



The Moley
VOLUME 73



The Motley

Student Art and Literature at Spring Hill College
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Letter from the Editor

Dear readers,

Volume 73 marks the fourth year of The Motley's return to campus. Even though Volume 70 was published my freshman year, I didn't know The Motley existed until I was a sophomore and was recruited to join the editing team. In the Boyle Conference room, manuscripts scattered amongst tortilla chip bags and cartons of strawberries, former Editor-in-Chief Megan Lear, '20 explained that The Motley had been discontinued decades prior. I took this news as a call to action.

For the past three years, I have viewed my role on The Motley as helping revive a Spring Hill tradition. Now, as I end out my senior year and my term as Editor-in-Chief, I feel confident that the Motley Crew has risen to the occasion. Our submission rate quadrupled from last year, and we revived the beloved Cover Art Contest. Students from every class and a number of majors comprise this year's Motley Crew. The Motley has provided innumerable students with a place to indulge their creativity, whether it be through submitting work for publication or indulging in peers' art. No longer is The Motley relegated to the library archives—our magazine is a thriving part of campus life, available to Badgers one and all. I am infinitely proud of this phoenix of a magazine, and I am confident that The Motley will continue to serve as a creative haven for the SHC community in the years to come.

Best,
Anna K. Pellerin, '22
Editor-in-Chief

To Summon Her

Sasha Falch

O hail maiden fair, for your voice rings out.
Your triumphant aura extends beyond the Earth.

Sorrows traded for coin, penitence bought thrice,
Save our children from the Snake's slitted song.

O praise maiden bright, the cloak of tears is soaked by
The sinner's plight. Lead them to new pastures green.

Guided by His greatest weapon she makes her rounds.
To instill the law laid upon the rock; her law, their law, His law.

O fear maiden calloused, whose fangs are vile and shadowed.
Lifted from the Nile, her screech cries, ten times on darkened days.

There upon the marbled stoneways she flutters, with hands
Bloody and conscience clean. Painted with newborn passion to glean.

Alas I call to you, maiden just, show me salvation. Come to the
Gilded hall and allow your tendrils to tear me apart as a mortal sinner.

I call upon thee! To be summoned by my side, a guardian
from the celestial void, a soldier of the inferno.

O glory to you, magnanimous creature, golden are your rings.
Pure to your animator, save us all, save our souls, and deliver us to the end.

late nights and evening drives

Kali Blair

are you up for a drive?
hanging out under the starry night
driving past all the city lights?

these late night drives with you by my side
make the 3 a.m. cries
seem like a memory passing by

I want to stay up all night
I want you to be my first sight
in the golden glow of the morning light

are you up for a drive?
let's stay out all night
to see the bright city lights

we've got an open road
with nowhere to go
a full tank under the city's glow

wherever we end up
will feel like home
as long as you say you'll go

Shatterer of Worlds

Niyah Davis

Shatterer of Worlds,
One who comes and goes like the wind,
Whose silence speaks volumes, and
Whose words shake the foundation of thought and reason.

Shatterer of Wonder,
One who invokes endless curiosity,
Who bears an infinite sea of intrigue yet
Remains an ever-present enigma.

Shatterer of Welcome,
Who has greeted me and knows me,
Who is privy to my thoughts but
Has nothing to say.

Shatterer of Words,
One who is a mystery,
Who allowed me to see but
Never truly let me in.

Shatterer of Whirlpools,
Who allowed me to believe,
One I have never doubted but
Have never been able to forget.

Shatterer of Worldviews,
I wonder,
How long will I be welcomed in your world
Before I find my place in mine?

It's Lyrical

Erthaly Thomas

Ever heard someone say “I love you” with laughter? It sounds just like a song. You turned on the radio, and at first, it annoyed you because it played repeatedly no matter what station you tuned into. It became so catchy as time went on, you couldn't help but jam on. It was contagious, and you laughed too, and soon you were in love with the sound that hit your ears. It was freeing, and you never wanted that love to fade. You began rooting for those around you who were in love so that you can hear that song again.

Soon you'll want to sing it, too.

For now, there is no melody to harmonize with. It's an unending search, and I am tired. But let me hear love laugh again, and I'm ready to go for it. Love beats like a drum; it's so loud. How can you not find it? Simply because maybe your ears aren't fine-tuned to the rhythms of my heart.

Wait.

Who are you, again? Where are you? What are you?
When are you?

You?

You creep into the crevices of my soul, and I don't even have you, know you. It might be a good thing because I run away from the beat when it comes. Maybe it's best if we both listen to separate songs until we can duet.

You must find me because I am blind and I can't see. I can't see past the love that I want. I can't see the love that I actually need. I think I'm more comfortable creating love around me. I know that's why I can't have my own. “Eyes on the prize,” they say, but I pride myself on knowing and appreciating the love of others. I couldn't even accept my own award. If I do, would you like a speech, a thank you, a dedication, a song?

It's just a simple “I love you” with laughter.

I love.

Do you?

