

The Motley



Issue #72



The Motley

Student Art and Literature from
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Letter From The Editor

Dear readers,

This semester has been a whirlwind for everyone. Between COVID-19 becoming more widespread as well as issues that have always existed being brought to the spotlight, such as the Black Lives Matter Movement and the problems with police brutality, everyone's lives have been affected in one way or another. We students are not exempt from this.

The process of publishing Volume 72 during the 2020/2021 academic year has been hectic, but the result has been rewarding. Our crew has been hard at work from the very beginning to put together an enjoyable issue, and we are thankful for everyone's support. We wanted to give the students a place to speak out about anything on their minds, whether they were talking about the unfair treatment of minorities, the process of graduating from college, or anything else they wanted or needed to discuss. Through the writing and art we've collected in this issue, I hope that *The Motley* is able to provide a way for students to share their opinions, experiences, and creativity in a safe and judgment-free space.

Yours,

Aeries Plasencia, Class of '22

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The Orange Oyster

Brook Evans

As I walked, sand ripping my ankles,
I pondered what had become of you.
Then I saw it: the orange oyster,
the ocean kissing and caressing it in sand.

I first passed it by not wanting to steal it from her;
but as I walked back, the orange oyster was still there.
and rather than seeing a caress
I saw it being suffocated
By the sand the sea put there to hold it captive.

So I picked it up [I wouldn't dare say I rescued it]
and placed it on my dash.

I began to realize that
perhaps I should have focused more on the oranges
than the blues
because they seem to satisfy me
more than you.

Mirrors

Niyah Davis

Concessions to make
To a dear friend
Over a mutual
interest
We both hope in.

The game was well fought
Hoped, yet in vain
Better to have lost
Than to not play the game.

Only there when I call
Not when I don't
I cry in the mirror
Though I said I won't.

My bed is still made
There are still bluer skies
Long awaited
Now I arise

Though night is closing
Day drawing near
My dreams are now fading
To give way to my fears.

We all have our hopes
We all have our dreams
I now bid adieu
To the one that gleams

Now I say good night
And I say hello
I'll cry in the mirror
And he'll never know.

S-C-R-A-B-B-L-E, Scrabble

Cecilia Dupepe

I sit tonight, like every night,
Playing Scrabble with the woman who raised me
The house is humid
And smells of the olives in her martini
Just like it always has

O-L-I-V-E, olive.

This Scrabble board is older than me.
I trace the soft wooden squares
Of a tree from a place I do not recognise
They clink like a maraca in their velvet bag,
Reminding me of the one my mother confiscated
Years ago, when I decided to start a band at ten, p.m.

C-L-I-N-K, clink.

My dog is drinking water
A familiar sound now paired with grey fur
Down her snout and forehead
She looks more like my mother than I do now
Greyer, kinder, and funnier than me.

G-R-E-Y, grey.

My childhood bedroom is covered with dust
And painted a shade of orange
I was convinced would stay in style.
So we play in the kitchen
On the wood table with carvings of math problems,
Smiley faces, and accidental stabbings.

K-N-I-F-E, knife.

I haven't played Scrabble in years,
But it's hard to forget the rush
Of placing a Z on a triple word score
Followed by, "that's not a word!"
And some yelling, some laughing, some play
My mother is always right.

Z-E-N-O-N, zenon.

Being home is a game
I didn't know I would have to restart.
I remembered all the rules.
Now, it seems the rules are changing,
The words are longer and more confusing now.

B-I-T-T-E-R, bitter.

I'm beating my mother at Scrabble
For the first time in both our lives.
But in winning I have lost something
Like finding a beautiful green olive,
But you have to drink a salty martini to reach it.

S-W-E-E-T, sweet.

Take Off The Mask

Chase Essary



Murkey Reflections

Ronnie Bergeron

How do we know we are real? Truly, how can we be sure we are actually alive? Well, I have an answer, and it's the feeling of my foot on the pedal. Whenever I begin to wonder the truth, I just push a little harder and hear the engine roar. I've been driving since prom night, which means I haven't talked to another person I know in roughly twelve days. I can still hear my mom screaming in the back of my head: "Katey, don't you go to that dance!" Well, a little too late for that now, Mom, a little too late. The screams don't matter anymore; they're only echoes. They're far, far behind me, and all that's ahead of me are open fields and forests along the highway.

Apparently, someone else wanted to join the conversation. "Grrbgh," my stomach yelled at me. As annoyed as I was that she interrupted my internal monologue, I had to agree. Driving along highways to a place you don't know yet to escape a life you don't want to live makes you pretty hungry. "Me too, girl," I said to my stomach like a madwoman, "I hear you and agree. Let's go get some burgers." An unhappy grumble. "Maybe some breakfast food?" Happier grumble.

Having appeased my unruly stomach with the thought of pancakes, I trekked onward to the next rest stop. Suddenly, I saw a large and ugly sign to my right. "Mom and Pop Diner, the place where the food is meh, but you eat what Momma serves ya! Two miles away on the right!" Wow, I have never heard of a more disgusting diner in the world. With a click, I turned on my blinker and got into the right lane.

What can I say about the Mom and Pop Diner other than the words "weird yet average?" The coffee and pancakes were meh, and so was the decoration of the restaurant. The waitress was fine as well, I guess, overall a basic, average place. Sitting at my syrup-stained booth, I was one of only five people in the restaurant. Only four of us if you didn't count the roach in the nearby corner the size of a child. The waitress told me the cockroach's name was Ryan after I

noticed him in the giant wall-sized mirror across from my booth that provided me with a view of the whole restaurant. Considering he has yet to eat me or my food, I would say I am on good terms with Ryan. However, Ryan and his cockroachiness couldn't distract from the energetic pull of the old lady sitting behind me.

