”

“Sure, go back to your cave. I know where you live if we need you.” She winked at me.

I started to head back to the lobby, back to my truck, back to my life up the mountain, back to my lake, back to something normal, but I couldn’t.

“Want to meet for a drink later, Reb?”

“Ask me again when you aren’t a suspect in a potential crime.”

The lobby was empty when I came out. I went out to the truck and found Isaac and his aunt waiting on me. He ran up to me and gave my leg a tight hug.

“Isaac told me what you did. Thank you for watching out for him.”

She stuck out her hand, and we shared an awkward handshake. I got in the truck and made my way back to the road. I made it up the mountain quicker than I made it down. Green trees turned back into bare trees, blossoms back into frozen buds, nature and time itself froze, and the dry, spring roads became slick again in the dying winter at the top of the mountain. I was back home, but when I closed the door behind me, it echoed through the cabin. Had it always done that? It was a dull, hollow noise. I tried to fish, but couldn’t catch anything. I went to the greenhouse, but none of my vegetables were ripe. So I got in the truck. It started on the first try, and I got back on the long road to town. If I was lucky, the kid and his aunt would still be there, waiting in the parking lot of the Owl’s Peak police station.

But my luck ran out. They weren’t at the police station. They weren’t at the bar. They weren’t at the corner store or the farmer’s market. They weren’t at the hardware store. They weren’t anywhere. They were gone, leaving the winter nightmare behind them.

I went back up the mountain.



“Untitled” | Kathryn Weatherspoon

EDITORS' CONTRIBUTIONS



“Childhood Adorned” (Three Photos) | Olivia McNorton



ELIZABETH PLASENCIA

Little plant

I got a little plant
She's a tiny succulent
She has green and purple leaves
That are round and soft
With no sharp edge in sight,
But she's not purple like an orchid
Or even like lavender
My plant's purple is dark
Like a shadow hiding behind
A person standing underneath the sun
Painting tiger lines and leopard spots on a
Jade green background of grass;
My plant has little scars marring
Her soft leaves and I stare at her in thought
Did she get them from someone?
From the ground to the pot,
How has she had to protect her soft spots?
One, two, three, four...
So many scars on her small leaves.
They cut through her stripes and dots
With their brown colored scabs.
My plant is still beautiful.
I like my little plant; she's a survivor.
I think I'll name her Champion.

ABBY RHODES

Love

i fear the stars
and the suffocating expanse surrounding them
ever glowing
never feeling
illuminating an unknown path
next to their brother, the moon

daylight comes and
goes
against the lake in the middle of the forest
where poets get lost
to dream their lives away
trees sway in the gentle breeze
the fading sun breaks through reborn leaves
the queen of the sky
tireless
restless
waiting to meet her lover on the horizon
the brother to the stars

a prince with a smile of mirth and mischief
a queen setting her crown aside for a fleeting moment
so they may meet then
they must part once more
a queen in a restless slumber
while her prince holds court with the stars

ANNA PELLERIN

Home

Morning sunlight swathes the treeline:
Oak leaves sashay in a breeze
Throwing shadows across the forest floor,
Newly unfurled mayflowers
Hug hawthorn branches,
Blades of green grass get dyed
By the dawn's rising light,
And similarly, the river's surface
Reflects that same shade.
Everything is caressed in sunshine.

Birds perch in trees,
And inquire down at
Me, sitting on the riverbank.
Grass stems tickle my fingers,
Mayflowers my perfume.

And I see my reflection staring straight at me;
My eyes, my lips, my hair
Outlined in crystalline detail
With perfect fluidity
And impeccable exactitude.
This river,
And the forest in which
It twines, the hawthorns burgeon, the oak leaves sashay,
The twangy birds twitter
Reflects me
Better
Than any brick,
Any mortar,
Any mortal piece of glass
Ever has or will.



“Waves of Haze” | Olivia McNorton

CAROLINE MORAN

The Secret Life of a Phone Charger and an Outlet

You wink at me
I wink back
The electricity hums between us
You hold promise of change; new life
You give me energy. I give you purpose – yet you always seem
so drained.
Your face says it all,
though you like to wear me as a mask
The gaping hole of your mouth does nothing to hide
your feelings.
Or perhaps it's jealousy?
If so, know that I only love you.
My bulky friend is just that: a friend
He only comes to me when he needs me
It means nothing
He connects to a part of me that you have never seen
And I think it would scare you if you did
He brings purpose to me like I bring purpose to you
And I give him energy like you give me energy
I will remain steadfast and true
only to you, for I am
always with you, am I not? Some might even say
We're attached at the hip
I only leave your side when I'm torn away by the hands of fate, but
who would have thought
fate to be so cruel?