Comfort

Tiffany Richardson-Bell

For so long
I searched
And searched
For ways to accept
And be accepted.
It wasn't until
I found love,
That I then
Found ways
To maintain
And self sustain.
I found comfort
To know that I
Should come first.
I found comfort
In knowing that
From my boys respect
Wouldn't be slept
On... you see,
They,
Had to learn how to
Be comfortable in
Their own Skin
And then
They began to
Shine their light
And let their thoughts
Be sublime
By the Most High.
They found comfort

in knowing
the connection is
pure and reliable.
They found comfort
In knowing the
connection is relatable.
They found comfort.
Being their mother
has never been
a burden, see,
I have always
been determined
to be mom, dad
you know; just me!
I found comfort
that it came with
such simplicity.

It was love
It was true
It was comfort

I found... you!



Shadow Man

Kennedy Sarrazin

Free From You

Victoria Spivey

I know you wanted me to stay
And I know that I miss you too
But I can't ignore all the things that got in our way back in Blue
They called me a whore for wearing a skirt
But they should be glad I'm not in heels with no shirt
I've let my bad habits take control
And if I say what I'm thinking
I'll cause a scene
Just for being bold

We're so different, you and I
I spend my nights out past 2:00 am
Drinking to drown the thoughts of ever seeing you again

Hard liquor and a blurry image of myself in a spinning disco ball
The unrequited lovers pushed against the wall
It's all so familiar, yet you're not here
I spill my guts to strangers more than once a year

I know you wanted me to stay
And I did too
But I can't ignore the high that I get being
Free from you.

Solace

Niyah S. Davis

Yes, I'm angry.
I don't know why.
I can't just say
What's on my mind.

I see them laugh.
It makes me cry.
I'll never have that
Because I can't try.

When I'm hurting,
I sit alone.
I hope for someone.
No lights on my phone.

I see them go.
I know they're near.
Why won't anyone
Come in here?

I miss warmth.
Hold me tight.
I wish I may.
I know they might.

It's not all bad.
I seize the day
And dread the night
When they're at play.

I'll never tell a soul
What I've found here.
Hope my emotions
Will all disappear.

Yes, I'm sad.
I know why.
Because I'll never say
What's on my mind.

One Day

Summer Poole

One day, maybe tomorrow,
Loving myself won't be so hard.
Maybe I will have a bagel for breakfast
And not care that it is 245 calories.

One day, maybe next week,
I will wake up and not be hungry.
Maybe my stomach won't be screaming
At my head for food.

One day, maybe next month,
Looking at myself in the mirror won't be so hard.
Maybe I will stand proud
And be ok with not being a size 0.

One day, maybe next year,
I can enjoy going out with friends.
Maybe I won't worry about what others think
And will live life to the fullest.

One day, maybe I won't.
Maybe the next 1460 days
Will be just like the last 1460 days.
What if one day never comes?



Rhythm

Rhythm

Briana Owen

Breath of Life

Chloe Holtzapfel

Seven hour drive for a thirty minute lunch
Chattering of students and families
She sits across from me with a smile on her face

Seven hour drive to go to the mall
We drink coffee and watch the people walk by
I look up to her with admiration

Seven hour drive to go eat at our favorite restaurant
The workers beam with joy as they see who came in
She looks at me with a happy stare

Seven hour drive to see her for Christmas
Driving her to the ER
Same smile on her face besides her obvious pain

Seven hour drive to the hospital
Hospice workers in the driveway
Labored breathing and a distant stare in her eyes

Seven hour drive to stay for the last few days
The whole family is here
We sit quiet holding our breaths making sure its not her last

Cries Of War

Harmony Romano

Another day dawns as the troops ready for the ongoing war waged between our conflicting ideas.

Months of bloodshed. Such a dark color drips from tongues that act as knives to wound each other, so maybe one can be declared a victor.

From my view, I can see a major stalemate forming in this war. You take the offensive with relentless, rapid fire attacks to my kingdom whereas I take the defensive to turn your attacks right back to you by sitting... waiting... with prolonged thinking.

I proclaim a declaration of truce for the sake of the innocent lives tied up by our ropes, forced to act as slaves instead of the free thinkers they were born to be.

You slam your fist on the table, uttering the declaration was of no use to you nor the innocent people our kingdoms have both captured. You demand both kingdoms come to an agreement, one formulated that you deem acceptable-fellow king.

It seems a battle of politics has been lost by my kingdom. I relent for the sake and sanity of my people. Their fear and aching reflects on me as their king. I am sure your frustrations appear as a reflection of your peoples' anger and distrust for mine. You may accept our offer to isolate and harvest, construct, and rebuild our kingdoms from the numerous battles but shall remain impaled by the very weaponry.

We are both losing this war, exhausting the resources our people need to thrive. I'm sure the messengers going between us have insisted on an end to this messy fight. You should listen to them.

We meet again at evening, deciding our parameters. I wish to listen. You wish to speak, yes, speak your mind. Tell me the hatred you have for me and my kingdom. I proclaim another truce. The king has reached his limitations. The anger written on the scroll of their face, in disbelief, in absurdity, loudly speaking its mind about how damaging the truce is.

There is no energy to use. Let's exhaust the flames ripping through our hearts. Realize our kingdoms can take no more damage. We must repair them separately.