Sitting directly behind me against the back of the booth's seat is a stunning old lady in a purple button-up shirt tucked into her tacky corduroy trousers. I didn't notice her at first, but once I saw her, I couldn't take my eyes off of her reflection in the wall mirror. She was sitting alone while eating her burger, but she was violently waving her hands as if there was someone at the booth with her. After a minute, I realized she was signing in ASL. Using all of my remaining knowledge of my third-grade sign language class, I picked apart half of a sentence. *I found your...under..... yesterday.*

What could she have been talking about? Even weirder, who could she be talking to? There was no one else there, but surely she wasn't signing to herself. I can practically hear Mrs. Schmidt turning in her grave at my shoddy interpretation skills. I see the lady signing again, which pulls me out of my trance. Looking at her in the mirror, I start to listen in again. Look in? Nope, not now, Katey, that's a question for later. Listening/reading, hell eavesdropping in on her conversation, I hear/read what she says clearly. *Can I help you, young lady?*

Shit. "Me?" I asked, looking around as if she was asking the waitress or the creepy burnout a few tables over. Hell, maybe she was just misgendering Ryan, but I knew she caught me. Raising an eyebrow, she nodded and started giggling. Grabbing her cane that I never noticed before, she pushed herself up and started hobbling over to my booth. Jesus, God, Buddha, hell I don't care I'll take Yoda - if anyone hears this, now's the time to strike me down, please and thank you.

"Well, young lady, since you seem so interested in me, how can I help you?" Her voice was surprisingly soft, each word flowing loosely into the next with a certain kindness I don't understand.

"I am so sorry, Ma'am! I didn't mean to listen in on your conversation," I stumbled, looking at her apologetically. Eyebrow raise and a grin. "I mean; I didn't mean to read in on you!" Furrowed brow of confusion. Shit, this is not how I wanted this to go. Suddenly, all my worries went away because she started

to laugh like I gave some stand-up bit.

“Well baby, for starters, it’s eavesdropping, call it what it is. What’s your name?” She asked me, slouching comfortably against the poorly-cushioned booth backs.

“I’m Katey, and I am so sorry for eavesdropping on you,” I said, probably as red as a baboon’s butt. The lady smiled at me like I was a puppy or something. I normally hated that kind of thing. Those looks make me feel inferior; but this was different. I felt like she saw me as her equal, like we were the same. Then, she turned towards the mirror and signed *She good...looks like...be quiet!* Okay so maybe I didn’t want us to be the same.

“Well,” she said, turning her attention away from her invisible and/or non-existent friend and back to me, “my name is Myra, and I am glad to see ya. Is there something on my face because you’re looking at me pretty funny right now?” Is there a shade of red even redder than baboon butt? If so, that’s probably what my face looked like. She must have noticed because her face wrinkled in confusion, and she said, “You okay sugar?” Something about the way her dark brown eyes were framed by her light brown skin reminded me of mud and other earthly things. Especially because when I looked a little closer at her face, I noticed that her eyes were like trees. Not only in color but that all around them were small white lines, scars forming the roots of a plant. It looked as if she had gone through glass face first.

Maybe that’s why I felt so calm around her, because she was so grounded. I could probably tell her anything.

My phone started buzzing to the beat of his favorite song. I clicked “deny” and sent him to voicemail. I couldn’t tell anyone about that situation, and certainly not a crazy old lady at the Mom and Pop Diner.

“Yes ma’am, I’m fine I just got lost in thought. I’m sorry I eavesdropped on your conversation with...” I said lamely before realizing I didn’t know what I was saying. “Uhm, I mean, I don’t know very much ASL, so I didn’t pick up on much. I’m sorry still though!” God, Katey get it together! Myra smiled at me and looked back at her booth again. *She knows...Don’t worry...Okay.*

“Uhm, how are you Myra? Are you here with anyone today?” Alright, I’ll admit it, that wasn’t the smoothest way to ask who she was talking to, but at least I didn’t ask straight up. Besides, I’ve read books like this before, and if I’m

right, she'll tell me she's been talking to her dead husband or something.

All of a sudden, Myra's eyes went wide with shock. "Well, of course! You can't see him? Surely you're not one of the blind!"

Okay, so clearly I was wrong after all. She's just straight-up crazy. There's no denying it. "No ma'am, I can see clear as day," I said, slowly eyeing the nearest exits.

"No, I don't mean you can't see the world, I mean you're one of the blind! You really can't see my husband over there?" She said, frantically waving her finger in the direction of her table where literally no one sat. Was she actually crazy? She seemed so nice I wouldn't want to have to leave her randomly, but she's starting to scare me.

A buzzing in my pocket, the bumps of "Vienna," tapping my leg, echoing into my heart. You know what, bring it on Myra, I've seen weirder and worse. I sighed and tried to calm myself down before speaking. I needed to get her back to whatever old people home she came from, so I sweetly smiled at her and replied, "No, Myra, I'm sorry, but I don't see him. Look, you seem very sweet, is there someone I should call to come to get you?"

Myra laughed, rolled her tree-like eyes, and crossed her arms.

"Oh sugar, you must think I'm crazy, don't you? Look, baby, he's real all right, but it would seem you're still blind to the ring," she said. She looked me up and down before adding, "It's a shame, you have the sight, you just haven't used it yet."

Crack, that must be what she smokes, right? The only ring I know is a wedding ring and those mushroom circle things. What were they called again? Wait, she couldn't possibly mean that?

"Myra, do you mean a Fairy Ring? Are you telling me your husband is a fairy?"

Her eyes widened, and a grin covered her entire face. Grabbing my hand, she started giggling and saying, "Yes! Yes, Katey, you got it!"

Oh my God, either this is the start of some horrible YA fantasy novel like adventure or she really does smoke crack and I need to call the police. Looking into her eyes, I saw my reflection, a perfect picture of my white shirt and blue jeans with a blobby abstraction of my face, my eyes hidden from me.

Reclaiming my hands, I sat back in my seat and took a deep breath.

“Okay, so you’re telling me you, a normal and human gal, have a husband who I can’t see because he is a member of the fae, and that is the person you have been signing to the whole time?”

She shook her head slightly and looked at me like a poor, confused child. So much for the non-condescending thing.

