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T O Y O N

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# TOYON

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Multilingual Journal  
of Literature and Art

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**Richard Cortez Day Advisor's Prize** Best Work in Fiction

*The Manner of Your Scramble*, Henry D. Goldkamp

**Toyon Staff Award** Best Work in Visual Art

*Head Study*, Linda J. Kuckuk

**Redwood Empire Mensa Award** Best Work in Creative  
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*The Sea and Everything In It*, Kirby Wright

**English Department Award in Critical Analysis** Best Work  
in Literary Criticism

*Constructing the "Not-Me"*, Selena A. Weltz

**Multilingual Award** Best Work in Translation  
or Multiple Languages

*En vez de Flórez*, p joshua laskey

**Environmental Studies Program Award** Best Work in Environ-  
mental Justice

*Can We Not Remember?*, Michael T. Thompson

**Fuerza Award** Best Work in Spoken Word

*The Great Divide*, Jeremiah W. Seaborn

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**I Am**  
*Donel Arrington*

I am  
the beauty  
    and the light  
I'm the darkness  
    and the plight  
I'm the things  
    you think at night, I am—

I'm the bullet  
    and the gun  
I'm the moon  
    and I'm the sun  
I'm the heartbeat  
    and the drum, I am—

I'm the prison  
    and the cell  
I'm the mental  
    anguish hell  
I'm the curse  
    and I'm the spell, I am—

I'm the criminal  
    the crook  
I'm that last life  
    they took  
injecting lethal  
    heart stop shook, I am—

I'm the fulfillment  
    of the dream  
I'm that friend  
    you couldn't keep  
I'm the charmer  
    and the creep, I am—



I'm Jericho  
     and its walls  
 the revolution  
     and its balls  
 school shooters  
     inside malls, I am—  
  
 I'm the order  
     of this world  
 misogynistic  
     men and girls  
 I'm the straightener  
     to your curls, I am—  
  
 I'm your wedding  
     and your dress  
 I'm that drunken  
     mid-day sex  
 all the anguish  
     and the stress  
 that feeling deep  
     within your chest, I am—  
  
 I'm the soil  
     and the trees  
 I am money  
     I am greed  
 I'm the plant  
     and I'm the seed, I am—  
  
 I am that,  
     that isn't seen  
 I'm the Pope  
     and I'm the Queen  
 presidential nominees, I am—  
  
 I'm the war  
     and I'm the peace  
 Islamophobia beneath  
     austerity in Greece, I am—

I'm Sandra Bland  
     I'm Michael Brown  
 I'm Freddie Gray  
     inside the ground  
 I'm Sam DuBose  
     I'm Tamir Rice  
 I'm Walter Scott  
     I lost my life  
 I'm Eric Garner  
     *"I can't Breathe"*  
 I'm mass rebellion  
     in the streets  
 my hands are up  
     I'm on my knees  
 the status quo  
     is what police  
 enforce  
     we all beneath  
 the dream is not  
     within your reach  
  
 Amerika ain't free  
     she just,  
         took off her sheets—  
  
 I'm occupy  
     the fucking streets  
 I'm that mace  
     that they release  
 the Brooklyn Bridge  
     arrest police  
 the not yet born  
     and the deceased  
 the climate change  
     the mass concrete  
 the car you drive  
     that pig you eat  
 the cow that's there  
     that you call beef  
 the barricades, yeah  
     the news cheats



the media  
     is just a cheep  
 tool used  
     by the elite  
     I am—

I'm say her name  
     I'm Yazmin Payne  
 I'm national pride  
     I'm so profane  
 I'm this culture  
     gone insane  
 for all the bad  
     we all to blame  
 solutions not  
     within this game  
 that we call politics  
     today,  
 I am black,  
     white, and grey

all the music  
     ever made

the revolution  
     and the way,

I am.

## Doldrums

*Ruth A. Aul*

The desert is dead space.

You can feel the heat shimmering across your skin, hear the quiet drowsy hums and crackles of the dry air, its deafening silence making time move like molasses. The sky fades from indigo around the edges to harsh cerulean at the top dotted with little faraway cotton ball clouds and streaked through with a jet trail. The sun is a celestial yellow eye, and the golden tears leaking out run and seep into all the gaps between buildings and over all of the sizzling fields full of dry dirt and cactuses and little clusters of yellow flowers. They run in through the slightly grimy window of the creaky old wooden house on the corner and fill in all the cracks, bathing everything in a golden glow somewhere between the color of sunflowers and honey. Behind doors with chipped white paint and in the spaces just to the left of windows where the light doesn't reach, dusty brown fades into oily black. Some stray rays of the light sneak their way into the darkness, and tiny hints catch the dust drifting through the shadows, making it glitter and float like little fairies. In the old leather and black coffee murkiness, tiny shapes play in your mind's eye just beyond your reach, like dark mirages in the cool, dusty corners. In half-honeyed light and shoe polish shadows, a parched, empty room looks like a funeral parlor.

Outside the dead-space rooms, puddles appear on cracked pavement and parched, baked sand, shimmering away and disappearing when you look straight at them. A couple of little brown birds peck at the street, and fly up to perch on humming telephone wires when an old red sedan with peeling paint and duct-taped windows rattles past on the rough, faded blacktop. The tiny birds twitter and flap their wings in disapproval, a dog barks, a kid yells somewhere far away, and mariachi music drifts out of someone's window; but the bone-dry air sucks up the sound and muffles it so you hear the world like a kid pressing a drinking glass against the kitchen door.

The plug-in fan sputters, then continues to buzz. A car whooshes by. A cat yowls somewhere, a woman yells something unintelligible in the distance, and the honey and sunflowers of the afternoon wilt and

darken until the sun becomes a pomegranate, the juice staining the once-gold spaces a peachy pink. You're viewing the world through a pair of dusty, rose-tinted glasses. The mountains go from hazy, tawny grey to deep purple, the little birds on the humming wires wiggle into their cactus nests, a baby cries in its crib a few decrepit doors down, its mother smacks on her gum and chatters on the phone. The crickets and coyotes begin their chirping and yapping, the noises drifting in on the suddenly cool breeze. The tawny rocks still sizzle with the heat of the day, and the waves of heat rising from them etch psychedelic patterns onto the rose gold sky.

As the colors fade from pink to deep red, the bleeding heart sun dips behind the velvety black mountains. For a brief moment, there is absolute silence—no dogs, no crickets or buzzing insects, not even a breath of the evening breeze to rattle the leaves of the Joshua trees and blow a discarded hamburger wrapper off the side of the road— just the bleeding sun slipping away and the paper lantern moon peeking out from the soft sky. Ears ring in the deafening silence, and the last touches of golden ichor seep out of the sky. In the reverent quiet, the sky is pricked with pinpoint stars one by one, and cacti are alien silhouettes in the dying light. A cricket chirps, a coyote yaps, and sound returns. A chill settles over the hot, heavy dryness like a blanket. Fans sputter to a halt, and the shadows in the little spots to the left of windows previously filled with black coffee murkiness hide inkblot almost-shapes from the moon. Moonlight drips down, down, down from the velvety dark sky and pools on door frames and windowsills, eventually running off to form silvery-white puddles on the floor. The buzzing, crackling heat is gone now, replaced by the cold-coffee dryness of the night. Moths flutter and splash in the watery moonlight, the cold air whispers around the walls outside, and the desert is alive for the night.



**Buffalo Beauty in the Amethyst**  
*Lindsay Blade*



**Thomas**  
*Cate Robertson*

## **Shadows**

*Mahmoud Sharif*

The cat hides behind the shrubs, preys at mice, brushes the walls,  
stalks the birds and I always follow it faithfully.

I am a shadow.

I am a dark silhouette cast on the surface of all things, following the  
cat every time, following its whim, mimicking it, every time it moves,  
everywhere.

I shadow the stray cat prowling the alleyways or climbing the walls.  
I am a shadow living a life bound to it, our lives forever intertwined.

A shadow never chooses who it follows, it has no will of its own,  
it is coerced to all shapes and to various forms. We accept our fate  
unequivocally, take it as it is and never question the purpose of our  
body. I long for my freedom and wish to break the chains of servitude,  
to free myself from this life in captivity. I am lacking a life of my own.  
Why have I taken the shape of another body and why do I follow it?

I am the one who follows the animal, I am led by it and have to repeat  
the same movements, when it licks its fur or when it plays. I imitate it  
when it yawns, follow the cat when it explores the souk, when it treads  
the roofs or scavenges for food. It ambles with grace in the gardens, on  
the grass, and on the tiled-floor. It tiptoes on the veranda, the balconies,  
and on the stairs. I follow it as it scampers on the trees or lies down to  
rest inside abandoned buildings.

Some shadows are linked to inanimate objects like tables, trees, walls,  
or cars. Others are linked to living beings like sheep, women, children,  
or birds. I am not unfortunate somehow, at least I can move.

The cat had blue, almond-shaped eyes, a round head, a fur with vertical  
stripes, medium sized ears, an elongated, strong, and healthy frame.