It uses us for its own wicked games
objectifies us
refuses to see our humanity
But pray, let us not upset fate – we are only together so long as we
are useful
in providing fate with what it wants: power
Lest my cord be cut; my life over, and my dear one true love –
I bid thee adieu



“Seafoam Consumption” | Caroline Moran

ASHLEY BURROUGHS

Beauty Unwanted

Do some adore where some are shamed,
there is always pain for those who disdain.

For one to be satisfied is often a lie,
understand impurities are the marks of life.

The creases of laughter that line our lips,
as important as the love surrounding our hips.

Concaving lines paint our exterior,
an imperfection shall not exude inferior.

The hidden dimples we try to ignore,
but know it is these that make it yours.

No two alike, no two compare,
not one should be seen as less than fare.

KORBI CLEVINGER

Artist's Translation:
An Ode to Those Before Me

Every day of the week and twice on Sunday
(for the longest time),
I found it but didn't touch it.
Didn't even go near it.
A whisper which begged for me to translate it.
I was too busy, but really I was too afraid to be
inaccurate.
I didn't know that those who whispered,
they wouldn't care.
They just wanted anything I could make of them.
They wanted what I did.
I thought of them. Often. I cared for the thought of them.
I saw a glimpse of them and noticed pieces of their voices
here and there,
but I didn't listen.

Until now.
I finally am making myself sit down,
cross-legged, eyes wide.
"Pay attention to them like they deserve,"
I tell myself,
"For they are truly forgotten."

Sugars seep from the bark of the trees
and the one who lives in the sun
directs me to do nothing and everything
all at once.
Personal identity,

mine especially,
lives in things to catch
(already in my lap),
And more importantly,
people from before.
Maybe people who made people
who made me.
Ancestors I or we or you don't know,
and never could,
How could we?
It's not in our culture to keep track
of our mother's mother's mother's mother's mother's.
or our father's mother's mother's mother's mother's.

Until now.

“I will simply make her up!” I decide. (Each one).
None of them will mind.
“I promise to remember you,” I told them,
“Even without knowing enough.”
They tell me what to do with it all,
what to do with the thought of them all.
The answer is just
whatever I want.
They are me, and I am what they use to be, and I am something
new, so
so are they.

A contemporary folktale,
Or that's how I will have it to be.
I have decided and they have confirmed it.
Now I can do it, and
I am doing it.
But,
push the knife in and twist it, too.
I want only dark

and sinister and twisted and sweet
and sentimental.

Sentimental,
strange.

“Yes, make it strange.”

But familiar.

“Don’t forget to make it familiar, too,”
they always tell me.

“That is how you will remember us.”

So I did and I do.

And I am.

SHELBY THORNTON

This body--

Annual rotations; approaching 26.

Fulfilling a destiny? Serving a purpose?

A vehicle; a vessel; carrying consciousness.

It takes its beatings; black, then blue.

It endures. Loitering. Prolonging.

Relentlessly. Ad infinitum.

Surviving inanely. Why?

The answer; unknown.

Seemingly righteous.

A meritorious gesture.

The bearer of burdens.

The cursed crucible.

Yet; I am disgusted.

Its lamentation of anguish;

Its calloused soles.

Expansion of cellulite;

Crooked collum of,

Disintegrating vertebrae;

Wrinkled guise.

Cyclic requirement for repair,

Whilst rendering no catalyst.

Repelling, revolting, nauseating.

Infected by an impression,

Of its reflection.

Overcome with rage, radiating within.

Clenched fists and ground teeth.

Putrid flesh,

Suit of meat.

Not my essence.

Not a temple.

Longing for the unattainable.
A smooth silhouette...
Titanium apparatus; steel appendages;
Platinum-plated.
Model 2.0.
A magnificent machine;
Would it still be me?

A fire built, within the belly.
Snuff it.
The hunger writhes;
Feed it.

I lacerate the surface.
Peel back the dermis.
Exposing the membrane.
Ephemeral release.

Spontaneous combustion;
A beseeching intention.
Set fire to this phosphorus shell.
Leak out of the open pores.

Soma Sema.
Of which I was condemned,
In a quondam hour.
Emancipated by delivery,
From the prison of this chassis.
No longer captive to mortal confinement.

Shuck the husk-
Singe the skin-
The carcass- in dust;

Flying; unfettered;

BRIANNA BRADEN

Dust to Dust

The tears stream down my pale skin

Hot and damp

Hot

Hot

Hot

What did it feel like to cross that desert?

Was the heat beating against the skin that is the color of the earth,

The color of your mother, and her mother before that

The color of our God

“Bless the house that welcomes you”

He told us

“You welcomed me in when I was a stranger”

He laments

I forgot the verse when he told me to build a fence

I think it got drowned out

When he was telling me about my neighbor

He sat me down across that fire and told me

The story of when he was born in a manger,

or maybe it was a cage

Where the floor was cement

and his mother was housed in another tent.