“No baby, you can see him if you finally open your eyes. I wish you could. He’s gorgeous.” She looked so sincere, which was the scary thing. She really was crazy, and I had to leave immediately. “Buzz buzz,” said my phone right on cue for the worst possible timing. Every time I want to leave, the universe just has to make me remember my other option. Clearly, I can’t judge any kind of crazy, and besides, now I’m interested.

“Well,” I said, taking my phone out and putting it on the table, “what’s he look like? Describe him to me.” Myra looked intrigued and turned to the mirror. *Can I? I know she... you of...but she is good.* I couldn’t figure out that one word she kept saying, but I’m sure it was a name sign. After a moment, she nodded to me and started speaking, not looking up from the mirror where her supposed husband was. “Oh, baby, I wish you could see him; he is just so stunning. His name is River, and he’s a forest spirit. As you said, he is one of the fae; he was killed on the side of the road, and his spirit protects the travelers on the road. He’s about six feet tall, has skin the shade of you with spots the shade of you, and eyes the color of your shirt.”

My shirt was white, so that was unsettling, to say the least. What was a little more unsettling was that, well, I could believe her. “Okay,” I said cautiously, “And is he deaf? How did you meet? Tell me some more!”

Myra hung her head and smiled at her lap. Not looking up, she said, “No, I’m sorry I must be wasting your time. I’ll just leave.”

Before she could even stand up, we both heard a loud vibration against our table. Can’t that dumbass see that I clearly don’t want to talk to him? You would think after someone stabs your eye with a rose and runs away from you, said person would understand your reluctance to see them again. Myra must have noticed me getting lost in my memory spiral because she suddenly looked at me like some sort of protective mother.

“Please?” I said, turning off the phone completely. “I don’t feel like leaving yet. Just tell me.” She looked in the mirror again, but this time she didn’t talk.

She just listened to her invisible partner in crime.

Nodding to the mirror, she turned to me and told me she wanted to make a deal. She would tell me how she met River if I told her what was happening with me. I sat there for what was probably a whole minute but felt like forever. How could I tell her, how could I tell anyone what happened that night? I looked at my phone, my reflection of my face in the dim black screen blurred by my fingerprints. Well, I didn't have much to lose, seeing as how the ugly truth remained that I would likely never see Myra again.

"Deal, but you have to go first," I said, taking a bite of my now cold pancakes.

"Okay, dear, I'll start from the beginning," Myra said, looking at me as she recounted her tale.

"When I was your age, way back in 1966, I was driving along the highway with my gal pal Cheryl. We were best friends and had been seeing each other in private for the past year. Since we wouldn't be able to be together in our old town, we had to run away. I know what you're thinking, but she wasn't really gay. I knew I liked both, but she made sure I knew I was her only exception. That's not the point though. The point is that Cheryl and I stole her father's car and started our escape." Myra had to stop for a second to catch her breath and wipe away a slight tear that was blooming in her eye. She wasn't even looking at me anymore so much as she was in the distance, probably relieving whatever memory she was about to share with me. "We were only seventeen, and she hadn't driven very much before. Obviously, we were rushing into it, but we were so in love we didn't mind. It was just us, driving down an empty road to our future — just Myra and Cheryl. Then, there was a third member of our company. The deer was so fast, and Cheryl was too busy looking at me to react. Suddenly, Cheryl's body was slouched and mangled on the side of the road, and I was on the crushed hood, my head through the windshield."

Holy shit, I felt terrible; I had no idea what I was asking Myra to do telling this story. There were waterfalls of tears streaking her cheeks like petals. She never stopped though.

"Through the blood and glass, I could see the ghost of the deer in front of me. 'I am River, the god of the deer of this forest. Why have you hurt

my kin?’ But after a minute of looking at me, he simply told me he could help me. He said if I stayed with him forever along the roads, he would heal me. However, doing so would cost him a part of himself, and I would have to promise never to leave him. So, to answer your question, yes, he is deaf. We met because after my lover died and I was injured, he gave up his deer form and his hearing to help me, for whatever reason he has.

“Now,” she said, wiping away her tears, “because you remind River and me of Cheryl because you both look so similar, we can’t let you leave without helping you. The universe clearly put you in our path for a reason. So, what’s the problem?”

I sat, looking away from her out of shame. I hadn’t thought I would ever be able to say this out loud and I didn’t know how she could help, but something was telling me I needed to tell her.

“At my senior prom, my boyfriend Adam had gotten drunk and tried to... he tried... and I couldn’t stop him... his grip was so strong around me, pushing me into the grass... and I didn’t mean to... really... the roses were just... there... and I can’t...”

I started to lose it, and the words started tumbling out of my mouth. Myra’s story was so horrid and descriptive but I wasn’t her. I don’t know how she managed to just say the trauma out loud, admitting it happened. I was not Myra. I am Katey, and I couldn’t admit I was broken or the pieces would finally fall. Myra nodded and got up from her seat. The taps of her cane against the dust and sugar covered floors formed a synched percussion with my heart. When she came back, she had a small handheld, makeup mirror. She didn’t sit back down. She simply kissed me on the cheek and whispered in my ear, “Go home, baby. You can travel as long as you need, running away from the problem is okay for a while. You’ll see pretty quickly through that mirror though that no matter how far you run, your past is still behind you. You can fix this. You are strong.”

“Wait!” I said, jumping up from my seat and grabbing Myra’s elbow as she walked away. “You told me magic was real, can’t you help me fix what happened?” She stood straighter, still looking ahead. Then I heard her voice for the last time before she left the restaurant and before I could find her outside, disappeared: “I’m sorry, baby girl, but there are some cuts made by things too

evil to be healed by anything other than time. Besides, the magic is the fact that you're alive and that you will regrow. I know you can, and I know you will."