It had a calm demeanor. When the cat walked or prowled, I trailed it. When the cat hissed or meowed, I imitated it. When it opened its mouth or spread its claws, I did the same.

The bondage persisted.

We lived in Mogadishu, a battle scarred city ruled by the madness of men, in a frenzy of war and fear.

We sauntered through the districts of Shingani, Medina, Wardiigle, or Waaberi. The cat wandered in the souk of Hamar Weyne then hid behind bags of rice or car wheels, beneath restaurant tables, or under the ground of the Marwaas Mosque in the heart of the old city.

We walked over tin roofs, landed on soft saffron bags, or ran away from the children teasing and chasing us.

We witnessed all major events such as riots and demonstrations, or marauding soldiers harassing innocent people, foreign armies patrolling the streets. We saw mean militiamen levying taxes on people, hungry children begging on the streets, entire families fleeing the city on donkey carts. We witnessed drones gliding in the sky, spying on everyone.

But I was bonded to the cat, unable to choose my destiny, unable to change the color of my coat, unable to change forms. I had no voice, no freedom to pursue other aspirations, and no way to express my feelings.

We hid during the day under the grounds of the mosque. At night, we sneaked into a grain storage, and the animal lay down on the floor, in the alcove.

In there I met the shadow of a chair.

"Hello," it would greet me every night.

"Hello," I would answer.

We met more frequently, and our friendship grew.

One day I asked,  
"For how many years have you been a shadow linked to this chair?"

"Thirty-five years since the chair was built," it answered.

"Is there is any hope for us to escape from our lives of bondage?"

"One day perhaps. One day."

On the following day, the cat dragged me through the alleyways. We strolled the beachfront, climbed derelict walls, sat on window panes, then stared at pedestrians. The cat watched fishermen carrying loads of fish on their heads, each man hastening his march. We stared at children playing football on the street. We watched women carrying bags near the fish market.

These were normal days. Other days weren't as quiet.

One night, as soon as we returned to the grain storage, the shadow of the chair said,  
"Did you have a nice day?"

I answered,

"No. Today children were shot in a crossfire. Women screamed lying next to their dead children. The blood flowed on the roadside like a water stream."

"That is indeed sad," the shadow of the chair said.

"How can one begin to free himself from servitude?" I asked.

"We are all servants of someone else. You see, you are the servant of the cat while I am the servant of the chair. The cat and the chair are servants of human beings. The human beings in this city are servants of foreign armies of occupation. These foreign armies - which they call peacekeeping forces - are all servants, directly or indirectly, of the monarch who rules the world from America."

The cat I served was sleeping, it was unaware of our conversation. The street light outside illuminated the room but was unable to radiate light over the angle that I occupied. Hence, I filled that space where the light source could not reach.

The shadow of the chair was still. I pictured a black figure outlined on the ceramic floor.

It said,

“If you want to be free and if you want to lead others to freedom, then lead by example. Reject injustice and iniquity. Renounce greed and vanity. Live by virtue and patience, protect the weak and the sick, respect the elders, cherish the children, and your cause will be worth fighting for. You will have to unite with all the shadows like us who live in bondage. In this struggle we will have to toil together, let go our differences, forego our egos. There are many millions in the world like us. Let’s all work together to gain our freedom.”

When morning came, I followed the cat under the scorching sun. It was time to leave, not leave the city, but leave the body. I had enough of this life of bondage.

In the afternoon, the cat meandered under the acacia trees, then the coconut trees.

When we returned back at night, the chair was moved in a different spot and the shadow lay in a different angle.

“I’ve had enough,” I said. “I want to break free. Right now. Tonight.”  
“But who will you be fighting?”

I remained silent.

He was right. I didn’t know who I had to fight.

The next day the chair was gone. Someone had taken it away.  
I never met the chair again.

**This story was first published in *Origami Journal***

## **Great Expectations: Forging Dickens’ Monsters**

*Linda J. Kuckuk*

In the late nineteenth century, at the time of Charles Dickens, death was all around London. Public hangings were still a common scene during his childhood, and grave-robbing was a relentless activity for thieves almost until his death. Despite widespread technological advances and general progress, Victorians held fast to folklore and in literature a Gothic undercurrent remained. Dickens refrains from directly identifying monsters in *Great Expectations*, but he nonetheless creates a story in which some characters are closer to being monstrous than they are to being realistically human. According to the Cambridge English Dictionary, a monster is “any imaginary, frightening creature, especially one that is large and strange, or a person who does very cruel and evil acts; a cruel person.” Dickens writes a variety of such cruel persons on the pages of his story, each engaging a different monstrous quality.

At the opening of the novel, escaped convict Abel Magwitch, is one such monster. Preying on a small, weak orphan mourning in the graveyard where his family lies, the menacing Magwitch starts “up from among the graves” (Dickens 10) and viciously grabs young Pip by the throat—if not ultimately by his innocent heart. Pip is seduced by the fear Magwitch imposes upon him, a fear which quickly morphs into guilt, as Pip begins a journey of lost innocence perpetrated by the convict’s needs and desires. At the same time that Pip is losing his innocence, in a town not far from the graveyard, a reclusive heiress insidiously manipulates her adopted daughter. Miss Havisham’s grief, fear and anger from lost love, turn upon herself and the child. Through molding Estella with her own deep-seated rage, Miss Havisham exchanges an innocent girl for a life-draining seductress. Having been fashioned by others into monsters themselves, Magwitch and Miss Havisham are like grave-robbers or Dr. Frankenstein; with a desire to seek revenge, they exploit the bodies and craft the emotions of their innocent victims turning them into monsters who exploit others and are emotionally void.

Abel Magwitch, who was himself monstrously forged by circumstance, finds in Pip a woeful opportunity to create what he could never himself become. As he engages in the vengeful act of one-



upping his former companion in crime Compeyson, Magwitch baits the innocent Pip with promises of great harm, and later, with the fantasy of a gentleman's life or "great expectations," all the while burying Pip's innocence in guilt; submerging him in a life free of personal responsibility. Dickens often evokes the power of names and in Abel Magwitch there is no exception. "Abel" is perhaps in contrast to Compeyson's "Cain"—thus the reader anticipates his redemption that eventually comes, but at great expense. Yet still, he is a "magic witch" who can raise weak and tender young boys—almost from the dead—in graveyards, only to kill their innocence. Divulging gothic conventions in *Great Expectations*, John Bowen, professor of nineteenth-century literature at the University of York, writes:

"When Magwitch leaves the graveyard, he looks to Pip 'as if he were eluding the hands of the dead people, stretching up cautiously out of their graves, to get a twist upon his ankle and pull him in.' What is true for Pip is also true for us as readers of the book; at certain moments, the dead seem to reach up to grab you." (Bowen)

The dead grab at Magwitch, at the reader, and at Pip's imagination. Watching Magwitch hobble across the marsh, Pip contemplates "a gibbet with some chains hanging" where a pirate was once hanged: "The man was limping on towards this latter, as if he were the pirate come to life, and come down, and going back to hook himself up again." (Dickens 12). To Pip, Magwitch may well be a pirate; he steals some part of the boy that can never be regained.

Surrounded by death from his first breath of life, Pip begins his story as an innocent child just coming into awareness, but who soon deviates from the small sense of self he had, altering himself to the purpose of others' until becoming a Frankenstein-like fabrication of himself. His world is one of bleak marshes and gravestones: "five little stone lozenges, each about a foot and a half long" whose "first fancies regarding" his family "were unreasonably derived from their tombstones" (Dickens 9). From here Pip gains most of the few comforts life affords him, assigning names to his family and to himself—the end of life for many is the beginning of life for Pip. Hoisted roughly atop a gravestone by the monstrous Magwitch and precariously upon it while interrogated, Pip's feelings of being at home are reinforced when he refers to the tall stone as "my gravestone" (Dickens 11). This is a reference to both his impending doom, and his feeling of ownership of this place. His heart lies here, and under these stones; his family—but too, the reference piques the thought of grave-robbers and making monsters from the dead. Having brought a small meal with him in his pocket, thinking to eat it here with his family, but instead unintentionally feeds his slice

of bread to Magwitch while on the graves. Unwittingly, Pip gestures a ceremony for death, perhaps foreshadowing the death of his own innocence in the novel. Researching these customs, social historian Ruth Richardson notes that it was "widespread custom" to provide "final refreshment customarily taken at eighteenth-and nineteenth-century funerals before the corpse left the house" (Richardson 8). Pip is small and weak—nearly a corpse himself—yet it is Magwitch who eats. Pip gives up his food to him in the same way he will give up his innocence. It is as though Pip is his own funeral-host with this grim refreshment. Manipulated into feeling guilty for the hunger pangs of the magic-witch, Pip's guilt grows stronger when he sneaks food for that monster from another; his monstrous sister, Mrs. Joe, who "raised him by hand" bottle-feeding him as an infant when Pips mother joined Pip's dead family in the graveyard. As well, Mrs. Joe's raised hand is a constant threat of punishment to Pip, and it is she who literally controls his bread and butter. From her recurring beatings, he is predisposed to victimization, and is ravaged by guilt when he steals sustenance for Magwitch. Instantly, Pip is transformed into a monster in his own mind, sharing the sins of the convict. Fearing the threats of Magwitch more than his sister's abuse, he becomes a liar and a thief: "under the weight of my wicked secret, I pondered whether the Church would be powerful enough to shield me from the vengeance of the terrible young man if I divulged to that establishment" (Dickens 24). Pip considers repenting, but the opportunity does not present itself, and his fear is too great to pursue absolution. He carries this forward, building upon the foundation that Magwitch carves. As he sinks deeper into his guilt, the torment from Magwitch's threats become a festering psychic wound. Pip, transforming into his own sort of monster, is overcome with a self-serving obsession for exploiting his "great expectations" when unlimited and unguided financial resources arrive.