We are all born from dust

and to dust we shall return

For some dust is what they have of a home

It takes on a new definition when all you have

Are broken fragments of a country that never wanted to protect you

Children fall asleep under stars in concrete boxes

Learning to build a defense in words that never sounded

Like their mother

My father calls me into the kitchen
The living room
My bedroom
And congratulates the president
Booming voices and eye of pride
This is great again
My Father calls me to the steps of his house
To arms of the man who sits on the street corner
To the poor in spirit and rich in life
And talks to me with tears in his eyes
Quiet voice and gentle words
Telling me stories of his father before him, and the children
He had to leave behind
Or maybe he was telling me where we can find them,
Outside in the desert of communion
Searching for water that drips from our spoiled hands.

BRIANNA BRADEN

To the God of My Great-Great Grandfather

I try to write a poem about my mother
How she used to push my bangs from my face
When I was four years old, she told her father to give me a haircut
He took me to the barber
It took three years for my sideburns to regrow
Parts of us refuse to come back quickly
I try to write a poem for my father
To explain what it felt like when he called me baby
I had an ear infection and he placed his hand on the side of my face
I realized then what I had been missing
I try to write a poem to my great-great grandfather
Did he know what it would be like to come here
How to conform to this country of gold
What God did he pray to in the middle of the night?
Maybe I shall send one up to him while kneeling in a pew
I try to write a poem for myself
I have more questions than answers:
How do I capture that night where we all stood on the balcony
Laughing as we shared a pack of cigarettes?
It took ten minutes for someone to find a lighter
It was in my pocket the whole time

My hand cramps as I attempt to create answers
I try to write a poem to my country
This is where I stop and pause
I listen deep to the silence surrounding me
I can feel the bustling of men in the street,
The backs of women straining under the weight of a nation
That never liked the color brown
America, America
When did I realize that the poem I was writing was to you all
along?
I am left with one more question:
Will you listen after I am gone?

WINNER OF THE CATHOLIC POETRY SOCIETY AWARD

BENEDIKT KRAEMLING

Equivocation of a water drop.

That humid day for the oaks where the droplets start
To pearl readily to the edge from the leaf's heart,

Solely commencing one's journey soaring into the infinite world,
Forming its character and shape, from being hurled,

Four seconds have passed or was it four years?
Feeling fully mature for the impact.

Bursting on the real world and seeing many fears,
Unripe as ever but set for escapade to attract.

The droplet has split into all directions not knowing which one's the one,

A dried droplet would say "to know, what you really want, takes time",

What is time.

WINNER OF THE MERILH AWARD

ZACHARY AUSTIN SCHULTZ

Comedic and Tragic Outlooks on Life

A Tragic Outlook on Life

In the life of man, intense and undeserved suffering is ubiquitous; but through observing and confronting such patent misfortune and injustice, the tormented soul in search of comfort can find partial solace in the recognition that, without the existence of suffering, he would not know the pleasure. The enlightened view that there is indeed a redemptive element to suffering can free the inflicted soul from the loss of self that often results in the presence of utter despair. As such, a tragic outlook on life is one that recognizes the existence of unjust suffering in the world but also acknowledges that the suffering, albeit undeserved, can bring about a true appreciation for the subtle pleasures of life. Hence, a philosopher who adheres to this tragic outlook would hold that the proper human emotion in the face of suffering is not mere commiseration with the sufferer; it is also the appreciation of the beautiful moments in life in which such undeserved suffering is absent. Without having first witnessed the devastation of war, one could not fully appreciate peace. Without having first felt the sharp pain of betrayal, one could not fully value loyalty. Without having first experienced injustice, one could not fully understand the value of justice. Hence, a tragic outlook on life urges the observer to acknowledge the existence of suffering and, from that acknowledgment, obtain an appreciation for the value of peace and justice, motivating his efforts toward ensuring the prevention of future unwarranted suffering.

The contention that tragedies use suffering to promote an appreciation for life is evidenced in Nora's recognition of injustice in *A Doll House*. After observing Helmer's unchivalrous—and unexpected—reaction to learning about Nora's financial indiscretions, she comes to a life-altering insight: Helmer “[is not] the man [she] thought [he was]” as “it dawned on [her] that [she had] been living with a stranger” (660). With this painful recognition, Nora comes to understand that there is

more to life than being Helmer's doll – her thoughts can be separate from those of her father and husband. In short, the one redemptive element of discovering her life in ruins is that she can have “[c]omplete freedom” in that she can be her own person and provide for herself. For the first time in the course of their marriage, and perhaps in her entire life, Nora vocalizes her dissatisfaction with the patriarchal social order that governed the time. Although the likelihood that Helmer himself will change is small, his declaration to Nora that “I can transform myself—I have the strength for it” underscores the transformative element of the tragic outlook: Nora's suffering sheds light on the value of freedom, the importance of which even someone as firm in his convictions as Helmer recognizes (660). Hence, through witnessing Nora's suffering, and her subsequent recognition of the oppressiveness of the patriarchal society of the time, the observer can emerge from his own ignorance and be motivated to effectuate the social change that prompted Helmer to treat Nora more like a “doll” than a spouse.