You're unsatisfied with this outcome. I bid farewell and move to exit while you, with hatred and disgust, holler into the empty space I left behind. I'll never return to your land.

I don't turn around. I accept all consequences, being pleased with our destruction of trust.



Apokalypse

Sasha Falch

Remember Love?

Sasha Falch

I looked back on my memories
of us together.

They were so messy and crazy,
like splitting smooth hairs.

I know you never felt that way.
But you played along.

The friendship was built on a lie;
a lie I made up.

Every day I saw you I
saw the sin I lived.

I remembered what they taught us
about love and truth.

The heartstrings that guided me were
falling to pieces.

Tangled and damaged and broken
were the words I used.

You taught me so much about love.
And I hated it.

But I only have you to thank
for all I know now.

Your abandonment proved that love
can be a challenge.

Do you, poor soul, remember love?
I can say I do.

Grade 9

Katherine Hirst

The first time my father left,
I clung to his uniform and begged him not to go.
He kissed my forehead
And held my mother's hand
All the way to the airport.
He smiled and said he'd be home soon.
And he was gone.

For dinner, we had takeout or TV dinners
Because mother didn't like eating at the table anymore.
She had to do the bills now that father was gone.
My sister cried for him and slept with my mother.
My father had always been the one to check under the bed for monsters.
I was struggling in math because he wasn't home to help
And my mother wasn't any good at it.

The first time he came home,
I hugged his waist tightly
And told him I had missed him.
My mother cried for him
And kissed him on the mouth in front of us.
We had a family dinner for the first time in a long time.

The second time my father left,
I shook his hand because I was too embarrassed to hug him.
My mother didn't hold his hand this time
But cried all the same when he left.
This time we dropped him at the curb of the terminal
Instead of walking inside with him.
And he was gone again.

I had my first day of high school
Without him there to say good luck.
I tried out for the football team that year
But only to have something to write him about.
My mother had to drive me to all my games
Even though she never stayed for them.

The second time he came home,
He gathered us all up in a big hug
But didn't kiss my mother after.
I drove us home this time
Since I had gotten my driver's license the year before.
My sister hadn't come on the drive.
She was out with her newfound friends.
My father rolled down the window as I drove
Even though the wind messed up my mother's hair
And she asked him not to.

The third time he left,
My mother drove to drop him off alone
While I stayed home and watched my sister.
She had been grounded the week beforehand
When my father found cigarettes under her mattress.

My mother didn't come home for three days after that.
When she did, she reeked of booze.
My sister had more boyfriends than she did friends.
And my mother never went a day without a glass of wine.
She didn't talk to us,
Except for when she was yelling at us.

The third time he came home,
He paid a cab to drive him home
And he and my mother slept in separate beds.
My sister refused to speak to him,
Unless he spoke to her first.

My father hadn't been there to lecture me
When I tried my first smoke
Or lost my virginity.
He hadn't been there to punish my sister the days she came home late
Or when she got pregnant.

The fourth time he left,
Was the last time he would leave
The last time we saw him
The last time he told us he loved us.
My sister cried again,
And my mother held her hand instead of his
And I sat in the car alone
And wept
Because my father
Didn't love us enough
To come back.



Vessel
Sasha Falch

By Any Other Name

Niyah S. Davis

I have to stop looking for you in crowded rooms,
Out of habit or genuine desire.
When you're gone, I miss you.
I know you don't miss me.

It's likely you don't think of me,
Only when I'm right in front of you.
I know that.
Why doesn't it sink in?

That forlorn song.
It starts for the same reason it ends.
That terrifies me more than you'll ever know.
I've lived that.
I've seen that.
I don't want to know it again.

When I dream of myself in white and jewels,
You're always the one waiting for me.
When I wake up,
I'm always alone.
It hurts me more than you'll ever know.

I speak of others to eradicate the thoughts that race through my mind.
They couldn't hold a candle to you.
Their flame never sparks,
While yours never dies.

When I look at you, a part of me dies inside.
Not because I want you to leave,
But because I know
You'd never stay.

When I think of you
My smile never fades.
You are pure joy, blinding light.

I know.
God, I know.
I can't tell you what I'm thinking,
So many possibilities.

It would scare you.
We would reset.
It would be daunting.
We'd never speak again.
I've lived that story, too.

Let this be the sign of my thoughts.
Let every word live and die here.
Even if you knew,
It's the remnant of my most sincere wish.
I stand idly by
Regardless of how much it pains
Me,
There will never be
A thread that ties us together.

I would rather a thousand lifetimes,
Longingly watching you smile as a
companion,

Than one lifetime
Going separate ways as heartbroken
strangers.





The Essence of Happiness

Kennedy Sarrazin

My Daughter's Dirty Hair

Chloe Holtzapfel

my daughter squeals and screams as i pull the comb through
her matted hair and i hear her school teacher *dont send her back
until she looks presentable for class*

i take my daughter to a friends birthday party i see the stares
and i hear the whispers as she walks in ignorant
who let her leave the house like that

i try to convince and persuade her to keep up her looks and i see
her roll her eyes and walk away frustrated

i see the way she looks at girls with the pin-straight blonde hair
with an envious and loathing look in her eye

i hear her grandmother when she comes to visit and she asks
her *why do you still look nameless*

i hear and see all of it but i still have to ask myself *why*

A response to *Self-Portrait with Dirty Hair* by Safia Elhillo

Ms. Heart

Niyah Davis

Usually, my analysis of others comes through continuous interaction and observation. For a while, I struggled to write about this individual. I hadn't been able to study her as often as I would have liked but speaking with her quelled my fears.