The pestilence in Magwitch's early manipulation of Pip makes itself known as the years go by in Dickens' story. Learning that Magwitch is his benefactor, the one who has raised him with an invisible hand, Pip feels great revulsion toward Magwitch, but even more so, toward himself. Dickens' Pip reflects upon Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* when he says, "The imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made, was not more wretched than I, pursued by the creature who had made me" (Dickens 254). Here Pip compares himself to a monster-maker, when he himself is a monster: He is, as Bowen points out, "like a creature created by a monster: a kind of monster's monster. This tiny gothic allusion, over in a sentence, tells us so much about Pip, his state of mind and his relationship with Magwitch"

(Bowen). Bowen pinpoints the gothic nature in *Great Expectations* and Dickens' acknowledgement of his character's darker nature.

There is another ghostly character in the novel, Miss Havisham, that Dickens condemns to his tradition of monster-making. Rich with money but little else, Miss Havisham is like the undead; a ghostly presence eternally dressed in the yellowed-innocence of her wedding gown. She protects her memories within the dark walls of her crumbling estate and survives, it would seem, upon the decayed fantasy of her wedding feast, while spiders and rodents devour the crumbs. She is a monster of a different sort—an animated corpse—and responsible for Pip's first venture out of the marshlands of his birth; the place where he found comfort around his dead family in the church graveyard and in the roof over his head—even if it was provided by an abusive sister. Seemingly satiating a hunger; “a sick fancy” (Dickens 51), Miss Havisham has Pip brought to her and commands him to “play” as though by observing his actions she will reanimate herself: “So she sat, corpse-like, as we played at cards” ruminates Pip, “I have often thought since, that she must have looked as if the admission of the natural light of day would have struck her to dust.” (Dickens 52). Miss Havisham is a different type of monster than is Magwitch. Much like a vampyre, she is frail, but not fragile. She plays the role of victim while simultaneously sucking the life-blood out of those she attacks. Bowen says: “Miss Havisham is both the victim of her abandonment and the dominant, powerful, even seductive, oppressor of Pip and Estella” (Bowen). By introducing Pip to her beautiful daughter Estella, who she teaches to taunt Pip, Havisham seduces Pip by false love as was she in her youth. Pips sense of being cared for by Havisham and Estella too is false, although it is ultimately more Pip who does the care-taking than the surrogate parents; Miss Havisham posing as one and Magwitch as another. Pip's upbringing and education in the Marsh and with Miss Havisham do not provide for lessons in discernment, and he flails about, not understanding what in his relationships is real, and what is fantasy. Miss Havisham's emotional and financial influence over Pip and Estella grows not from love or good-will, but from the fungus upon her heart. Her proud attitude serves as a thinly-veiled costume for her real intentions; solely to cause hurt to others.

Estella, raised with the deteriorating bride-cake of Miss Havisham as a constant backdrop, is a morsel upon which the monstrous heiress thrusts her rage over love's rejection. Estella is a counter-balance to Pip, as she has no “great expectations” for herself but rather, she herself is the great expectation of Miss Havisham. In the clutches of the jilted bride Havisham, Estella is raised to capture the hearts of men, yet to be void

of any feeling toward them. In her close analysis of gender and hunger in Dickens' novels, Prof. Gail Houston observes that Estella becomes “the nightmare version of the Victorian young woman bred to have no desires and no appetites, trained to be desired and to be the object of appetite” (Houston 159). Indeed, in contrast to the ravenous appetite of Magwitch, Miss Havisham and Estella never consume food, but instead, feed off of the naïveté of Pip. Estella's objectification as a “plaything” allows her to tease and provoke men, but she “plays”, or does so, only at Miss Havisham's command. In the words of Houston: “Estella views herself as Miss Havisham's ornamental object, to be dangled before men to tantalize them and break their hearts” (Houston 159). Sucking life from Pip, Estella plays for Miss Havisham a monstrous game of hearts.

When they are no longer children, Pip and Estella's games become more subtle. Pip escorts Estella to a departure for Richmond, where, in her words; a lady will be “showing people to me and showing me to people” (Dickens 203). Pip, in what might be considered an emerging self-awareness, questions her as to the enjoyment of life she will have there where her whole being will be consumed by the vanity of others, but she answers him “so carelessly” that Pip observes, “You speak of yourself as if you were someone else” (Dickens 203). Seeing her in this fashion indicates Pip is growing into a matured perspective about their childish games and monster natures. While there are many instances of Estella's cruelty toward Pip in Dickens' story, here she has become vacant—and no longer playing the old games with him that she will continue to play with others in Richmond. Estella is the hollow, vampyre-like creature of Miss Havisham's design. She is the innocent child that has been replaced by an emotionless void without the ability to love even her maker, not out of cruelty, but out of the simple facts that describe her existence.

In Dickens' *Great Expectations*, the author creates an array of monsters who feed upon one another both financially and emotionally. Magwitch is the solitary character in this patch-work family to whom great expectations are actually offered. His exile to Australia—as punishment for crimes—provides a new beginning for him, even if inadvertently. But his need for revenge overpowers his sensibility. Originally a criminal by circumstance, he chooses to use his freedom and subsequent wealth in the new land to form Pip into a monstrous “gentleman.” And it is Magwitch's ability to choose that leads him full-circle back to Compeyson; the “Cain” to his “Able” and one of his own makers. Against all better judgment, Magwitch returns from Australia to see in-person what his money has bought him: gentleman Pip. Although Pip is initially revolted when Magwitch unsettles his adult



world—returning into his life like a resurrection from that long-ago graveyard—it is when Magwitch views what he forged—his creation Pip—that the reader can see a transformation from monster to man; Magwitch is released from his ghoulish form by his love for Pip and the belief that he has achieved his goal of transforming the little boy from the Marsh into a gentleman. The death of his master, Compeyson, and the compassion shown him by Pip, affirms his redemption.

Dickens purges Miss Havisham of her monster nature with fire. He kindles the flames with her decrepit wedding dress and fans the blaze with her dried and shriveled past as her old gown catches fire. Pip too, is injured by flames as he rescues her from total consumption, but she emerges cleansed, asking him, “perhaps you can never believe, now, that there is anything human in my heart?” (Dickens 295). Learning his own lessons, as the goodness in her heart is revealed, Pip becomes the beneficiary not of her fortune, but of the legacy of her monstrous nature: “There was an air of utter loneliness upon her that would have moved me to pity though she has willfully done me deeper injury than I could charge her with. I stood...thinking of how in the progress of time I too had come to be a part of the wrecked fortunes of that house” (Dickens 295). Pip sheds more of his own monster-self as the true nature of his makers, and his own folly, is revealed to him.

Devouring the fantasy created by Miss Havisham and his own imagination, young Pip had no discernment; he held “great expectations” about being a gentleman rather than a poor boy from the marshlands, but Dickens’s character flounders without grounding about what makes life meaningful beyond money. As Houston notes: “Pip becomes property as much as he inherits it” (Houston 162). Magwitch owns him financially the unknown source of distant but plentiful money and without direction and guidance, Pip knows no boundaries; his morality frays. It is only the return of the living Magwitch that enables him to realize his own monstrous behavior toward those who truly love him. He remains eternally wounded, but sheds his monster skin along with his unrealistic “great expectations” redefining his sense of morality and humanity.

With the spider-infested bridal-cake belonging to Miss Havisham as a representation of her own life, Estella escapes the darkness of that monster’s manipulations only to marry Drummle, aptly nicknamed “the spider”. A more sinister monster than she, Drummle eventually consumes Estella, much like the spiders feast upon her mother’s cake. And as though his abuse was retribution for her own cruelty to others, Drummle’s treatment sparks her transformation and thus she sheds

her monster nature too. Yet as with her mother, Magwitch and Pip, it is not without cost.