In similar fashion, the suffering that results from Jason leaving his wife Medea in order to wed King Creon's daughter is conducive to the recognition of injustice and the subsequent appreciation of justice. Upon learning of Jason's intention to leave her for the princess, Medea is overcome with the desire for vengeance: “May I see [Jason], along with his bride and the palace scraped down to nothing, crushed into splinters” (163). The chorus contextualizes Medea's passionate anger by revealing the familial relationships and immense wealth that Medea sacrificed in order to protect and advance her husband. But notwithstanding the utmost compassion of the chorus members for Medea's unforeseeable situation, the chorus does not endorse Medea's lust for vengeance. In spite of the chorus' imploring Medea to abandon her insidious plot, Medea retorts: “There is no other [path]. It's understandable that you would say this—you're not the one who's suffered” (178). In her statement, Medea underscores an important point that is at the core of a tragic outlook. In Medea's view, for one to comprehend the state of mind of a grieved individual such as herself, one must have first-hand knowledge of a similar degree of suffering. For the proponent of the above tragic philosophical outlook, however, Medea's argument is incompatible with the tragic outlook. Hence, the logical path forward is to turn Medea's argument on its head. The chorus' distance from Medea's suffering—the same as that of the audience—enables them to use their cognitive faculties to

analyze the whole picture and deduce therefrom the most appropriate path forward. In so doing, the case can be made that Medea's suffering, although painful, provides her with an excellent educational lesson for her two young sons. Having experienced such an utter betrayal puts Medea in the rare position of using her first-hand experience in order to effectuate positive change through educating the next generation of men on the value of faithfulness to one's spouse. Medea's emphatic rejection of the chorus' inclination to proceed with caution, however, deprives her of using her suffering to improve the condition of civilization.

A Comedic Outlook on Life

In a culture replete with strict normative social rules, occasional breaks with tradition, when such departures are not injurious to an individual's wellbeing, enables him to experience a brief liberation from the dominant social suppression through the wonderful sensation of laughter. As such, a comedic outlook on life is one that focuses on the bright side of life, focusing on the good aspects of a situation as opposed to the bad. In short, one ought to make the best of the cards one is dealt and not allow minutiae to stand in the path of one's happiness. The adherent to this comedic philosophical view can find humor in almost all such social situations, and that humor is conducive to accomplishing a positive end: preventing one from becoming a misanthrope. In the grand scheme of things, life is too short to spend in dedication to reaching the impossible goal of perfection. Life is not perfect and it need not be in order for people to enjoy it.

The concepts of benign violation and carnivalesque each promote the above comedic outlook. In respect to the former, all comedic moments are humorous as the result of being inappropriate while also innocuous. The inclination to maintain strict adherence to socially-sanctioned norms of behavior is not conducive to a well-lived life. Hence, situations that are taboo, albeit to a small degree, are humorous because such situations do not result in serious harm to others. Moments like these provide a small, much-needed break to the observer from the strict societal expectations regulating proper social conduct. Conduct that violates social norms and is also harmful cannot be squared with a comedic outlook: instead of encouraging a break from tradition, it would help to reinforce the idea that doing so results in serious consequences.

In respect to the latter, comedies are often carnivalized in order to suspend the hierarchal structure of civilization—allowing individuals from different class backgrounds to intermingle. For instance, in *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio, the chief steward to Olivia, has a large degree of interaction with Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, individuals of an elevated social standing to his own. Under the comedic philosophical framework, this interaction helps an individual look on the bright side of life: the values of one individual does not mean that “there shall be no more cakes and ale” for those who think different from himself (449). In such moments, the comedic philosopher appreciates the comedic aspect of abandoning the hope of absolute perfection in exchange for the more realistic and beneficial goal of living an enjoyable existence.