Sitting in my car in the parking lot, I was surrounded by silence except for my heavy breathing. It had been half an hour since I had finished my luke-warm coffee, paid, and bid farewell to Ryan the roach. Now, I was alone in my car with a small mirror upside down on my passenger seat. Taking a deep breath and turning on my phone, I see a message notification. [From: Adam "Answer me, NOW you li-" press open to see the rest of the message.] I sigh and turn my head to the mirror.

If I was going to move on from this whole experience, I would have to look in the mirror eventually. I picked it up, still looking at the back of it. It was a small silver hand mirror, covered in spots of light brown rust. Almost directly in the middle of the back was a crudely done engraving, reading, "C + M." I had to do it now, or I never would. With a painfully slow turn of my wrist, I saw my reflection in the mirror. Staring back at me was, well, me. Crystal is clear and ready to do what she needs to. Placing the mirror in my pocket, I turned the key in the ignition.

My Bully's Enemy

Abigail Palopoli

My bully hitches a tent atop my brain
Unwelcome but expected is her stay -
Camping all day to grin as I grieve

Her morning coffee spills
Staining the inner folds -
Now soiled are my memories
Once swathed in spotless silk

My bully is unbothered by misdirections
Indifferent to distractions -
Building a fire to pollute my mind

Her words with knives attack
Plunging each lobe -
Now wounded are my thoughts
Once shielded in solid steel

I yield and become her accomplice
With nothing to protest
I tilted the coffee.
I buried the knife.
Her unkind will to which I submit
That flair for persuasion
Does sicken and exhaust

No one threatens our routine
All morning, day, and night
We bruise and smear my brain
But after twelve, the enemy she fears
Knocks on my door
With blankets and dreams to defend
My bully's enemy, the Sandman, is my friend

Romanticizing The Rented Heart

Ronnie Bergeron

The spotless carpet floors
The stairs that never groan
The walls clean and unmarked
Because lord knows we don't own

The clean door frame
Unmarked and unscarred
No playing catch outside
Our building has no yard

They say learning a house
Is not a home
Your name in the cement
Well hell if I
Didn't know
My childhood's rent

They say that they can't leave
They belong in that place
But how could I not
We're in borrowed space

His whole house is his own
Never using a coaster
His drinks leave a stain
His walls filled with posters

The stories love them
Their house provides
An arc
But no one writes us
Our house is rented
We never made a mark

His Different Place

Avery Thayer

He says that He is from a different place.

Where strawberries grow,
and honeybees roam.

He says that He is from a different place.

With skies so clear,
there is no dead of night.

He says there is a different place.

With company true,
there is no need for doubt.

He says there is a different place.

And if I close my eyes,

I will see it too.

So, I closed my eyes--
and I will never open them again.

Sunset

Kyla Shappell

The lake was silent, glistening underneath vibrant colors as the sun laid to rest, its reflection equally as breathtaking. We sat at the edge of the lake, watching the soft shades of amber and rose fade into one another. Our breath cut through the cold air as he placed his warm hand on my thigh and sent chills down my back. I lay my head on his shoulder and listened to the cool breeze make its way past us, rustling the leaves and flipping up the corners of the blanket we sat on. A smile grew on my face as I shut my eyes and took in a long, deep breath. Letting it go, I looked up at him and recognized a smile of equal bliss.

We talked until the colors of the lake disappeared behind the trees and all that was left were the shimmering stars, like splattered paint on a dark canvas. We compared fears, expressed our dreams, relived old memories, and revealed our beliefs. We talked for hours, yet every time I thought we had covered everything and there couldn't possibly be more to talk about, the conversation pursued. Talking to him was far from difficult, and I allowed myself to be vulnerable, disclosing my every thought.

"What are you most afraid of?" I asked, popping a Hershey's kiss into my mouth. We'd stopped at a gas station on the way to the lake and he'd bought me a bag of chocolate accompanied by a single orange rose. I hadn't asked for either, but he constantly insisted on surprising me with little things such as these, and referred to them as "one out of a thousand, for absolutely no reason at all."

"What am I most afraid of?" he pondered for a moment. "Other than spiders, you mean?" he grinned while unwrapping another kiss and handing it to me.

"Yes, other than spiders," I laughed, taking the chocolate. He looked away toward the trees and tilted his head in thought.

"I'm afraid of dying," he said finally, meeting my eyes to gauge what I was thinking. "How come?" I questioned.

"I..." he thought. "I just really love my life." He smiled and took my hand as we continued talking. "And I don't ever want it to end."

I glanced at the time only to realize that it was a quarter 'til midnight: almost curfew. We would have to head home. We gathered the soft blanket on which we'd been sitting along with what was left from our picnic of McDonald's burgers and hot fudge sundaes and made our way to his car. Unfaltering with the change of scenery, our dialogue remained consistent during the majority of the car ride back to his house.

"How long has it been now?" I asked, grinning because I already knew.

"Almost four months," he replied without hesitation.

It had been four months officially, our first date being two months prior. At the time, there was a new restaurant in town and he had offered to take me. I hadn't had any expectations for that night, but if I had I know he would have surpassed them. It was easily the best first date I'd ever been on. We sat in the booth, talking and laughing and getting to know each other for the very first time.

"Titanic," I answered after being asked about my favorite movie. By this time, we'd already finished our meals hours ago but had no intention of leaving just yet. We sat with no sense of time, no sense of anything, really, other than the task of getting to know the stranger sitting across from us.

"Really?" he grinned, raising his eyebrows. "I've never seen it."

I opened my mouth and widened my eyes dramatically. "You're kidding!" I exclaimed and he shook his head in response. "That's unacceptable. We're probably gonna have to fix that." He agreed, but only on the condition that I would have to watch Star Wars in return since I hadn't seen those either. "Fair terms, I guess." I laughed, giddy but trying to play it cool. Eventually, the restaurant began closing and we were asked to leave. He drove me back home in his dark green 1997 camaro that smelled like freshly picked cherries, a smell I didn't know I would grow to like so much. We sat in my driveway and continued talking for several more hours before our first night together came to an end.