In the end Estella admits the positivity of her transformation to Pip: “I have been bent and broken, but—I hope—into a better shape” (Dickens 358). Her suffering has overcome her training as she too, is shed of the monster-skin. Having lost all they thought they were—and at her childhood home, Satis House, as Dickens’ novel closes—Pip and Estella are like the survivors of a great siege, after which they have laid their monsters to rest, burying them forever in the graveyard of their hearts. Pip does not return to the old graveyard where his innocence and his family lay buried, but he and Estella do return “home”, where the great tomb—the home of Miss Havisham—is dismantled. And with the physical place destroyed, they move to an emotional place where Pip’s true nature is revealed to himself, where the monsters have finally been confessed, and where love—even love—may be waiting.

Dickens crafts humans into monsters in his novel, *Great Expectations*. He gives them human form and voice then weaves into them individual stories of perceived oppression, privilege, power, and denial. Like spiders building web upon web, he layers the persona of his characters, but then catches them in their own webs, offering escape only through the shedding of their old skin. Although death is the inevitable end for some, Dickens is equally ready to give his characters new life through transformation. He not only gives us monsters, he shows us how they form, and how they subsequently redeem themselves; how they feed off of each other, and how they transform each other. In the end, each character is able to fill the void formed by the expulsion of the monster through the essential human characteristics of forgiveness, compassion, redemption, and love.

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## The Sea and Everything In It

*Kirby Wright*

The boy stood at the fence line watching Valdez stack wood. The ranch hand was burning the horse. The stink of scorched flesh made the boy feel sick. He watched a hand of black smoke reach through the pasture and wondered if it would grab Flash's spirit and carry it up to Heaven.

He thought about leaving Honolulu. Mummy had said it was only for August and threw him a kiss when he looked back before boarding Aloha Air. This was the first time they'd been apart in all his four years. Mummy was blonde. Her eyes flashed a cold green. He sensed she didn't love him because he looked nothing like her. Sometimes it felt like hate. She'd called him a "scaredy-cat" for running to her bed after a nightmare about flying rats. When she'd found out he'd pried rhinestones out of her porcelain fish, she gave away his kitten. His big brother was Mummy's pet. Troy had her hair and eyes and could always make her laugh.

He'd held the lantern that first night. The grandmother had cradled Flash's head in her lap while Dr. Lux pressed a stethoscope to her belly. The mare's friends had neighed deep in the pasture. The boy had felt the lantern was a part of him and that he was an angel of light sent down to save Flash. There'd been a gasp and the mare shook violently. "Maki?" the old woman had asked as Dr. Lux tucked the stethoscope back in his black bag.

This was the boy's first trip to Moloka'i. The grandmother had parked her blue jeep outside Misaki's Grocer and let him choose macadamia nut ice cream from the deep freeze before she put milk, butter, and a carton of eggs in their basket. Then they'd headed east. The old woman had pointed at the Churches built by Father Damien: they were tiny with high steeples, hibiscus hedges, and square cemeteries. He'd scared himself thinking the ghosts of lepers haunted the grounds.

The grandmother joined him at the fence line, wrapping her gnarled fingers around the wire. They were swollen and bent from arthritis. Her face was as wrinkled as a crumpled bag. She smelled of

VapoRub. She'd rubbed Vick's on her neck and chest before bed to help with breathing. He liked that smell better than cigarettes. Gramma hunched down. The odor of burnt tobacco was in her clothes and it made him think of the horse in the flames.

"Whacha doin', Peanut?" the grandmother asked.

"Nothing, Gramma." The boy felt a tear spill and wiped it away with a sweep of his knuckles.

"Nothin', my foot," she snapped.

"I'm watching the fire," he answered, finger combing his crew cut. He wanted to be tough like his hapa haole father. He was glad he took after him. The old woman loved his father more than anyone so it was a good thing to look like him and to have the same short hair.

"Wish dat Valdez'd finish da hell up," the grandmother grouched. She wore a palaka shirt with a red stain, denims, and a lauhala hat. A yellow handkerchief was knotted to the brim.

The boy thought Gramma sounded different today. She made a smacking noise pursing her lips and slurred some of her words. Her mouth seemed hollow. She made him think of the Munchkin mayor in *The Wizard of Oz*, the one with the top hat and body shaped like a pear. She was pear-shaped too. The old woman held a cigarette between her lips, struck a wooden match to life against a fence post, and lit the tip. She sucked the filter the way babies suck bottles and blew smoke through her nose. "Not long befoah dey burnin' me up," she mumbled.

The boy winced. "God wants you in a grave with a cross."

"Says who."

He realized she was toothless. But didn't she have teeth yesterday at Moloka'i Airport? He tried remembering her mouth when she'd poked him awake with a bamboo stick in the rooster light.

"Asked you a question, boy."

"Says Mummy," he shot back. "When you get burned to dust your soul burns to dust too."

"How she come to know dat?"

"Father Keelan."

"Wot Mummy says don't mattah."

"How come?"

"Christ, dat damn wahine's a million miles away."

He liked being called Peanut. He liked it too when she swore talking about his mother. He knew Gramma thought she was a spoiled mainland girl and that her son could have done better. He was glad he didn't look like Mummy. He still loved her but being separated made him feel funny, as if she didn't care what happened to him on the ranch.

This was his “big boy” month with Gramma. His father was preparing for a trial back home while his mother and Troy visited Boston relatives.

The grandmother dropped her cigarette on the grass. She stomped it out with the heel of her boot. “Whacha want fo’ breakfast, Peanut?”

“Sugar Pops.”

“You’ll get eggs an’ be happy with ‘um.”

He followed her toward the beach house, their thin shadows climbing the crab grass incline past the jeep.

The steel roof of the beach house was red with rust. It was a small place with storm windows facing the channel and Maui. The parlor, kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom rested on a foundation of small concrete pyramids, allowing water to pass safely under the house during super tides. The grandmother lived there alone. She’d divorced Chipper after all his cheating drove them both to drink. A desperate sort of loneliness had gnawed away at her and she drank herself numb every morning. She’d fall trying to stand. Shirts and denims were permanently stained from crawling through the red dirt. Christian Scientists traveling ranch-to-ranch had offered friendship, a Bible, and the belief her sins could be erased through prayer and faith. She’d started attending Sunday meetings in a coconut grove at the Fairgrounds and prayed for spiritual guidance. The prayers, the meetings, and fellow Christian Scientists gave her the courage to give up the bottle and deed her destitute ex a life estate on the eastern edge of her property. The boy had never seen him. The grandmother had warned him never to venture east of the ironwoods because Chipper mixed shooting with drinking and might mistake him for a deer.

The old woman had told the boy she was never alone because she had the ocean and all the whales, fish, and turtles in it for company. The waves broke fifty feet away from his bed on the lanai. The crashing water reminded him of thunder. The crashing, buzzing mosquitoes, and chirping geckos had caused him to toss and turn his first night. Just when he’d nodded off, the roosters started in.

He followed Gramma through the screen door into a yellow kitchen. He wasn’t allowed to open the fridge without permission. A plate with brown eggs was perched on her steel counter. The grandmother opened a cupboard below the sink and pulled out a frying pan.

“Sunny side up?”

He nodded. He wasn’t sure what she meant. Was she talking about the sun burning away the clouds?

“Wash up befoah kaukau, boy.”

He ambled down the hall to the bathroom and shut the door. He wanted to lock it but there was no lock. He faced the pedestal sink. Something bubbled in a glass on the dresser. He gazed through the bubbling water and saw two rows of teeth attached to bright pink gums. The teeth looked real and he imagined the old woman had the power to unlock body parts. He stuck in a finger, running it over the gums. They felt like plastic.

“Peanut!”

He pulled out his finger. He tiptoed and smiled big in the mirror behind the sink. The boy studied his baby teeth. They were as white as the puka shells he’d found at the point. He stared at the old woman’s teeth. Gramma would die first. His father was next. Finally, it would be Mummy’s time. He was pretty sure he’d outlive Troy. His heart would beat longer than anyone’s and that’s when he’d pack and move to the beach house. Crowing roosters, creaking floors, and thundering waves would remind him of that August he shared with his grandmother. He’d buy VapoRub and dab some on his chest before bed. The boy knew he would never be alone on the ranch—he could always make friends with the sea and everything in it.

## Yellow

*Amantha Wood*

Lettie sat on the white washed edge of her bedroom windowsill smoking a long cigarette. Through the smoke she squinted at the shadow behind her neighbor's window shade. A lone figure, a curvy and vivacious shadow, stood twisting in place, posturing and bending forward, showing off a large ass and tall hair. Lettie wasn't too impressed with the largeness of the ass as much as she wished she could take a yardstick and lay it straight against that tall hair, count the inches, and then slap that big ass with the yard stick and watch the red sting grow. She wondered how many cans of Aqua-Net hairspray it took to hold up that hive. Stubbing out her Slim on the outside stucco of her second story apartment window, Lettie pushed her foot back into the fuzzy pink slipper that had slipped off her nervous foot, picked up the empty plastic laundry basket, and kicked the unfolded clothes under the bed, shoving them far under the yellow dust ruffle. Briefly she doubled over from the pain of another contraction. She pulled open her waistband and peered at the hand towel folded between her thighs. There was still spotting, but not the clumpy mess that had discharged from her body hours ago.