In all three of the comedies covered in this course—*Fuddy Meers*, *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Twelfth Night*—the stage is set with the main character finding himself or herself in an unenviable position. In the first scene of *Fuddy Meers*, Clair learns that she has a rare cognitive condition that deprives her of a proper-functioning recollection. In *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Ernest is unable to obtain Lady Bracknell’s approval of his marriage proposal to her daughter Gwendolen because he does not know his parentage. And at the outset of *Twelfth Night*, Viola laments the recent death of her twin brother at sea. However, in spite of these difficulties, all three characters take an active role in moving their lives forward, as opposed to dwelling in perpetual self-pity and despair. In other words, each makes the best of the unfavorable hand that life dealt them. As a result of their resilience, the situation that plagued them does not appear as bleak in the end as it did in the beginning: Claire’s condition at the end of *Fuddy Meers* appears to be in a much improved state than was the case at the play’s inception; Ernest discovers his parentage and as a result Lady Bracknell deems him to be a more-than-suitable candidate for marrying her daughter Gwendolen; and Viola learns that her brother did not perish after all, whereupon she is free to dispense with her masculine disguise and pursue a romantic relationship with her heart’s desire, Duke Orsino. None of these improvements, however, would have been possible had the characters succumb to the perceived finality of their initial situation.

A comic outlook hence views even the worst situations in life—discovering that one has a rare cognitive disorder, is unable to wed one’s true love or will never again see one’s twin brother alive—as capable of

improvement; but in order to obtain this improvement, one must see the subtle humor in the ill situation: Claire accompanies a deformed stranger; Ernest plans to be rebaptized in order to win Gwendolen's love; and Viola masquerades as a man and unintentionally wins the love of the fairest woman in the land, whose hand in marriage is sought by her handsome and prominent master. In the end, consistent with a comedic outlook, the problems that seemed irremediable at the outset of these comedies obtain positive solutions at their conclusions as the result of odd and extraordinary coincidences. It is clear, then, that life is unpredictable, an insight that leads the comedic philosopher to believe that even the worst situations are amendable.

The personal outlook on life that I have adopted as a result of two decades of life experience is a blend of the above comedic and tragic philosophical outlooks. That is, there are times in life when I utilize a comedic outlook as well as times when I believe a tragic outlook is more appropriate. When faced with the recognition that suffering is universal, I have found comfort in a tragic outlook: without knowing pain, I would not appreciate the subtle delights that the magnificent and complex features of nature offer to mankind. Just as Adam and Eve did not appreciate the oasis that God forged for them in Eden until their expulsion therefrom, a tranquil, starlit night's sky would mean little to me without the prior experience of urbanization.

There have been times in my life, however, when a tragic outlook was not sufficient to deal with a troubling, faith-weakening situation. I believe that a comedic outlook is more appropriate when, through the benefit of hindsight, the reaction to a particular situation, which can also appear bleak, has produced some unintentional outcomes. No one in life is the cause of his own existence and therefore no one can have universal control over their particular situations. And while it is true that one cannot control his situation all the time, one does maintain universal discretion over how he reacts to his situation. Without a significant alteration of the plot line, *Fuddy Meers* could be rewritten such that it would resemble a tragedy more than a comedy. Claire's reaction to the suffering which has engulfed her life and that of her son presents itself as the main reason the storyline appears comedic rather than tragic. Claire's willingness to roll with the punches, that is, allows the audience to not feel compelled to commiserate with Claire as they otherwise would.

A temptation to view the tragic and comedic outlooks expounded above as too similar might well befall the reader. However, there is a distinction to be made. In a tragic outlook, while one experiences severe suffering as an incommensurate consequence of his actions, he can come to appreciate a redemptive element of such suffering: appreciation for the times in his life that have been absent of pain. Or he might take notice of the subtle pleasures of life at present, such as the clockwork regularity of the sun setting in the West. In contrast, a comedic outlook does not require one to suffer in that, despite the difficulties of his situation, he has self-determination over his fate. While it is true that both place importance on the response of the individual to his particular circumstance, in the latter the individual has the power to improve his situation because the nature of that situation is not as grave. But in the former, the individual has only the power to prevent the suffering from transforming him into a misanthrope, which takes not only strength and resilience of character but many years of reflection; regardless of his perspective, that is, his situation remains just as undesirable as before.

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JOHANNA MEISTER

Invisible

(To Brito)

“Good morning, how can I help you?”

“Can I have eggs, potatoes and bacon?”

Mechanically, Randa scoops the food items on a plate and hands it over. It is 7:30 a.m. and the bright fluorescent light that reflects off the white walls of the university cafeteria makes her eyes squint and tear up. *You're welcome*, she thinks while handing over the plate.

“You have a good day, babe,” she says and turns to the next student. “Good morning, how can I help you?”

Student after student, Randa scoops eggs, potatoes, and bacon in various combinations and amounts on the plain white cafeteria plates, monotonous like a machine. “Good morning, how can I help you?” *Scoop, scoop*. “Have a good day, babe.” *Scratch, scratch*. The sound of the metal spoon scratching the bottom of the aluminum tray gives her goosebumps. *Chop, chop*. She parts the slimy yellow powder eggs in the metal box in front of her with the big metal spoon. A whiff of the poorly overcooked potatoes makes her awfully empty stomach turn. “How can I help you?”