In keeping with the spirit of originality, this commentary focuses on what I see in her rather than what I've learned through observation. Sometimes, the traits I see in people paint more vivid pictures of who they are than anything I could ever learn through watching.

When I met Ms. Heart, I didn't think we'd end up being friends. I'd heard nothing but good things about her, sure. I was still skeptical of her. I'd heard good things about a lot of people and been sorely disappointed by my experience with them. Everyone talked about how nice she was, how artsy she was, and how cool she was. They told me I'd like her. I brushed it off thinking there wasn't a possibility that we would ever speak. I held that belief for a week.

I spent the first week and a half of junior year at home because my air conditioner didn't work. There's nothing worse than the fan blowing out hot air in the middle of ninety-degree weather. The maintenance workers were a bit slow on their roll, which made existence extremely difficult for me. In the storm, I was able to meet her. I met her. She shattered all my precognitions.

Key names are incredibly important because they have to fit the person they belong to. Sometimes, it's an experience I had that defined the relationship. Other times, it's a part of a story that stuck with me. Even then, it could be a fact that I haven't been able to forget or a trait someone possesses. For Ms. Heart, it's a bit more than that.

Every experience I've had with her has one thing in common: she shows how much she cares. She goes the extra mile for the people she cares about. She puts her all into everything she does. She's a natural born leader one can't help but follow. You can see her heart in everything she does. She loves what she does, and that adoration and joy is contagious. She has heart and she makes it known.

When I mentioned I didn't have any friends on campus,

seeing as I transferred in the middle of the most unexpected disaster in the world, she went beyond what I expected. She not only offered to allow me to sleep in her room until my A/C was fixed, but she also offered to be my first friend as well. At the time, I took it with a grain of salt. That's what anyone who was responsible for making sure you didn't die in your room would say. I didn't anticipate that she'd mean every word and follow through.

The first time I saw her kindness as a friend was the first night I had a working A/C. It was at a point in time where I couldn't figure out where I stood with a mutual friend of ours. I figured she'd be able to help as someone who'd spent an extended amount of time with him. I figured if anyone knew him, it'd be her.

I reached out to her, expecting her to tell me to go to bed or something. Not only did she come, she stayed and listened to me talk about my past for three hours. What stood out to me was the way she listened in silent contemplation. She took in every word I said and considered what to say next. She didn't condemn me for my past but offered advice to pave my future. Despite everything I'd ever done, she didn't judge me or hold it against me. She didn't tell me I was overreacting or overanalyzing. I don't think she thought much of it, but it meant the world to me.

Ms. Heart is an excellent listener and an amazing friend. She's there when you need her, the absolute sweetest, and the kind of person you can't help but love. I've noticed the traits that make her unique. From those, I could make inferences about her, that may or may not be true. I think it's important I share them. That way, I can create a vivid picture of who she is to me.

She's wickedly creative. I've been in her art studio, and if I had the money, I'd definitely commission a piece. Her art is stellar. Every piece is crafted to perfection. At times, I think she works a little too hard. She's prone to going anywhere and everywhere to finish a painting- even if that place is outside at 9:00 pm. I've had the privilege of viewing a design she made for a local company's branding. I don't think it was her intention, but it made me want to assist the company. Without saying a word, she managed to achieve her

desired effect.

In truth, I've seen the way others react to doing something they love. When it comes to her passions, there are few who are as excitable as Ms. Heart. That's not an insult. I had the privilege of going to an art museum with her. That was the moment I knew for sure, more than anything I may have previously mentioned, her key-name was the best one for her. She was like a kid in a candy store as she walked around and examined the artwork. I'd seen her joy, but I'd never seen her as over the moon as she was that day. She was in her element.

I asked her to go with me a couple of months prior, but the timing was never right. When we actually went, I was happier to hang out with her than I was to actually be at the museum. The first time I went, I saw what I wanted to see, and everything else in the building was there. Admittedly, I thought we'd go in, stay for an hour, and leave. By the end of the trip, we'd stayed about three hours and I wish we could've stayed longer. Her love for art shined. It was contagious.

Had I gone by myself that day, I would've left the minute my feet started hurting in my heels. If I hadn't known it was something she liked, I probably wouldn't have gone. When we left, I couldn't think of anything I'd rather have done. I enjoyed it because she was there. She pointed out the small details that I hadn't noticed before. She gave little tidbits and context I didn't know. She noted the things I would have never thought of because I don't know art. The experience would've been like any other day. It was extraordinary because it was one of her favorite things. I got to see a side of her I'd known of but hadn't expected. It gave new meaning to an otherwise average venture. I didn't even notice how long I'd been walking in heels or how long we'd been there until it was almost closing time. I wished we could've seen everything in more detail, but I was happy with what we did see. She has a light that doesn't seem to burn out when she's doing something she's passionate about.