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Life with Wade was pretty good. They'd been married for almost two years. Wade used to go through the line at Woolworths department store, where Lettie was a cashier. One day, Wade bought her a yellow rose. As Lettie handed him the change he handed her the rose and asked Lettie to be his date at the Lincoln Elementary School PTA Dance. Wade was a third grade teacher there. When they slow danced together, Lettie felt the intimate warmth of Wade's soft palm through her thin silk dress, just above her buttocks, and fell in love. They planned to have babies and made love voraciously as newlyweds did, but after the third miscarriage, love making became a bit famished, as did Lettie's body. She traded food for Virginia Slims. After each miscarriage, Wade held her and whispered in her ear "We'll just have

to try again, my Yellow Rose." And off he'd go, back to his third grade classroom to grade papers late into the night.

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The first two miscarriages had happened early in each pregnancy, Lettie's morning sickness had not even subsided. A visit to the obstetrician's office filled Lettie and Wade with meaningless statistics of common miscarriage rates and continued hope. "Keep trying," said Dr. Boyle. Wade held Lettie's hand as they left Dr. Boyles office and walked slowly through the park towards home; the little buds of flowers showing hopeful signs of warmth in the air. Lettie stopped in front of a patch of small purple blooms, bowed her head into Wade's chest, and cried. Wade hesitated before wrapping his arms around her, stroking her long brown hair.

The third miscarriage happened a week after Lettie and Wade got to hear the heartbeat of the growing fetus in Dr. Boyle's office. Lettie's leg would bounce nervously, remembering the rhythm of that fast little heartbeat, while sitting in the windowsill, smoking, watching the beehive grow.

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"Your daddy's a cheating bastard, Lettie," her momma said, she was putting the kettle on the stove. "Here I am pregnant again, and that man is out rolling around with some gawd-damn whore. Now, Lettie, go out in the meadow and pick me some of those purple flowers. Pick me a nice bouquet of that purple Pennyroyal. Go on now." Lettie ran out to the meadow, as fast as her six-year-old legs could go. She wanted to bring back the prettiest flowers for her mamma and make her happy. Lettie thought about how beautiful her mamma was, with her long brown hair just like Lettie's. She picked what she could hold of the purple blossoms, arms full, and ran back to the house. Her mamma took up the flowers from Lettie's arms and cut them up into bits. Then she put all the pieces into the kettle. "Now, Lettie," Momma knelt down and brought Lettie close to her. "After I drink this tea, there won't be a baby in me anymore. I don't want you to say nothing about it, to anybody. I love you so much, Lettie Bug—now go outside and play."

That night Lettie heard her momma yelling in pain. Her daddy took her momma to the hospital while Mrs. Lee from next door came to stay with Lettie. The next morning, daddy came home all by himself. He sat Lettie on his lap and stroked her long brown hair. "Lettie, your momma is gone now. She won't be coming home. She's gone off to Heaven."

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It had been months since Lettie and Wade made love, months since the last miscarriage. Lettie only worked part time at Woolworth's, leaving her time in the day to do the household chores. Usually, Wade stayed at work late into the day; sometimes he'd come home for dinner and sometimes they would sit quietly together and watch the T.V. Sometimes, Lettie would feel Wade's stare burn into her, but she wouldn't meet his gaze. One night Wade came home and slipped into bed. He wrapped his arm over Lettie's hip, pulled her close and whispered, "I forgive you." Lettie stared deep and blank into the darkness, wondering if her neighbor's lover buried his nose in her Aqua Net beehive and slapped that large ass. Lettie rolled over and allowed Wade to make love to her. In her mind's eye, she could see them, two nude bodies smashed against each other, both frail and thin with desperation, haunted by unborn children.

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The next morning there was a yellow rose in a red, glass vase on the breakfast table. Its yellow petals opened into the beam of sunlight that cut in through the kitchen window. Over in the sink, Wade's breakfast dishes were stacked neatly, the fork and knife gleaming in the beam of sunlight. The smell of bacon lingered in the air and grease had splattered on the range top. Lettie ran to the toilet, lifted the lid, and vomited. Lettie vomited in the morning for the next several weeks as she watched the yellow rose dry up and decided that she was again pregnant. She gathered some cash from their nightstand drawer and set out to Woolworth's to buy Aqua Net. Lettie asked her co-worker Noreen to cover Lettie's shifts over the next week. On her way home through the park, she stopped at the patch of purple Pennyroyal. She thought about her mother's long brown hair and felt a stab of guilt rip through her heart. Hurriedly, she began pulling the Pennyroyal out of the ground and stuffed the purple buds into her Woolworth's sack.

For four days, after Wade had gone to work in his third grade classroom, Lettie brewed a quart of Pennyroyal tea. She drank four cups each day. After each cup, Lettie would sit on the windowsill and blow smoke towards her neighbor's window, her fuzzy pink slipper dangling from the foot of a crossed leg, nervously bouncing. On the third day, when the cramps began, Lettie chain smoked a pack of Slims, sitting in the window, waiting for her neighbor's shadow to appear behind the drawn shade. Lettie knew this was the time of day her neighbor got ready to go somewhere. When the shadow appeared, Lettie thought

the beehive had grown taller. She watched as the shadows hands moved from the pointed breasts to flutter up to pat the beehive and flutter back down to caress the pointed breasts again and finally, the large ass. She watched as an aerosol can of spray orbited the beehive. . . *spray spray pat pat* . . . Lettie's cramps began to make her wince in pain.

On the fourth day and after the first cup of Pennyroyal tea, Letties cramping had become so severe she had to hold on to the kitchen sink while doubled over in pain. Wade hadn't left for work yet. He came to give her a goodbye kiss and saw her face contorted.

"Lettie? You okay? Did you eat something bad?"

"No Wade, it's just my time of month, worse than usual."

"Ahhh," said Wade, in that way a man does, when he doesn't understand the mysterious pain of monthly cramps.

"Well okay then. I'm off to work, have a nice day, my Yellow Rose."

After Wade left, Lettie pulled herself upstairs, the cramps making her thin body contract over so that she crawled up the stairs to their bedroom. She carried a quart of tea with her, three quarts to go. Upstairs, the cramps subsided enough that Lettie could gather towels and her pack of Slims. She sat in front of the dresser mirror and took out the can of Aqua Net, spraying it all around her shoulder length brown hair. With a comb she began to tease and rat and back comb the long strands, making her hair a large fluff of a bush around her head. She gulped down another quart of tea. Two to go. Cramps. She crossed her arms over her abdomen and rocked forward and back. When the cramps backed off, Lettie piled the teased mess on top of her head and sprayed. She poked bobby pins in every direction to help hold up the fluffy mass. Then she teased some more, she sprayed some more, and finally there it was. A beehive. She drank the third quart, went over to the windowsill, and lit a Slim. No shadow appeared, but the cramps came on so strong Lettie yelped in pain. She got up from the window, her Slim falling to the beige carpet. She watched the fibers sizzle, stepped on it, and saw the blood that had made big circles on the inside thighs of her pants. Her abdomen contracted again and she fell to the floor, doubled over in agony. Her blood had stained the crotch and thighs of her pants. She reached for the towels she had gathered and tugged one under her body, wrapping it between her legs like a diaper. A sharp cramp hurled itself from her insides; she could feel something soft and clumpy pass from her body in one final heave. Slowly, she reached into her pants, into her pink cotton underwear, and grabbed the clump. She brought the reddish brown clump up to her heart and held it there. "I forgive you," she whispered to what could've been their first born child.



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Lettie sat in the whitewashed windowsill smoking a Slim, watching her neighbor. She looked over at the unfolded, clean and bleached, towels on the floor near their bed. Then, she reached up to run her fingers through her short brown stubby hair. The beehive ended up in the trash. The reddish brown blood clot ended up being flushed down the toilet. Lettie turned back to the drawn shade of her neighbor and wondered how many cans of Aqua Net that fat ass used on her beehive. She stubbed out her Slim and looked down at the cigarette burn in the beige carpet. Briefly she doubled over in pain from another contraction. She peered into her clean jeans and saw blood spots on the hand towel folded between her thighs. Standing upright in her pink fuzzy slippers, she kicked the unfolded laundry under the bed, far under the yellow dust ruffle. Wade would be home from teaching third grade any minute. He'd been coming home early these days. He would call out "Where's my Yellow Rose?" and Lettie would run down the stairs into his arms and look up at Wade and say, "I forgive you too."



**Exodus Continues**  
*Scott Peek*



**Self Portrait**  
*Lindsay Blade*

**Can We Not Remember?**  
*Michael T. Thompson*

How deep  
Do we have to drill?

How deep  
Do we have to dig?

How deeply  
Do we have to bury  
The meadows and streams  
Under tailings and ash  
To forget  
What a billion years  
Of evolution  
Or maybe God  
Planted there?