She's been up since 5 a.m. Her feet hurt, not just because of the extra weight she has put on since her first daughter thirteen years ago, which kept adding with each of three children, but because she is standing essentially barefoot with no support in her flat-soled off-brand Converse shoes she found at Goodwill three years ago. Two and a half more hours of scooping and scratching ahead of her. Her eyelids are heavy. She didn't make it to bed until 2 a.m.. Her night shift at the bottling factory where she works to make some extra money didn't end until 1 a.m.. When she came home, she found Little Jake curled up in a ball on the couch crying. He misses Daddy. Randa feels a pinch in her heart thinking about last night. She wishes she could have been there to bring Little Jake to bed and wake him up with a kiss on his forehead in the morning, prepare him breakfast and make sure he makes it to school.

She tries to remember the last time they all had breakfast together, as a family – it must have been Christmas last year when she was lucky enough to get Christmas morning off and the kids were out of school. It was a good time. Now, she barely gets to see the kids. She tiptoes around them in the morning, preparing lunch bags for school, leaving the house and coming back home late at night to a messy apartment, complaint letters from teachers and crying Little Jake. Sometimes, she wonders if the kids even still knew her, knew their mother.

10:30 a.m.

Finally, her time to eat. For the last time this morning, Randa scoops the rest of the powder-eggs, bacon, and potatoes on a plate and walks over to a table in the seating area of the cafeteria. Her little table with the wooden chair is surrounded by hundreds of its look-alikes: dark grey tables – sprinkled with crumbs of the breakfast food and coffee spills – with empty brown chairs sitting in circles around them. Most students are in class now, only a handful of people are still keeping the tables company. It is finally quieter. The chit-chatting which always creates one big loud soundwave of voices has died down. Now, all Randa can hear is the beeping sound of the kitchen machines and the clinking of the dishes that her colleagues in the kitchen are cleaning and preparing for lunch. She sits down. Getting the weight off her feet and back feels good. She leans back in the chair for a minute and stretches her legs out, wiggling her feet. Her muscles relax and she feels a comfortable stretch in the back of her legs and calves. She scoops a fork-full of egg and potatoes in her mouth. Her stomach utters a hungry growl. She hasn't eaten since her last meal in the cafeteria which was lunch the day before.

While eating her breakfast, Randa lets her eyes wander through the room. She notices the army of empty tables and chairs that surround her. It seems like they are turning their wooden brown backs on her while she sits there, alone. She sees students with their heavy backpacks rushing in and out of the cafeteria. She never went to college. She was lucky enough to finish high school and then find a job at the little fast food stall on the corner of her street. That's where she met Jake. Jake, the truck driver, the love of her life, the father of her kids. He would always stop by with his truck when he was in town for a delivery. Back then, when she was skinny and young, he noticed her and asked her out. The rest is

history – wedding at the courthouse, little Jamie already on her way. Jordan and Justin followed a year and a half later. That’s when Jake’s company went bankrupt and he lost his job. To keep supporting the family, Randa switched jobs, took on a second one, while Jake decided to retire at the age of 39. *It’s fine, really*, she tells herself every day. *It is for the kids*. But all she really wants is to just hear those two words once, a little appreciation for the hard work and long hours she puts in every day. How hard can it be? She places her tongue in between her teeth, opens her mouth and silently mouths: *Th-a-n-k Y-o-u*. That was easy. She wishes Jake would have used some of his endless free time to practice saying those words to her. Jake, the lazy husband, the unemployed alcoholic, the asshole that left her.

Suddenly, she feels a thud in her back, she almost falls over onto her half-full plate of eggs, bacon, and potatoes. She turns around to see what or who it was that had bumped into her, hoping for an apology. But, as she looks around, all she sees is another heavy book bag on two skinny white legs walking away from her towards the cafeteria door. She sighs and feels a sting in her heart. This is nothing new. She is used to being overlooked not just by her own family, yet it still hurts every time it happens. At home, Randa has always tried to teach her kids how to be respectful and considerate. When Jamie spilled her juice in front of her neighbor’s apartment door the other day, she made her ring the doorbell and apologize. Then showed her where to find a cloth, some water, and cleaning spray to clean it up. Jamie didn’t like facing the consequences of her clumsiness and started crying and stomping her foot. However, after she cleaned everything up, the neighbor’s lady complimented her for being such a well-behaved young lady. The rest of the day, Jamie seemed to have grown two inches as she was walking around smiling and acting like the perfect child. In front of her eyes, Randa sees her daughter bumping into somebody. She hopes that she would have learned enough from her mother by now so that she would turn around and at least say, “I’m sorry.”

10:55 a.m.