She's also very outgoing. She'll talk to anyone, at any time, about anything. It doesn't matter who it is or what's going on. If there's an opportunity, she has no problem speaking with you, even

if it's just one time. When she says you're welcome to come chat, she means it. Still, I don't think she has a large group of friends. Despite talking to anyone and everyone when she can, she still has a reserved side to her. There are times when she doesn't feel like speaking. She'd rather be alone in times like those. People are great, but there's nothing like having those people you can talk to about anything and always have your back. There's a certain level of comfort in having people you feel close to. I've seen that in her, though I'm not sure she ever put a name to it.

One trait I'm sure she put a name to is her overall cheery disposition. She always has a smile on her face, except when she's deep in thought. She greets everyone she knows when she sees them with a smile and a wave. She'll stop and have a conversation when she can. When you spend time with her, you end up smiling by the end of the night. Even if you were in a bad mood at the start, she'll say something that'll make you laugh. She's just that contagious. She radiates positivity in a relatable sort of way. Her hardships become tools to help her grow. She shares that knowledge and faces the world bravely.

She's a natural born leader. There are people who are meant to lead and people who are meant to follow. She has a dynamic personality and has no problem telling you what she thinks, even if she does it in the nicest way possible. If she doesn't think something is a good idea, she'll encourage you to try something else but stand behind you if you stick with it. She offers advice if you want it and listens if you need it. She keeps everyone together and knows how to take a step back when she needs to. She cares about the opinions of others and takes all sides into consideration. She rules a democracy, and she makes that known.

I think one of her most prominent traits is her expression. Artists are some of the most vibrant individuals, and Ms. Heart is no exception. She wears her thoughts like a shirt, so to speak. I'm not sure if she's noticed, but she tends to express whatever she's thinking just by her countenance. If she's in a good mood, it shows. If she's worried, you can tell. When she's thinking, you can see it. That's one

of the tell-tale signs that she's considering what to say and trying to word it in the best way she knows how.

Speaking of listening in the best way she knows how, I mentioned earlier that she's a great listener. There's more to it than that though. Ms. Heart is a great listener and amazing at giving advice. She'd created an open-door policy for the hall, in some respects. At first, I thought it was just for show. She meant it and exercised it. She's on your side unless you've done something sincerely wrong to negate it.

More often than not, I withhold my opinions in votes. When I'm not making a legal vote, I tend to abstain - especially when I see that the majority will rule against me. With the people I've known up to now, I've never really had a choice. At some point, I'd had one with a man I'd known before, but he slowly took it away from me. I figured it was easier to hold my peace since no one really asked or cared what I thought. She reminded me that my opinion was valid, regardless of what that opinion was. It was worthy of respect; I was worthy of respect.

There's so much more to her than meets the eye. She greets the world with a smile, finds the nuances and zest in life. She's always there to lend a helping hand. In fact, her plans after college involved a year in a service position (not the military). Her heart is in everything she does. When I mentioned I was struggling with this, she told me a bit about her to assist. That's what solidified this commentary. It wasn't what she said, though that was important. It was how she said it. She said it with a certain spark in her eyes and conviction in her tone. It was evident just how passionate she was about her interests, her life, and her friends. She believes in what she knows, and she stands behind what she says. When she realizes she's wrong, she can change based on new information. She allows her heart and mind to guide her through life. I think that's why I was drawn to her and was able to open up. Every move she makes has heart.



Crystal
Sasha Falch

Dormitory Disaster

Sasha Falch

A walk in the park is enough for me,
and yet it sits there two by three.
Black and stained and mildewy.

It reeks.

The threshold bears a withered ramp,
cracked stones and mold, dark and damp.
The bricks are beyond unsightly.

It's decrepit.

I have the splendid misfortune of living there,
the walls so thin that all can hear.
Splintered and stale and shaggy.

It's dilapidated.

This ancient dreamwork whose father died
stands as a gentle reminder;

It failed.

Now I enter this prison to take a shower,
and yet my towel is already soaked.

Great.

I used you.

Harmony Romano

I used you.
So many times,

To cry into you, as if your hold was the comfort of a mother's.
To laugh with you because you're the one who humors me with original jokes, like a comedy skit I have tickets to.
To isolate from the world, not taken as a prisoner, but rather enjoying your company in our mutually shared space.
To smile brightly for the happiness you remind me of, preaching everything will be okay—that you still believe in me.

I used you.
So many times,

To validate my pain because no one else was listening to the words the world exchanged with me.
To close our eyes, and imagine new realities we swear by, where our imagination was guided by our minds' hands interlacing when we danced in ballroom dresswear under a chandelier, in front of royals—like the start of a love story.
To sit with each other, on rainy nights feeling sleepy, as the only glow creeps from under the door crack to light up our dreams after we sing each other to sleep.