Even from the beginning he was the easiest person to talk to. I'd known him for only this short time, but I felt at home in his company. I recognized him as someone I deeply trusted, someone who made me feel safe because I knew how deeply he cared about me. I wished he knew how deeply I cared about him.

As we grew closer to his house after our time at the lake, I recognized a feeling of anxiousness beginning to settle. I swallowed and became silent, attempting to sort out what I was feeling. I'm sure he noticed the change in dynamic, but he didn't say anything and I was grateful. I pondered and reviewed our night together silently in my head for a few minutes. I felt so strongly for him, and I knew that, but I didn't want to rush anything without being completely sure. I'd felt this way once before, but this was much different. These feelings were strong and unmistakable, although the most vulnerable parts of myself constantly tried to convince me I was wrong. I had only known him for the better half of a year. How could a bond become this strong in such a short amount of time? How could I feel this way toward someone I hardly knew? But I did know him, and he knew me more than anyone else and he saw me for the person I wanted to be.

We reached his house several minutes later, my heart sinking as we pulled into the driveway. I knew we wouldn't have much time before I would have to leave, as I needed to be home in ten minutes and I usually made it a priority to abide by my parents' rules, as there weren't many of them. I stepped out from the car and walked around to meet him on the other side. I stood on my toes and wrapped my arms around his neck. I welcomed his warm embrace for several moments that stood still, only to

be flooded with cold air when we parted. I opened my mouth unwillingly, not knowing what to say, but wanting to say something. He listened intently, his eyes fixed on mine, but I faltered and said nothing. I laughed, embarrassed, and looked down at the ground between us. He must have known why I had gone quiet in the car, because before I could say anything else he placed his hand under my chin and raised my eyes to meet his.

"You know how I feel," he said and smiled, his eyes glittering in the dark, "but I won't say it until you're ready."

I nodded and clenched my teeth. I wanted the words to pass my lips because I knew that they were true, but they never came. I was suddenly thankful for the sky above us, engulfing us in darkness so that he was unable to see the pain in my eyes, not knowing how to express myself. I tried to remember the lake and the sunset and the picnic and the chocolate and everything that might be just enough to push me over the edge so that I could speak. But the scene of the sky had been replaced with a vacant darkness that left me without a shred of hope for what I longed to say. I tried to grasp onto any confidence I may have had for fleeting moments in the car ride there, but they too had disappeared with the sunset. There were several moments of silence between us, so quiet that I could hear my own heartbeat, and we both knew that any opportunity to say what I had wanted had already passed. He leaned forward to kiss me on the cheek, said goodnight with a smile that meant "really, it's okay," and walked up the driveway to his house. As I got into my car and prepared to leave, I scolded myself and shook my head angrily, wondering why I hadn't taken advantage of the perfect opportunity.

"You fucked up," I whispered to myself, backing out of his drive.

Eight minutes until curfew.

Although I was upset with myself, I couldn't help but think about the incredible night we had... Watching the moon rise as the sun fell with extravagant colors overtaking it, the water capturing its beautiful descent. The quiet and slow rustling of the leaves on the trees surrounding us, creating our own world at the edge of the lake. The smell of his cologne masking all other scents, as he was wearing too much of it because I had told him once that I liked that one. Seven minutes.

Him placing his hand in mine as I rested my head on his shoulder, not thinking of anything else except the moment we were in. Our endless conversations leading into the next and the next without missing a beat. Somehow finding more to talk about even though I'm sure we both thought there was nothing left. No matter the topic of discussion, being truthful and thoughtful and respectful and real.

Six minutes.

Starting to realize how I truly felt while we were sitting on a blanket by a lake talking about nothing and everything at the same time. Trying so hard to convince myself that it wasn't true and that I couldn't possibly be right. The entire ride from the lake to his house building up the confidence to tell him, yet still faltering when I actually got the chance. Him knowing what I wanted to say, but assuring me that I didn't need to in that moment.

Five minutes.

"I know how I feel," I whispered, disheartened, knowing that I had blown the perfect moment after the perfect night together. I furrowed my eyebrows and held my breath, deep in thought. My eyes bounced from the road to the glowing green numbers on the dash that told me how much time I had left. I had unfortunately been late getting home the night before, and my parents insisted that I needed to be home on time tonight. I respected my parents' rules and didn't want to abuse their leniency toward these sorts of things. They'd forgive me, undoubtedly, but they would nonetheless be disappointed. I didn't want to start anything unnecessarily...

"Actually," I said after thinking it over. "No."

I took a sharp turn into the nearest neighborhood and turned my car around to head back to his house. Determined and eager, I called him quickly and told him to come back outside. "Why?" he asked, confused.

"Just do it," I replied and hung up.

As much as I wanted to get there quickly and get out of the car and relay to him everything I was thinking, I couldn't help but wish that the drive back to his house would take longer. I had made up my mind, but my stomach didn't turn any less at the thought of telling him how I felt. I had only a few minutes to build up the confidence I needed, and this time there was no option. There was no escape route if I needed it.

"Just tell him the truth," I encouraged myself, gripping the steering wheel tightly. "Tell him the truth. It's not that hard."

I reached the stop sign just outside his house and saw him standing in the driveway, confused. The disappointment I had been feeling before was now a million butterflies in my stomach. I didn't care about making it home on time anymore. I needed to do this tonight and my parents would have to understand. My heart pounding, I pulled back into the driveway as he walked toward my car. I took a deep breath and let it out, attempting to calm my nerves. In the time that I had been running circles in my mind during the drive home, he had found time to change into his warm, blue striped pajama bottoms with the button up that matched. I felt somewhat guilty for disrupting his routine, but I also knew that he wouldn't mind in the slightest once he knew the reason for which I had.

"What are you doing?" he asked with a grin as I stepped out of the running car, the moonlight illuminating his expression. I hadn't noticed in the minutes before, but the moon was large and bright and the stars that surrounded it twinkled in excitement high above us.

"I wanted to tell you something." I walked quickly toward him and placed his hands in mine. He raised his eyebrows in question, although I was sure he already knew. I took a deep breath and replayed everything I had been thinking about, convincing myself that this was right. And it was.