And,  
How deeply  
Do we have to bury  
Our own consciousness  
Our wonderment  
Our aching  
To not remember  
That we were born  
Of this  
The garden planet.



## Naturaleza y Humanidad

Nature and Humanity

*Christina R. Córdova*

Una unión de compañerismo que comenzó en el primer aliento  
de la tierra  
together we coincide as our hearts continue to beat  
Hemos pasado mucho tiempo conociendonos y a veces no respetando  
el alma de la tierra  
and we take the good and the bad that nature bestows because that is  
the balance of life  
Tomando de la naturaleza y no devolviendo  
we will no longer continue to grow in the same direction  
Nuestra sociedad no se da cuenta de el daño que impedimos destruyendola  
But nature remains and combats the destruction that we emit  
Lo que necesitamos recordar es  
for as long as there are both, nature and humanity shall continue to  
prosper  
Empezar a encontrar un buen equilibrio para cuidar de la naturaleza  
to take responsibility and respect our soulmate  
La union de todos nosotros amando la tierra y la humanidad es lo ideal  
para nuestros cielos  
below our feet, here beside us, and up above in the skies

Existencia, Let's continue to be.



# **Ode To The Young**

For Oscar Brown, Jr.

*Donel Arrington*

I'm sorry, that we've killed the earth  
for all the extinct plants and birds  
for all the oil we had to burn  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry, for the trail we leave  
of hunger, misogyny, and greed  
for all the shit we think we need  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry, for the drones and bombs  
for every country we done wronged  
for every Bush, Clinton, and Trump  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry, for the apartheid  
for all who suffer in Palestine  
for all the poems I didn't write  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry because I am black  
for not being able to stop the attack  
on our bodies from way back  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry to all those locked down  
in a cell because they're brown  
political prisoners not broke out  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry to all of the poor  
for letting the rich make you their whores  
for keeping us sick without the cure  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry for Standing Rock  
for the pipeline we tried to stop  
for every battle that we lost  
yes, I apologize

I'm sorry to the unborn kids  
for the world in which you'll live  
for what religious fanatics did  
yes, I apologize.

**Constructing the “Not-Me”:  
A Critique of the Institutionalization of Identity Through  
Discourse as Shown Through Race and Sexuality in Claudia  
Rankine’s *Citizen: An American Lyric* and Alison Bechdel’s  
*Fun Home***

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As a society we have become disconnected from each other. We have distinguished and separated ourselves by the color of our skin, the organs between our legs, and the way we choose to present ourselves in the world. We make generalizing judgements about each other based on these factors and ideas which are dependent on what our society believes is “normal” or not; those who fit within the bounds of our societal norms are accepted and those who are different are discriminated against. This kind of discrimination is institutionalized. However, when we take a closer look at who is being discriminated against and who is not, we can begin to see the structure of institutionalized oppression. Across race, gender, and sexuality, we as a society have created identities through discourse. Because of this discourse, we have set in place a hierarchy of subdivisions for these identities. Both Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* and Claudia Rankine’s *Citizen* demonstrate the institutionalized oppression that individuals face because of the discourse that creates their identities.

Alison Bechdel examines how her younger self understands her identity and sexuality, and how the discourse surrounding it is perceived in society, while Rankine emphasizes that as a black person it is impossible to escape the ‘identity’ that discourse has already created for them. Throughout history, society has given labels to different communities of people in order to marginalize them, forever establishing them as inferior to those with power. By further polarizing the privileged and the marginalized, this gives those with privilege, predominantly white men, the power to exploit them. In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison uses slavery and the exploitation of black bodies as an example of the historical beginnings of racial hierarchies. She says, “Black slavery enriched the country’s creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness and enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me” (38). Here, Morrison is explaining that slavery allowed whites to construct an identity for blacks, giving the “not-free” all the characteristics that whites wanted to consider as “not-me”. Morrison states that blackness is constructed through discourse by what white people didn’t want to associate with, thus whatever blacks

are not, whites have become. With this construction of whiteness and blackness through discourse, white supremacy was created and with this, the construction of the racial hierarchy in our society had begun. The construction of race has continued to be present throughout history as a means of discrimination. This social discrimination is used for the purposes of taking social power from the marginalized and giving it to whites, who are constantly hungry for more.

In *Citizen: An American Lyric*, Claudia Rankine writes poems based on real situations that have occurred in the lives of people of color. Many of these incidents were very similar in motive and reason, all surrounded by discourse that is both verbal and visual. The language she uses in her poems helps to demonstrate the way identity is perceived in society and how people of color are objectified through discourse: “Words work as release.... [W]ords encoding the bodies they cover” (Rankine 69). Here, Rankine is explaining how the verbal judgement that society creates is aimed towards marginalized races. It is referring to the way that discourse in society paints them, “covering” their body with false stereotypes in order to place them lower in the social hierarchy.

Visual discourse also plays a large role in this structure of institutionalized discrimination. It is especially prevalent when black people are being discriminated against because of the color of their skin “And you are not the guy and still you fit the description because there is only one guy who is always the guy fitting the description” (105). In this specific situation, a man is being objectified by the police, assumed of committing a crime solely because he is black. When Rankine says “always the guy,” she is showing that through white supremacy, discourse has defined this person’s identity and created objectifying stereotypes. Many people of color, especially black men, are racially profiled and assumed guilty and suspicious when there is no “evidence” besides the color of their skin. This is a form of objectification.

The white man speaking in Rankine’s next poem has previously met the man he is objectifying, but he assumes it is not the same man because he is black. He is objectifying and racially profiling the man based on the the color of his skin and is convinced that the man he is seeing is not the same man that he’s met, even though they are the same: “He’s met your friend and this isn’t that nice young man” (15). He automatically profiles the black man as suspicious because of his skin color. Another poem depicting a similar situation describes a white female psychiatrist meeting her client for the first time. She meets her new client when he comes to her home for their first appointment and she screams: “Get away from my house! What are you doing in my yard?” (18). Both of these white people in the different poems are

using skin color as “evidence” that the black men are threatening. This kind of racialized discourse is how society shapes identity, establishing who has more power in the hierarchy—emphasizing the polarity of whiteness, blackness, and the “not-me”.

Another form of objectification is aestheticization. In Rankine’s next poem, a woman is objectified by a man who compares her to his wife: “She is, he says, beautiful and black, like you” (78). Here, the man is stating that because he thinks his black wife is beautiful, this woman must be beautiful because she is also black. This is an instance of discrimination by aesthetic objectification, because he is using the woman’s skin color as the sole reason that she is beautiful. This demonstrates how black people are objectified through visual discourse and how each person becomes no different from another, being stereotyped into the same box, according to this racialized language.

We can also see these aesthetic stereotypes projected through mimicry. Two weeks after a high-stakes tennis match, “Dane Caroline Wozniacki, a former number-one player, imitates Serena [Williams] by stuffing towels in her top and shorts” (36), another form of aestheticizing objectification. Wozniacki stuffs her clothes as a way to make fun of Serena, objectifying the black body for the stereotypes society has constructed of black women being curvy. By imitating Serena, not only is she perpetuating those stereotypes, but because of her platform of white privilege, she is using them as a way to degrade Serena and her identity. Because of the creation of racial identity through white supremacy, the idea of racial hierarchy is best examined through the discourse that creates it. Rankine’s book shows how this hierarchy created by white supremacy is used as a method of discrimination. When Rankine says “I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp white background” (25) she demonstrates how the minority identity is discriminated against because of the way discourse frames them separately from whites. Thus, they are “most colored” when the background of what society deems as the norm is whiteness. Because of this construction of whiteness being viewed as higher in society than what blackness has been constructed to be, whiteness is what sets the norm for society, becoming the background, the status quo, what we need to have in order to fit in.

In *Fun Home*, a graphic memoir, Alison Bechdel depicts sexuality and the many ways it is constructed and perceived as an identity in the United States. While growing up, Alison was interested in wearing boy’s clothes and was fascinated by the social constructs of masculinity. It wasn’t until she was in college, that Bechdel came to the realization that she was lesbian: “My realization at nineteen that I was a

lesbian came about in a manner consistent with my bookish upbringing (Bechdel 74.1). I’d been having qualms since I was thirteen... (74.2A) ... When I first learned the word due to its alarming prominence in my dictionary (74.2B).” However, this is not to say she didn’t have this identity until she knew the definition, she only knew that this label described her identity because of the discourse that created it. Bechdel, after discovering this new identity, proclaimed it in a letter: “I had made an announcement to my parents. ‘I am a lesbian’” (58.1A). Bechdel’s desire to come out to her parents demonstrates how society requires us to label ourselves—to use the discourse that created it in order to be culturally defined.