But I used you.
So many... so many times,

To project my short-fused patience and destructive behavior unleashed in my room—broken vase glass embedded in the carpet, shredded book pages that spoke soft languages and overturned furniture I'd regret fixing later—all onto you because of blames and responsibilities I cannot accept.
To exacerbate my perception of rightness during war between my friends.
To push those closest away, spread between a distance by a dissonance, when stranded.

But sometimes,

You yelled back at me. Sometimes louder, angrier, more violent.
Telling me how worthless I am, how horrible I can be, how I
should've made things right because *you* were always in the
middle.

But... sometimes, you spoke softly, cradling me with advice.
Wrapping your arms around me, pulling me to your chest to muffle
my loud wails.
To tell me to look forward to tomorrow since yesterday is now too
far away.

Your words were so beautiful, they almost sounded like songs.
They drove me to dance, to sing along, to listen to them
repeatedly.
Your words were so beautiful, they almost sounded like songs...

Or were they?



Edamame

Kennedy Sarrazin

Langston Hughes: Literature Against White Saviorism and Performative Activism

Abigail Palopoli

The cunning modes of racism are explicitly revealed in Langston Hughes's "Slave on the Block" and "Poor Little Black Fellow". As a contributor to black talent and creativity during the Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes made it his duty to portray the plight of black youth smothered by white people whose intentions were self-serving and far removed from any social justice perspective. While black America cried out for strong activists against racial prejudices and discrimination, she only received the misplaced and misdirected use of privilege by people employed with a white savior complex. By exoticizing and appropriating black culture, the Carraways and Pembertons expose their ignorance through the vain attempt at remaining color conscious. Langston Hughes's short fiction in *The Ways of White Folks* perfectly reflects the feigned progressivism that plagued urban hubs during the Harlem Renaissance and exposes the subtlety of racism hidden beneath kindness that white saviors practiced for their seemingly altruistic performance in works like "Slave on the Block" and "Poor Little Black Fellow."

Hughes certainly recognizes the similar and dissimilar ways of white folks and presents them through the relationships between Luther and the Carraways and Arnie and the Pembertons. The Carraways are artists who have an obsession with the aesthetic and appearance of black skin. By using primitive terms like "jungle" and "ebony", they become entranced with Luther's color and fixate a dehumanizing gaze upon him that satisfies their artistic pleasures. In contrast to the Pembertons, the Carraways never truly sought to support Luther; rather he existed solely to fulfill a personal fetish of theirs that allowed the exploitation of his body. In the first description of the white couple, Hughes writes, "They were people who went in for Negroes—Michael and Anne—the Carraways. But not in the social-service, philanthropic sort of way, no. They saw no use in helping a race that was already too charming and naive and lovely

for words” (Hughes 19). The Carrways describe African Americans as simple, childlike, naive, and tragic, yet do nothing but objectify their bodies—letting their naïveté offset any real pursuit of reparation, politicization, or activism. Although they try to surround themselves with diversity, Michael and Anne continue to turn a blind eye to the overt racism from their friends and mother. The insincere language with which they discuss Luther and disingenuous advocacy of his freedom are the ways of white folks that Hughes illuminates through the subtlety of their debasement. The Pembertons, however, engage in a more discreet practice of assimilation that renders Arnie a mere product manufactured out of their artificial sense of goodness that seeks to respond to a “Christian duty”. In his literary analysis of the black aesthetic, Onwuchekwa Jamie writes:

Through the years, a portion of the Afro-American people have urged and attempted total effacement of the American self and total assimilation into white American culture and identity. But the very conditions (racism) which created that option also made it impossible to fulfill. So that in the final analysis, the most enduring voices in Afro-American life and history have been those who have insisted that the African identity is fundamental and definitive, that it is a positive structure onto which additions borrowed from white American culture and elsewhere are to be built, not a structure to be razed and replaced. (96-97)

Jamie’s argument against assimilation and the appropriation of black art and culture applies to Mapleton’s collective ego trip which encourages their white savior complex. Comparable to the Carraway’s patronizing speech, the Pembertons constantly misuse Arnie’s pronouns and reduce his masculinity and humanity to the single pronoun: “it”. Instead of succeeding his parents as the help, Arnie grew up under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Pemberton who supported him financially and forged the necessary means for his development and happiness all of which were selfishly motivated. Hughes writes of their self-righteousness: “Did they not go out of their way to

be nice to him—a poor little black fellow whom they, through Christ, had taken in? Throughout the years the whole of Mapleton began to preen itself on its charity, and kindness to Arnie. One would think that nobody in the town need ever again do a good deed: that this acceptance of a black boy was quite enough” (327). Juxtaposing the Carraway obsession of Luther with the Pemberton tokenism of Arnie, Langston Hughes illustrates the many disguises of bigotry.