"*I love you.*" An enormous weight was lifted from my chest as I spoke the words and all I could feel in the moment was joy. I was grateful that he could see me in the silver moonlight, match my smile, and look into my eyes and know without a doubt that this was the truth.

Being Black Is...

Aalayah Kizer

Being black is Martin on stress-free weekends
It's hot combs and methodical speeches on Easter Sunday
It's being tender-headed when Momma brushes your naps
It's the Candy Lady at the corner
It's waiting for the streetlights to come on
It's turning off lights during a storm
It's Big Gram talking about the past
Being black is a struggle only you relate to

Being black is being the only one in your class
It's "Don't touch my hair."
It's humiliation for being a skinny, ashy, black girl
It's having no money for lunch
It's learning three facts about your ancestry in class
It's being ridiculed for being proud
It's wishing you had Jessica or Cindy's hair
Being black is being uncomfortable in your own skin

Being black is \$700 apartments
It's peanut butter sandwiches and cheese and crackers
It's riding your bike in the house
It's "Your kind isn't welcome in this neighborhood."
It's a fire in your apartment
It's eviction after eviction
It's living with your grandmother
Being black is being homeless

Being black is fighting the same battle for four hundred years
It's the world finally realizing your life matters
It's seeing George Floyd killed and Kyle Rittenhouse let go
It's thinking you're next
It's America invalidating your struggle

It's "When the looting starts, the shooting starts."
It's having friends call you and apologize for the sins of their ancestors
It's driving past Michael Donald Avenue and shuddering in horror
It's sixteen shots and a cover up
It's Fox News mocking your cries to be alive
It's CNN turning your movement into a political issue
It's "Officer, I'm complying!"
It's "You shot me!"
It's "I can't breathe!"
It's silence
Being black is death

Being black is funerals for the ones who rest in power
It's Auntie screaming and crying when the casket closes
It's the reception at Grandma's house
It's the come to Jesus meeting at the end of the night
It's the mourning that turns to dancing
It's the "Electric Slide" that blares through the streets
It's talking politics with the Elders who nod their hands solemnly because they know
Being black is seeing how far we've come

Being black is having a president that looks like you
It's a vice president that has hair like you
It's seeing our faces on the big screen
It's hearing our voices on the radio
It's seeing our people at places they've never been
It's the applause from audiences we've never performed in front of
It's the vindication and validation of our art, sound, and soul
Being black is art, sound, soul
Being black is hope
Being black is joy
Being black is prayer
Being black is numb
Being black is free

2020: We Move On

Hannah Shaffett

It was supposed to be the year of hope
When dreams came true
The roaring 20s all over again
The parties, the glamour
A world of stars and twinkle lights

Then came the virus:
We tried not to worry
To push it aside
It won't come here, not to us, we'll be alright
But then the first case happened, and then another
A dozen more, a hundred, a thousand,
The death toll rose
Then it came to our country, our state, our town
It visited someone we knew, someone we loved
We lie awake at night, struggling to breathe
We wonder; are we caught by the fear or the disease?
But when the morning comes
We pick ourselves up
We take a breath
We go on

Then came the video:
Eight minutes played over and over.
We watch it in horror and wonder why.
We wish we never heard his name,
That he lived to an old age and then died
In happy anonymity
Instead of being the name on everyone's lips
And dying on a sidewalk.
We lie awake at night
Unable to answer any of the questions
But in the morning
We pick ourselves up
We take a breath
We try to go on.
Then comes the storms:
Laura, Marco, Sally, Delta
Each time we hear we're in the cone

And we cringe,
Wonder how much more we can take,
Wonder if it's a sin
To pray it goes somewhere else and doesn't hit us.
Wonder if it's wrong
To save ourselves at someone else's expense
We lie awake at night, listening to the wind.
In the morning we survey the damage.
We try to pick ourselves up.

We try to take a breath.
We wonder how much longer we can go on.
And it keeps coming
Fires. Elections. Storms. Disease
Anger. Hatred. Fear.
Not knowing what decisions to make.
Not knowing what tomorrow will bring.

All those nights lying awake
Drained of energy, left our eyes red,
Each time thinking
It can't get any worse;
But it does.
Again and again.
And now we're scared to even hope,
Afraid to pick ourselves up
Take a breath
And move on.

But this isn't the end.
The day will come when life will be "good" again
The moments of hope will grow closer together
And we'll sleep at night,
Forget the pattern on the bedroom ceiling
That we've studied so many times,
And living will be more than existing and
Waiting for the next bad thing.
Waking up in the morning will be more
Than finding the strength
To pick ourselves up,
To take a breath,
And to move on

Pandemic

Chase Essay



The Life of A Table

Stephanie Magaldi

A table,
Crafted from the hands of man,
Carefully placed into a home,
A staple for each day that is to come.

A table,
Solid, sturdy, dependable;
Present for every breaking of bread,
Supportive of the weight thrust upon it.

A table,
Scratched, dented, chipped;
Pushed aside to make room,
Thrown out when styles changed.

A table,
Crammed into the back of a truck;
Unsure of where it will end up next,
Hoping for a fresh coat of paint.

I am a table,
Solid, sturdy, dependable;
Scratched, dented, chipped;
Thrown out and hoping for a fresh coat of paint.

Winner of the Merilh Award

How Jane Eyre's Childhood Trauma Affects Her Adult Relationship

Hannah Shaffett

In her novel *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte tells the story of a young orphan girl growing up. The novel follows Jane from her early childhood into adulthood, which gives the reader a unique opportunity. Because the book follows Jane for such a long time, it is possible to draw connections from her childhood experiences to her adult behavior and to form hypotheses about how the former caused the latter. Jane's childhood is by no means ideal. Besides being orphaned, she is neglected and mistreated by her Aunt Reed and her cousins. After leaving that, she is shipped off to Lowood School, which is also a less than ideal situation for a young and impressionable child. Though Jane seems to overcome these difficulties, her tumultuous childhood relationships continue to affect her adult relationships, namely her relationship with Mr. Rochester. Jane's early exposure to abuse, neglect, and trauma had a deep impression on her and caused her to not only neglect the red flags of abuse in her relationship with Rochester, but also to view them as the ideal model for their relationship.