Randa places her palms on the table and pushes her heavy weight up back onto her aching feet. Time for lunch. She puts up her plate and slowly makes her way back over to the serving station. She slides the

black apron over her head and ties the strings around her waist. She bends down to lift the heavy aluminum tin full of mashed potatoes out of the warmer. Her back is tight and she feels a small pinch in her lower spine. Her back has never been the best, but for the last couple of months it has been acting up more. The pain has gotten to a point where she would have to lean on the kitchen counters every now and then to get at least some relief. It would seem like an easy thing for her co-workers to switch duties with her, but nobody seems to notice her pain. She places the mashed potatoes on the heating plate in front of her, slips on two disposable gloves and picks up the spoon. While waiting for the first hungry students to show up, her thoughts go back to Little Jake.

Ever since Jake left her, Little Jake started to wet the bed again. Some nights, he wouldn't even go to sleep. If he did, he would wake up crying from a nightmare. The nights she was home, she tried everything. She would sit by him, sing a lullaby, read a bedtime story, but nothing worked. Every night Little Jake looked at her with his beady eyes and asked that question that makes her chest feel tight and makes her break out in cold sweats: "When is Daddy coming home?" A couple days after Jake moved out for good – taking his suitcases and whatever he claimed to be his with him – she gathered her kids around her, pulled Little Jake into her lap and tried to explain what was going on. "Daddy decided to move on with his life. He won't be living with us anymore. He still loves you and he might come visit but for now it is just us: Jamie, Jordan, Justin, Little Jake, and mommy."

That night, Little Jake woke up crying for the first time and when she came to pick him up from the bed, she saw the dark stain on his sheets. How could he do that to the kids? Just leave them, make them feel like they weren't good enough, like they didn't matter. Randa feels a hot wave of anger rushing through her body. She clasps the serving spoon tighter until she feels the cold metal painfully pressing into the palm of her right hand. She noticed that something was off when he would come home smelling all good and with this stupid grinning smile on his face looking like a 13-year-old boy who had just found his older brother's *Playboy* magazines. Although she noticed, she was too tired to confront him about what was going on. Two jobs and the kids consumed not just all of her time but every ounce of her energy.

Her relationship with Jake had been falling apart since her last pregnancy. While Jake suddenly had all the time in the world, she didn't even get a minute of a day to herself. They barely spoke, and he turned into a stranger who she still had to share a bed with. During the day, he would hang out with the kids and make them laugh with his stupid childish ideas making her feel even less as a part of the family. At night, he usually left; went out for drinks with his men. After a while, he started to come home less and less and finally, he told her, "I am moving in with Justine."

She asked, "But, what about the kids?"

He shrugged his shoulders, looked at her with an arrogant side-grin and winked. "They like you better than me anyways. You got this."

That was two months ago. She hasn't seen him since. Sometimes, at night, she would think back to the time when she was skinny and young and worked at the fast food stall on the street corner. Back then, Jake would come in and give her that look that made her blush and set free the butterflies in her stomach. She can't remember the last time he looked at her like that. His eyes now are all for *Justine*. Randa doesn't know her, but she is probably still young and skinny. She hates Justine.

Randa looks up and sees a girl approaching the serving station. She is tall, skinny, with a young smiling face. *I bet it's her*. Randa can't help this thought that suddenly rushes through her head. *You bitch!* she wants to scream. *How dare you steal Little Jake's daddy!* She feels another hot anger wave rushing through her body into her arm. She lifts the serving spoon, ready to throw it at the awfully beautiful daddy-thief. She opens her mouth. "What can I get for you, sweetie?"

Last second, Randa gains back control over her thoughts and body. She transforms herself into the lunch-serving machine again, scooping mashed potatoes instead of powder-eggs onto the plate now. The girl takes it and walks away.

You're welcome. You're welcome for your lunch. You're welcome for Little Jake's daddy. You're welcome for my husband. Randa stares after her hoping the girl would notice the angry look she was shooting at the back of her head. No reaction. The girl picks out a fork from one of the silverware baskets on the center table of the cafeteria and walks over to the tables.

Randa takes a deep breath and tries to relax her tense shoulders. It is common hour now and students are starting to pour in. The soundwave of voices is building up again and starts roaring in her ears, the beeping noise of the kitchen machines behind her give her a headache. Luckily, she gets distracted asking “What can I get for you?” and scooping mashed potatoes onto the white cafeteria plates. Mechanically scooping away her anger, sadness and pain.

2:30 p.m.