The experience of freedom is uniquely different in both narrations, yet they share the same experience universally acknowledged by all victims as racial tokenism. Luther witnesses the alternative to his life with possessive caretakers in the hot-spots of Harlem. Growing a sense of liberation with Mattie as his guide, Luther comes to recognize what they describe as “vagaries of white folks” when Michael Carraway defends his mother’s aversion to “familiar Negroes” (Hughes 25, 29). Luther undoubtedly adopts the confidence from Harlem that makes his confrontation with the Carraways possible. It would belittle his experience if one were to say he became radicalized since the notion towards accosting the dignity of all people is far from radical theory; however, this does not deny his revolutionary resistance in the context of the early twentieth century. In his review of the short stories within *The Ways of White Folks*, Alain Locke maintains an argument in distaste of Hughes’s literary choices:

Their sociological significance is as important as their literary value, perhaps more so, because although written with some personal reaction of disillusionment and bitter despair, they reflect the growing resentment and desperation which is on the increase in the Negro world today ... It has reportorial courage and presents new angles, but it offers no solutions, doctors no situations and points no morals ... This is an important book for the present times; greater artistry, deeper sympathy and less resentment would have made it a book for all times. (66-67)

Although he commends Hughes for challenging the contemporary race struggle with “Negro point of views”, he denies its timeless effect and significant contribution to American race relations. To refute

Locke, "Slave on the Block" and "Poor Little Black Fellow" do in fact present a problem and offer a solution, but it is just as subtle as the families' prejudices. Hughes balances sympathy and resentment among black and white folk by depicting white people's oversimplified reactions to injustice alongside black people's justified reactions. Both white families in these short stories protest accusations made against them and redundantly proclaim their liberal-minded charity and kindness. The Pembertons specifically exchange their politeness as retribution for the world's harm against Arnie which is where Hughes artfully injects humor into the scene. After every beating to Arnie's dignity, Grace Pemberton and her husband repeat: "Let's be extra nice to him". The forced politeness does nothing to support Arnie when its intentions are to coddle the "poor little black fellow" who is ironically grown enough to recognize what true impartiality looks like. Hughes narrates, "For the first time in his life Arnie was really happy. Somebody had offered him something without charity, without condescension, without prayer, without distance, and without being nice" (331). Special treatment as a form of reparation was still discriminatory in the eyes of Langston Hughes and would not be welcomed into the hearts of his protagonists. The Carraways and Pembertons cut their performative activism short when Luther and Arnie act in unfamiliar ways that interfere with their daily abasement. In "Slave on the Block", Luther interrupts their artistic amusement: "And often, all too often, Mattie had moods. Then Luther would have moods. And it was pretty awful having two dark and glowering people around the house. Anne couldn't paint and Michael couldn't play"(28). Similarly, the Pembertons discouraged Arnie from associating with Claudina Lawrence and her diverse crowd of friends: "The Pembertons hoped they wouldn't get hold of Arnie. They would be a bad influence" (330). Arnie's experience of freedom is not in Harlem nor New Orleans but Paris with Claudina and Vivi through whom he found his true expression of race and identity. Proud of Claudina's fame and accomplishments as a black woman, Arnie learns of his potential outside of Mapleton and remains in Paris.

This sense of pride in one's blackness and heritage was felt

deeply by Langston Hughes. He found it of the utmost importance to redirect attention to artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance who wished to be called a “black artist” and not merely an “artist.” Jemie writes, “Hughes’s insistence on a distinct black art utilizing black themes and styles is an affirmation of black existence, a recognition of the fact that Afro-Americans are a distinct people within the American nation, and an insistence on their continued ethnic directness” (Jemie 103). The celebration and affirmation of black excellence continued to bolster the writings of the Harlem Renaissance, specifically the characters within Hughes’s short stories. While the white couples in “Slave on the Block” and “Poor Little Black Fellow” attempted to extol the aesthetic of black skin for their own attention seeking purposes, Luther and Arnie find it within themselves to individually and righteously appreciate their blackness. Freedom from oppression might appear more romantic with violent oppressors and heroic victims, but Hughes’s characters offer a realistic portrayal of those objectified by white saviorism. G. Lewis Chandler discusses the direction of Hughes’s literature and states that “Everything Langston Hughes writes—poetry or prose; lyrics or narratives—bears his stamp: a predilection for common life and everyday situations treated with a paradoxical mixture of genial humor and uncomfortable satire” (79). The humor and satirical edge within his writing can confound reader’s interpretations of his criticism; however, they blend well enough to further emphasize the realism found within Harlem literature. In order not to succumb to the artistic propaganda that is romanticism, Jemie states that “Hughes calls instead for critical realism—a balanced presentation as free from chauvinism as from apology, a view in which blacks are neither monsters nor saints but richly and complexly humanity” (Jemie 102). Never missing an opportunity to stress the importance of the universal life and death experience of humanity, Hughes illuminates the human condition in “Slave on the Block” and “Poor Little Black Fellow”; however, he does so specifically for his black characters in order to convey the black struggle against white saviorism in America. Hughes demonstrates a cutting social critique on white

people who present themselves as allies to the black struggle in America and extends it beyond his own disillusionment.