As shown through Rankine’s writing, visual discourse dictates the norms of a person’s appearance within that society. With Bechdel’s realization that “there were women who wore men’s clothes and had men’s haircuts” (118.1) after seeing a “masculinely” dressed woman, her father’s response was: “Is that what you want to look like?” (118.2). This example of gendering shows how visual discourse creates a minority identity within society. When her father responded negatively to the woman’s non-conformist gender expression, we can see how visual discourse shapes what society thinks about non-normative gender identities. Along the same lines, visual discourse also dictates what people should look like. Bechdel’s father, Bruce, tells her that she “need[s] some pearls” (99.1A) and after she expresses that she doesn’t want any, her father accuses her: “What’re you afraid of? Being beautiful?” (99.1B). Through this societal expectation of female identity and femininity, Bechdel’s father is attempting to manipulate her appearance in order to normalize her into society’s visual discourse. He hints that society dictates femininity as the norm for women, suggesting that they are only beautiful when they conform to this feminine norm. This female norm of femininity can also be seen being constructed through visual discourse in a poster Bechdel sees of a naked woman (112.1A), objectified for her body: “I felt as if I’d been stripped naked myself” (112.1B). She feels as if she is being objectified through what discourse constructs as femininity. By showcasing a naked woman on a poster, society is able to objectify the female body, and in doing so, take control of the female identity and construct, through visual discourse, what femininity means in society. Through the way the female body has been represented in society, women are being marginalized through the objectification and aestheticization of their visual form.

Race and sexuality theorist Paula Rothenberg writes in, *The Social Construction of Difference: Race, Class Gender, and Sexuality*, that the “United States society, like many others, places a priority on



sex, race, and class. To this end, race and gender difference have been portrayed as unbridgeable and immutable” (Rothenberg 7). Here, Rothenberg is explaining that because of the way race and gender have been constructed in our society, we view each race and each gender as eternally disconnected. When she states that they are “unbridgeable and immutable” (7) she is saying that the discourse we use in our society makes it so that we are unable to bring together these identities we’ve separated. Because of the way race and gender are talked about, people of color, women, nonconforming sexualities, and gender identities are highly marginalized identity groups within our society. These minority identities are created through discourse solely for the purpose of being marginalized in order to perpetuate the privilege of the socially powerful.

Much like the ways in which race has become a means for discrimination through discourse, sexuality has also evolved in this manner. We can see how sexuality is constructed according to Foucault’s application of sexuality to the social constructionist theory: “[sexuality] is a cultural construct. Its meaning is derived from language or discourse; each institution in society has a discourse about sex, a way of thinking and talking about the broad array of behaviors and actors who are involved in sexual expression” (DeLamater and Hyde 15). This is saying that because of discourse, we have created ideas about sexuality and have prescribed it meaning within our society. It has only become a necessary means of identity because of the language we use to reference it. Through discourse, anything but heterosexuality has been frowned upon in the past, and any relations other than that between one man and one woman have to be labeled alternately in order to correctly define and marginalize them. When we look at sexuality through a social constructionist lens, we can see how discourse in society and culture favors some categories of sexuality over others. Because heterosexuality is institutionalized, any non-normative sexualities are minoritized because they don’t fit society’s “normal” description.

Throughout time, not only has non-normative sexuality been a means of discrimination, but with the increasing differences in performance and presentation of gender identity, it has become another reason to marginalize someone. We are trained in our culture, from a young age to conform to our gender’s roles and norms in order to fit into society. We are taught this because when we become members of society, we are expected to fulfill those positions and characteristics that society dictates. However, these expectations of men and women are purely social constructions, formed in order to give men a social advantage over women. Rothenberg says, “Differences between women and men are never merely differences but are constructed hierarchically

so that women are always portrayed as different in the sense of being deviant and deficient” (Rothenberg 9). As a result of these false ideas about gender, men are able to construct femininity in a way that both benefits men and degrades women, based on what society tells us is true about them. Because of these constructions, women are placed lower in the hierarchy of society and demonstrates how men and women cannot be equal, as Rothenberg emphasises.

Through Claudia Rankine and Alison Bechdel’s texts, we can see how society uses discourse as a means to create identities. However, not only are these identities created, but with the social construction of whiteness, they are placed low in the hierarchy that white supremacy requires to maintain control. Those lower in the hierarchy are labelled as minorities, and because of that social status they are discriminated against. These identities are created through discourse, either visual or verbal, and because of this institution of oppression these constructions of identity have been in place for so long it has become an ingrained part of our society. Although it is something that cannot be changed easily, it is the discourse we use now in our daily lives that reinforces that institution. These concepts are only real because they have been socially constructed and they are not impervious to change. Although the way we choose to use discourse won’t overthrow white supremacy, if we start to resist the discourse used to construct identities, we can start to make social change.

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## Los

*Scott T. Starbuck*

Some days Hugh dreams of a window office,  
finding a parking spot right away,  
\$2 an hour raise

but others his thoughts are higher –  
keeping a left kidney,  
phone call from a daughter.

One night I saw him collecting shells,  
another, pier fishing with no hook.  
Fish & Game officer was writing a ticket

for casting without a license  
until Hugh showed him, “I’m not fishing.  
I’m dying.”



## Twisted

*Angelica Armijo-Keats*



**Head Study**  
*Linda J. Kuckuk*

## **En vez de Flórez**

*p/joshua laskey*

—Flora, Pruébalo, hija.  
—Después de ti, papi. —insistió su hija de diez años.  
No podía determinar si estaba ella temerosa, orgullosa, o impasible. Habían pasado juntos todo el día—yendo de compras al mercado, relleno de los chiles, perfeccionando su salsa verde. Ya había llegado el gran momento. Sumergió la cuchara en la salsa espesa y la llevó hacia los labios mientras lo miraba su hija, con anticipación. Mientras su lengua se encontró con las especias, enseguida lo trasladaron.  
—¿Por qué lloras, papi?  
—¿Es demasiado picante? —preguntó su esposa antes de levantarse de su silla para llevarlo un vaso de leche.  
—No, no, no —logró decir—. Es ... perfecta.  
—¿La misma como la que cocinaba tu abuelita? —preguntó su hija.  
Sin embargo, no podía hablar a causa de llorar. ¿La alegría? ¿La tristeza? ¿La añoranza de un pasado que nunca había pasado jamás o que nunca se había permitido pasar? No lo podía determinar. No le importaba.  
—A su abuelito le va a encantar —le dijo a su hija.  
Sonrió ella con toda la cara.  
—No, papá; toda era su idea.  
Sonrió su padre con toda la cara.  
—La ayudé con saber leer la receta, pero cocinó ella casi todo.  
—Pues, Flora —dijo su padre a través de la mesa—, es perfecta.  
—¿La misma como la que cocinaba tu mamá? —preguntó su nieta.  
—Sabrosa —dijo él con lágrimas en los ojos.  
—¿Estás llorando?  
—¿Sabes quién era que le enseñó a tu padre saber cocinar éste? —preguntó él.  
—Era abuelito —contestó el hijo suyo sin permitir a su propia hija el tiempo para reflexionar—. Sin embargo, era yo mayor que ya eres.



—Pues, ¿quién te enseñó, abuelito? ¿Bisabuelita Miller?  
 —Claro que sí.  
 —¿Quién le enseñó?  
 —Su marido —contestó él.  
 —¿Bisabuelito Miller?  
 —No —dijo el padre de ella—. Su primer marido. Era mexicano.  
 —¿Se casó dos veces bisabuelita Miller?  
     Se sonrió su abuelo. —Sí.  
 —¿Se murió su primer marido antes de que naciste?  
 —No.

\* \* \*

El salón de tatuaje olía como antiséptico. Zumbaban como abejas una media docena de artistas en sus puestos, agujones en la mano, oprimiendo la carne.

—Quizá me pondré sólo alguno pequeño —dijo su padre, unos restos de su miedo de niñez de la aguja haciendo la voz más ronca.

—No tenemos que lograrlo —dijo él—. Ya mamá cree que nos hemos vuelto locos. —Rió él, tratando de desencadenar a su padre de tensiones que se disputaban.

—¿Qué cree tu esposa de nosotros? —preguntó su padre, como si la aprobación de una nuera de la idea impulsiva pudiese rectificar el mundo.

—Pensamos en llamar al bebé <<Flora>>.

Sonrió su padre con toda la cara.

—Quizá me pondré sólo alguno pequeño —dijo el hombre mayor con resolución.

Salieron al sol lleno con los hombros cubiertos, según el último consejo del artista de tatuaje. La piel estaba hinchada alrededor de las letras cursivas de tinta. Enconada. Roja.

—¿Crees que se va a enfadar tu madre?

—Creo que va a sacudir la cabeza y seguir frotando la loción hasta que se cicatriza —contestó su hijo.

—Es una buena mujer.

—¡Sabemos escogerlas!

—¡Y tenemos suerte tremenda en que nos dicen sí! —Rió su padre.

Caminaron hacia el hotel un rato en silencio. Vio él que lloraba su padre.

—¿Te dolió tanto que lo has previsto?  
 —Nada en comparación a lo que padeció él —contestó su padre.