Lunch was served. Plates and kitchen are clean again. It is Randa’s lunch time now. She walks over to the soup station to get some of the chicken noodle soup they had today. She pours the hot tasty smelling broth into a bowl, closes the lid and starts walking towards the tables again. Each step, she feels a shooting pain going up from her feet into her calves. She can’t wait to sit down. With both her hands around the steaming hot soup bowl, she steers towards the closest table. She focuses on the rim of the bowl to not spill any hot soup over herself or on the ground. Step by step she gets closer to the table and – *CRASH* – she walks into a soft, wall-like obstacle. The bowl of soup flies out of her hands, sprinkling the hot soup all over her and the obstacle in front of her – *SHATTER* – the ceramics bowl crashes and shatters into a hundred pieces on the ground. The obstacle is yelling.

“OUCH! For fuck’s sake! That HURTS! Can you not pay attention? Are you stupid or what?”

The hot soup sprinkle rain is followed by a flash flood of screaming insults. Randa freezes. She looks up at the fat white man in front of her – the soft wall-like obstacle she walked into and spilled her soup onto. His face is bright red with anger, his eyes are glaring at her and his mouth is wide open, spitting disgusting insults at her. She just stands there. She doesn’t feel the hot soup scalding the skin on her arms. She doesn’t care about the insults that keep coming at her. She feels great. She feels alive. Each bad word that hits her is breaking the invisible shell that seems to surround her. She can’t help but smile. For the first time in a long time, somebody is actually noticing her.

CONTRIBUTER BIOGRAPHIES

Brianna Braden is from Birmingham, AL and is currently studying English and Theology. She is frequently found scribbling on napkins, wearing too much yellow, and badgering professors or priests with existential life questions. Follow her ramblings on Instagram @Bthechange36 and Twitter @BBnickole.

Ashley Burroughs is a Philosophy major with minors in Pre-Law and Professional Writing. Her love for reading began with the words of William Faulkner and her love for writing is driven by her passion for feminism.

Rose Ellen Buzhardt is a junior from Birmingham, AL. She is a Secondary Education and English double major.

Korbi Clevinger is a Studio Art major from Mobile, AL.

Cecilia Dupepe is a junior from New Orleans, LA. She's an English major with a minor in Writing.

Benedikt Kraemling is a Marketing and Management major from Landshut, Germany. He loves soccer, hanging out with friends, and, very importantly, humor.

Noah McClure is a Political Science major from Odenville, AL.

Johanna Meister comes from a small town in the deep south of Germany of which no American can pronounce the name. From there, she moved to the Deep South of the U.S. in 2016 to play soccer for Spring Hill and study International Business and Hispanic Studies.

Caroline Moran is a sophomore Graphic Design major from Madison, MS. She loves doing cross fit, playing volleyball, making art, and spending time with friends and family as well as her two miniature poodles. She is the youngest of eight girls and is an extroverted introvert. Gryffindor, INFJ, virgo. Bad puns are her jam. Her art Instagram is @cmoran_art.

Zachary Austin Schultz is a double-major in Philosophy and Sociology here on the Hill. Among other interests, he has a deep passion for reading and writing, both of which tend to center around philosophical works (Dostoevsky has been a huge inspiration).

Haleigh Spragg is a Mobile native and junior pursuing a double major in Political Science and Philosophy. You might catch her running around campus carrying too many things or at any local coffee shop most evenings.

Shelby Thornton is a four-and-a-half year senior who is double majoring in Philosophy and Studio Art. She has lived in Mobile, AL her entire life. She enjoys writing as a form of self expression, as she is an artist.

Kathryn Weatherspoon is a Criminology major from Mobile, AL.

Caroline Weisinger, sophomore Louisiana native, is currently a Health Science major at the lovely Spring Hill College with a minor in Writing--her true passion. She flutters with excitement when it comes time to use words to tell the stories manifesting within her head. Find her on Instagram @carolineweisinger.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

For the first time in a decade, *The Motley* is alive and well. During the Spring 2020 semester, the journal thrived on a 675% increase in funding, quintupled staff, fancy new website, and heaps of student art and literature created with passion. Volume 71 marks the end of my two years as Editor-in-Chief and it's bittersweet; I'm thrilled to see *The Motley* revive, saddened knowing I have to leave it, and thrilled again remembering what good hands I'm leaving it in.

In the days leading up to publication, Spring Hill College made the decision to suspend classes through the remaining semester. Students across campus are reveling in an odd mixture of pre-apocalypse, last-hoorah, stressful yet optimistic fear. As seniors, I feel the Class of 2020 shares the same mess of emotions with a touch more fear. We've made Spring Hill our 'hill away from home' as promised in those recruitment emails we received in high school. How could we possibly go home when we're already here?

Still, we badgers are packing our bags between COVID-19 updates and quality time with best friends. None of us are quite certain what will come in the next few months, but *The Motley Crew* is certain our journal will remain an outlet for student creativity when campus life resumes.

Megan Lear, '20
Editor-in-Chief



L-R: Brian Druckenmiller, Anna Pellerin, Elizabeth Plasencia, Megan Lear, Olivia McNorton, Abby Rhodes