Langston Hughes's style of writing leaves room for different interpretations. Although he certainly derides the ways of white folks, it is worth noting the unique way in which he criticizes them. The violent, white oppressor does not exist in these narrations, yet their grand attempt to bestow kindness does exist despite self-serving motivations. Although he certainly has his qualms with the nation that enslaved a race of people and publicly debased their humanity with Jim Crow, Hughes loved his country and wished to make it as beautiful and wonderful as it could be. During the Red Scare of the 1950s, Langston Hughes appeared before Senator Joseph McCarthy denying his communist affiliation and presenting his experience with a racially segregated America. He speaks on the race relations within schools and recalls painful memories with sweet innocence:

One of my schoolmates (and there were no other Negro children in the school), a little white boy, protected me, and I have never in all my writing career or speech career as far as I know said anything to create a division among humans, or between whites and Negroes, because I have never forgotten this kid standing up for me against these other first-graders who were throwing stones at me. I have always felt from that time on that there are white people in America who can be your friend, and will be your friend, and who do not believe in the kind of things that almost every Negro who has lived in our country has experienced. (39)

Here, Hughes clearly portrays his attitude towards white people and specifically defends his literature to be a critique of a common sickness among the white people who seek attention and praise for their philanthropic efforts to diversify their life. According to George Kent, "Hughes prized decency in the individual person and could look with compassion upon those corrupted by delusions and systematized prejudice, but in several poems he responded with outrage, bitterness, anger and threat" (Kent 20). Kent recognizes the empathy and lack of defacement in Hughes's writings, but alienates particular

moments of hostility in his poems. This observation also pertains to his prose and narration within *The Ways of White Folks*. His anger against the Carraways and Pembertons is enthusiastically present in his critique against white America. Jemie writes, “Hughes calls on black writers to address their work to the masses, both black and white, and seek to unify them, and to use their work to lay bare the true nature of America: the hypocrisy of philanthropy and of organized religion ... The black writer should use his art to expose ‘all the economic roots of race hatred and race fear’” (Jemie 104). The future of America rests in the coalition and unity of all races such that efforts made towards their division should be challenged. Langston Hughes wrote consistently with this vision of unity, and it mustn’t go unnoticed in his fiction. Without disputing the reality of racism in America and its white perpetrators disguised as allies, Hughes critiques their behavior with humor, satire, and redeeming protagonists.

The Ways of White Folks hits at the nerves of every white performer and savior who seeks nothing for social justice and everything for validation, attention, and artistic pleasure. Luther and Arnie’s experience with the subtlety of their guardians’ prejudices shapes their successive experience with the taste of freedom outside the all too exoticized gaze within white American culture. Only through the proper observance of black art and culture in Harlem and Paris do their tolerations cease, thus prioritizing the celebration of their heritage with due respect to those who bestow kindness where it is not publicly rewarded. Langston Hughes projects a contemporary analysis of white saviorism and performative activism onto his characters, and his criticisms against the violators of such misdirected social justice present progressivism in the truest sense of the term as opposed to the faux demonstrations of white people pandering to black America.

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The Wilds of The Unknown

Taleigh Reed

There is time...
time for growth,
time for rest, and
time for letting go.

Letting go...
Letting go is something
that she never thought
would be challenging, but as
the door becomes closer to her
hand's reach, she begins to feel
stagnant.

Her hands begin to sweat.
Her breath becomes labored.
Her legs become heavy.
Her mind is racing, and
all of a sudden, she stops.
She never thought that letting
go would be so hard until she
remembered the fear, the
worry, the confusion: the wilds
of the unknown.

The unknown...
The feeling of being in the water
when your feet no longer touch.
The feeling of being stuck in the
valley when the weight of it all
seems too much. The feeling of
being at the bottom of the
mountain when the top cannot
be seen. And the feeling when
the darkness makes it impossible to see.

As she ponders on whether or not to touch the doorknob, she remembers that if God has allowed her to let go, the wilds of the unknown will not break her. Even here, in this new season, she is learning to trust as she lets go.

So she will trust in these waters when her feet no longer touch. She will trust in this valley when the weight of things seems too much. She will trust at the bottom of this mountain when the top is not seen. She will trust even when the darkness makes it hard to see.

She stands there, remembering that sometimes trusting is all you can do. Trusting does not always come with an itinerary. Trusting does not always come from a whim either. Sometimes trusting is knowing that it does not matter how wild the unknown may become, but all that matters is somehow, by the grace of God, she will get there.

So she opened the door.

Dyslexia

Aryton Purdy

Fog,
Eterna lly,
Loo ming ov er every inst ance of l ife,
a light fog, rather du ll but,
Powerful
eno ugh to stum
p you

at any moment.

Fog
Carries
A mix ture of fru strations an d mi snomers,
Neve rr the right word s to say,
Nev er know the best way to say th em,
Consta ntly misunderstand situati ons and
feel, unsa tisfied when one tr ies to express
themselves,
It ca n lead one to feel lo st or stuc k in a sens e.

Some days the fog creates
a rather dro wsy experi ence,
Leavi ng one rat her exhausted
and spent of e nergy,
Almost like walkin g blindly th roug h a fo rest,
With out any sl eep for the last f ew days.

Thro ugh all the muck and thicck fog, a brig ht light,
A light of imagina tion and a stroke of ge nius.
Things are more visible at times,
One is able to approa ch problems with an abstract,
Uni que and innovative view.

Some days the fog is unbearable, some dayse are manag
eable, Threw every day thro ugh it is persistent.
A shining beacon of cuuriosity, wonder, and
confusion.

Contributor Bios

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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