Much research has been done in the field of psychology to show the way that trauma, abuse, and neglect in early childhood can lead to issues later in life. Attachment style is developed in infancy and early childhood through a child's relationship with their primary caregiver and affects relationships for the rest of the child's life. Children who have a secure attachment style are much more likely to have healthy relationships as adults than those who develop an insecure attachment style (Rosenberg and Kosslyn 21). Because of how young Jane was when her parents died, Aunt Reed was her primary caregiver for much of her formative years, which would have led her to develop an insecure attachment style. Additionally, previous studies have shown that those who experience any kind of childhood maltreatment (neglect, verbal abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse and/or sexual abuse) are "more likely to be victimized as adults," (Rosenberg and Kosslyn 51). In other words, Jane's childhood trauma would more than qualify her as having a high risk of falling into an abusive relationship as an adult.

Jane's experience both at her Aunt Reed's home and Lowood school qualify as verbal, emotional, and physical abuse as well as neglect. Her cousin John was physically abusive to her. The one scene shown in detail that illustrates this is when he has her go stand across the room and, taking the book she had been reading, "the volume was flung, it hit me, and I fell, striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp," (Bron-

te 6-7). In this scene, John is fourteen and Jane is only ten. He is bigger and stronger than she is and is using his strength and ability to cause physical pain to control and dominate her. It is also made clear that this is not an isolated incident. When speaking of John, Jane says that he bullied and hurt her, "Continually: every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he came near;" (5). This is exactly the way that one would expect someone to talk about their abuser. Aunt Reed not only does nothing about her son's abuse of Jane, she contributes to it. In Jane's hearing she calls her deceitful, wicked, naughty, ugly, "less than a servant" and "an underhand little thing" (8-9). Her self-worth and self-confidence are not only constantly knocked down, they are not even given room to develop in the first place. She is locked in the red room, a place that frightens her so much she has a fit and is physically ill afterwards. Aunt Reed ignores her pleas and screams to be released and orders her shoved back into the room, which holds great horrors for little Jane. All of this happens before Jane reaches her eleventh birthday.

Though Jane's lot becomes somewhat better when she leaves her Aunt's house for Lowood school, her environment still meets the criteria for neglect and there are instances of emotional abuse. The biggest instance of abuse is when Mr. Brocklehurst comes to pay a call on the school. Though he has only had one conversation with Jane previously, and that lasted only a few minutes, he calls her in front of the whole school and tells the other girls to "be on your guard against her; you must shun her example - if necessary, avoid her company exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse" (87). He then tells the teachers to "keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body;" (87). In other words, he tells the girls to ignore, bully, and exclude Jane and he tells the teachers to assume the worst of her and to physically punish her often. Not only does he mistreat Jane by publicly shaming her, he tries to convince everyone else to do the same. If Mr. Brocklehurst had had his way, the environment at Lowood would have been as bad as the environment at Aunt Reed's, possibly worse because instead of one Aunt and three cousins it would have been a whole school's worth of potential abusers. Thankfully for Jane, the teachers and students strongly disliked Mr. Brocklehurst and did not follow his instructions, however Jane still suffered from neglect for the first chunk of time she spent at Lowood. Because of Mr. Brocklehurst's tight-fisted nature, the girls at Lowood are not given enough resources. Jane says "our clothing was insufficient to protect us from the severe cold.... the scanty supply of food was distressing" (77). These are classic signs of neglect, inadequate food, and clothing. The situation only gets worse when typhus breaks out and spreads quickly because "semi-starvation and neglected cold had predisposed most of the pupils to receive infection," (102). When the epidemic is over, so many pupils have died that public attention is brought to Lowood and the conditions change, but Jane has suffered from abuse and neglect for so long at this point

that the long-term damage was already in place and ready to cause her problems in her adult relationships.

Because of this early childhood maltreatment, when Jane moves out into the adult world on her own and meets Rochester, she falls in love with him, despite all the warning signs of abuse. When he wishes her to do something he orders, he does not ask. He tells her to "Speak!" "Don't move" and saying that if she will not join the party he will "come and fetch her in case of contumacy," (184, 208, 235). He is not taking her wishes into account; rather he is giving her orders and telling her what to do. He also shows no care for her emotional state. Even after he knows that she is in love with him, he still teases her with the notion that he intends to marry Blanche. In her presence, Rochester refers to Blanche as, "such an excellent thing...my beautiful Blanche," (351). He also tells Jane he has found a position for her in Ireland and Jane tells him that it upsets her to go there because it is so far, "From England and from Thornfield: and- From you, sir," (353). He responds by telling her "when you get to [Ireland] I shall never see you again, Jane: that's morally certain," (335). He feels the need to drive the point further home just in case she did not already realize the implications of going so far away. He is using feelings that he knows she has for him to hurt and manipulate her. He does this so much that when he finally does drive her to the point that she is overcome with emotions and decides it is an appropriate time to ask her to marry him, she does not believe he is serious. Instead, she "thought he mocked me," (357). He has tormented her so much about this point that even a marriage proposal, which is what she wants, is not to be believed.

If Rochester stopped with emotional abuse and manipulation that would be bad enough, but he also physically threatens Jane. When Jane finds out about his living wife and refuses to marry him, he just assumes that she will run away with him and be his mistress. Jane's moral values do not permit her to become his mistress, but this is no objection for Rochester. After she tells him she will not go he tries to threaten and strong arm her into agreeing with him. He asks her again to go with him and says, "I am not a gentle-tempered man - you forget that: Out of pity to me and yourself, put your finger on my pulse, feel how it throbs, and - - beware," (428). The language here, reminding her of his short temper and making her feel his pulse to see how angry he is, is a not-so-subtle threat. He is basically telling her that she should stop refusing him or it will not be good for her, and Jane is aware of it. He continues to ask her to go with him and she says, "I shook, I feared," (446). When she finally refuses him again, she says that "I still possess my soul, and with it the certainty of ultimate safety," (448). This shows she is not just frightened of being hurt; she is scared for her life. By referring to her soul as her comfort and ultimate safety, she is saying that even if he were to kill her, she would at least have her immortal soul to fall back on. These are the

words and actions of an abuser. This is the kind of relationship that populated Jane's early childhood, and this is the kind of relationship that she chooses for adulthood—one in which she cannot even rest in her ability to say no but must sneak out of the house in the middle of the night and change her name in order to ensure her safety.

Interestingly enough, it is illustrated in the novel that not only does Jane seem to see nothing is wrong with Rochester's behavior, she prefers it to behavior that is kinder and more chivalrous. The first time they meet he is rather gruff with her and she says that "The frown, the roughness of the traveler set me at my ease," (156). If he had been kinder to her, she would have been shy of him and moved on, but because he is rough with her, she likes him and stays. Later once they are engaged, she rejects his attempts to spoil her and flatter her. She does not wish to be treated in this way and so she provoked him and forbids his kindness until he starts to call her "'provoking puppet', malicious elf', 'sprite', changeling', &c for caresses, too, I now got grimaces; for a pressure of the hand, a pinch on the arm; for a kiss on the cheek, a severe tweak of the ear," (385). Not only does Jane not at all object to this treatment, she "decidedly preferred these fierce favors to anything more tender," (385). She does not want to be treated with kindness and gentleness; she doesn't know how to deal with it. This is a lasting effect of her childhood abuse; she expects to be mistreated and does not wish for anything else or seem to understand how anything else could be desirable.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is full of complications, parallels, and wrinkles. One of the most interesting ones is the way in which Jane is set up as having suffered abuse in childhood and then continues to suffer abuse, by her own free choice, in adulthood. By the end of the novel, Jane is independent and has money and family of her own, yet she still chooses to go back to Rochester. The relationships that Jane experienced as a small child have so distorted her view of how people should interact with each other, she goes running back to him willingly and with open arms. Tracing the connections between this decision and her childhood provides a motivation for why she chose Rochester.

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The End of the Road

Mary Catherine Watson

my youth will soon tuck away on a dusty
shelf, and I ponder chapters left to close,
and the chapters that have yet to expose the
question of identity, my true self.
I ponder the growth of the head and heart
throughout my four bewildering years.
I recall my hands gently, wistfully,
placed outside my car window,
And the sharp inhale of the southern evening air.
And as I pass by street names aglow,
I reflect on the mark I have left on each street,
and in the hearts of others.
I reflect on the winter midnight memories
of a car pulsed with the energy,
and of the bass and voices belting
lyrics that bring me back to that
moment every time I hear its tune.
I reflect on the heart-to-hearts,
the "How's the weather?,"
and the exchanges that had me hoping
for a meteor to hit me soon.
and for four years,
each exchange molded me,
stretched me,
and ultimately convinced me that
that meteor I hoped and prayed for
spared me.
soon my trembling hands will carry the weight
of ensuing uncertain times of possibility.
I hear my mother repeat the words she
once spoke to a brown-eyed,
kept,
chaotic,
fearless,
daughter
"Be Not Afraid."
soon I will grasp these words
using the strength of these trembling hands
and knowingly walk into the unknown,
a pursuit I am ready to take as I embark
the end of the road.

About The Motley Crew

Aeries Plasencia//Editor in Chief

Aeries Plasencia is double majoring in English and Writing. They like to grow plants and play video games when they have the time.

Darbi Broadus//Poetry Editor

Darbi Broadus is a freshman Writing major with International Studies and History minors. She did color guard for five years and continues to spin and dance today, despite not being on a team at Spring Hill.

Anna Pellerin//Prose Editor

Anna Pellerin is a junior Creative Writing and English double major (be careful: if you talk to her, she'll try and convert you) with a History minor. From New Iberia, Louisiana, Anna is an RA on campus and has been with The Motley for two years now! She loves to read, write, watch anime, and obsess over cats.

Olivia McNorton//Managing Editor

Olivia McNorton is a senior graduating with a B.A. in Journalism this May! She has a passion for writing and design, and works as Managing Editor for The Motley! Her hobbies include playing video games, reading, drawing, cooking, and looking at memes on her phone.

Rilie McDaniel//Social Media Manager

Rilie McDaniel is a senior Writing major from Mobile, AL and runs all of the social media for The Motley! She has a passion for loving others and helping others both academically and in life. A fun fact about her is that you'd be hard pressed to find her without a coffee of some sort!

Professor Brian Druckenmiller, MFA

Brian Druckenmiller is the Visiting Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at Spring Hill College. He serves as the Faculty Moderator for The Motley and his work is featured in several journals and other periodicals. His obsession with professional wrestling is alarming.

Why The Motley? Why such a puzzling title?

Well, in days of yore one of the most engaging figures in the royal court was the jester, a character who seemed to embody a puzzling union of several characteristics: wisdom and buffoonery, profundity and foolishness, gravity and frivolity. Dressed in his colorful costume, the motley, the Jester enjoyed a favored position. Never regarded completely seriously by anyone, least of all himself, he was free to pass comments on any subject under the sun, sometimes piquantly, sometimes displaying a certain wisdom, almost always entertainingly. Most important of all, the Jester's sole aim was to provide amusement for the king. It is from this that we draw our analogy.

We have chosen the motley for our garb to serve as an indication of both our spirit and our scope. We hope to incorporate in these pages a wide and varied choice of subjects, all the while not taking ourselves too seriously and making no pretenses at being definitive. Thus, like the famous jugglers who entertained Our Lady, we offer our efforts for the pleasure of our Monarch: Christ the King.

We are his jesters.

This is our Motley.

-The Motley, Volume I, 1949