\* \* \*

Vio las lágrimas de su padre en los funerales. Estremecimientos silenciosos. Gotitas formando en los párpados inferiores antes de alcanzar una masa crítica y luego correr por las mejillas. Colocó la mano sobre la rodilla de su padre, y su padre, después de un momentito, metió la mano propia encima de la de su hijo.

En la acera al exterior de la iglesia vieja de adobe, estaban de pie esperando el cortejo que llevaría el padre de su padre al cementerio para el entierro militar. Se había encargado su padre de recibir a nombre de la familia la bandera doblada, ya que era el pariente mayor que asistía. Descendiente. Único hijo. Hijo único. Lo miraba a su padre manteniéndose firme para el honor. No podía determinar si estaba el hombre mayor temeroso, orgulloso, o impasible.

—Deberíamos ponernos en los brazos su apellido —dijo él.

—¿A causa de que llegó a este país como bracero? —preguntó su padre distraídamente, los ojos fijados todo derecho y distantes, pero no desprendidos.

—A causa de que es nuestro apellido también.

\* \* \*

No había visto a Cruz por muchos años. Su abuelo. El padre de su padre. Ya no podía distinguir al anciano enfermo en el sillón a pocos pies de distancia a causa de las lágrimas que emborronaba la visión. Podía sentir la mano de su esposa que agarraba la suya. Apretando, pero sólo bastante para recordarle a él de que estaba ella ahí. Podía oír los sollozos de su padre de otra parte del cuarto, y esperaba que le proveyera su madre a su papá lo mismo que en la intimidad le proveía su propia esposa a él. Era él seguro que sí lo hacía ella.

—Y lo hice —quebró la voz de su abuelo. También lloraba, aunque sin alguien con que tomar la mano. —Maté a los prisioneros. Ya apunté mi rifle y ... —pero se puso a llorar incontrolable.

Cuando se había compuesto el nieto suficientemente para enjugar sus propias lágrimas, se levantó para moverse hacia su abuelo, para consolar al anciano temblante en el sillón. Cuando vio a su propio padre, el hijo distantísimo del anciano, ya acucillado al lado del soldado arrepentido, la mano sobre su rodilla temblorosa, el joven dio un paso

adelante, se acuclilló, y puso una mano tembleque sobre la otra rodilla del anciano.

—¿Estás bien, papá? —preguntó a su padre mientras regresaban a pie hasta el hotel.

El otro hombre no dijo nada por varias cuerdas. Goteaba una lágrima por su mejilla, así que se volvió la cara su hijo, al frente todo derecho, mientras caminaban hombro a hombro. Miró a su esposa y a su madre unos pasos más adelante. Vio las tejas rojizas del campanario de la iglesia que destacaba arriba de las tiendas bajas que lindaban con la calle mayor que utilizaban para prolongar, y hermosear, su vuelta de la casa de su abuelo.

Mientras pasaban ante la ventana de un salón de tatuaje poco activo, dijo su padre— Creo que ya puedo disculparlo.

—¿Al saber lo que padeció? —preguntó el hijo.

—No lo exime de nada. —Pausó su padre, pero no cambió su ritmo de paso—. Aunque sí explica mucho.

Paró enfrente de la iglesia y se volvió a su hijo.

—Espero que no hiciera lo que hizo, pero ¿quién sabe? Según las circunstancias. Es verdad que nunca he servido, entonces quizá no sé de lo que hablo. Aunque ciertamente puedo entender un jovencito, acaba de ver a sus compañeros muriendo el día anterior, y a manos de los mismos soldados enemigos a los que mientras tanto ha ayudado apresar. — En la palabra final, subió en el tono su voz como si plantease una pregunta—. No sé.

Dejó de hablar. No le interrumpió su hijo.

—Tal vez también los hubiera tirado. Por orden de mi sargento. Aceptado la promoción y pues tenido que vivir con el horror el resto de mi vida.

—Aquí por allí, salvo la salve del Señor —murmuró su hijo.

—Gracias por estar dispuesto a acompañarnos por este viaje para visitarlo. Acompañarme. Estoy seguro que tienes un montón de cosas a las que necesitarás volver.

—No estaría en siquiera lugar fuera de aquí, papá. Además, me alegro que vine.

Sonrió su padre con toda la cara, y tenía una lagrimita por el ojo.

\* \* \*

—Quiero que me adoptes —le dijo el adolescente a su padrastro que era en verdad el marido nuevo de su madre—. Antes de que cumpla dieciocho años.

—Creo que tuviera que aprobarlo tu padre —dijo el hombre mayor—, pero si estuviera dispuesto él ... ¿Por qué de repente como así?

—Te amo —dijo el mozo, resistiéndose ahogarse de emoción—, y quiero apellidarme con el tuyo como lo hizo mamá cuando se casaron uno a otra. Somos familia, y no quiero irme de esta casa para el mundo por mi cuenta sin la prueba de que eres mi papá.

Se humedecieron los ojos del hombre mayor. —Está bien que se llora, ¿sabes? —le dijo a su hijastro. Y dando un paso adelante con su pierna de madera, estrechó en los brazos al mozo y lo apretujó hasta que se calmaron los sollozos.

—Creo que esta noche cocina tu madre chiles rellenos.

—Puedo sentirlos a pesar del mocarro —se rió el mozo a través de los últimos hipo de su emoción incontrolable, aún mientras enjugaba con la mancha las mejillas cálidas y manchadas—. Antes de marcharme desde esta casa —dijo—, debería pedirle a ella que me enseñe a prepararlos.

—Es cierto que sí te haría un soltero aún más elegible por el mundo de lo que tanto te preocupas —se sonrió su padrastro.

—¿<<Miller>>?! —bramó su padre—. ¿Quieres que te deje que cambies tu apellido a <<Miller>>?! No va a pasar. ¡No voy a firmar nada que permite que alguien me robe mi hijo y especialmente no si obligue él que cambies tu apellido para que pueda fingir que tenga un hijo propio!

Ahogó el mozo lágrimas de amargura y de su rabia contenida.

—No pide que lo haga yo. Yo le pedí a él. Y ha accedido.

—Supongo que te traiga consigo tu madre —bufó el hombre mayor mirando con ceño.

—No —dijo su hijo tan tranquilamente como podía—, me traigo conmigo por mi cuenta.

—¿Y quién es qué traes contigo? ¿Un traidor de tu padre? ¿de tu raza? ¿<<Miller>>?! ¡Qué apellido gringo! —Se rió con amargura. Lágrimas de cólera se hicieron a los rabillos de sus ojos enconados.

—Yo soy el que va a cambiarme el apellido en <<Miller>> si a ti te guste o no. Cuando cumpla dieciocho en unos meses, puedo lograrlo sin tu firma. Vine aquí para tratar de discutirlo hombre a hombre.

—Viniste aquí para dañarme.

—Si eres la medida de un Flórez, entonces sería yo cualquiera en vez de un Flórez. Aun nada —gritaba el mozo—, pero si el hecho de convertirme en Miller te daña, pues, ¡tanto mejor!

Golpeó de revés a su hijo el hombre mayor. Lágrimas. La sangre escurriéndose poco a poco desde un labio partido. El calor de

un verdugón subiendo desde la mejilla aún suave, sin ningún indicio de barba. Una mandíbula apretada con firmeza.

—El hombre verdadero no llora —pronunció el padre su fallo y luego arrancó la hoja de papel que todavía cogía su hijo con la mano temblada.

Con dificultad, grabó la firma.

—¡Hecho! Ya eres de él. El vagoneta gandul. ¡Soy veterano! tú niño ingrato.

—Él lo es también. —Una palabra más y pudiera ponerse a empezar el sollozo.

—Hubiera podido quitarle la pierna en varias maneras aparte de servir a esta patria.

Dejó de hablar. No le interrumpió su hijo.

—Es probable que pasara a lo largo de la guerra entera guardando cama y coqueteando con las enfermeras después de hacerle tropezar su propio cordón desatado y quedarse la bota enganchada en la escalera de desembarco en la pista. Puede afirmar que estuviera <<en el país>>, aun, mejor, que entrara <<en combate>> si se aterrizaron en una zona caliente y hubiera el ruido de tiroteo lo más mínimo a lo lejos; puede renquear por todas partes bebiendo a lengüetazos la atención como pobrecito amputado inválido mientras los hombres verdaderos libraban la guerra y luego creaban infantes después de regresar a casa.

Se sorbió el mozo—pero tenía cuidado de no gimotear—antes de recoger la hoja de papel que se quedaba sobre la mesa. Con ella seguramente en mano, se puso los hombros derechos, alcanzó hasta su plena estatura, y le miró a su padre directamente en los ojos.

—El hombre verdadero no golpea a su hijo.

Como regresaba a casa, caminó la ruta más larga. Al lograr la puerta de su hogar, no tenía ningunas lágrimas más para derramar. El olor de chiles que se cocinaban le levantó el ánimo, y el ruido sordo de una pierna de madera que pisaba en alguna parte de la casa le llenó de contento el corazón roto.

## Perdida para Kiribati

*Megan Wildhood*

Nací en un mundo que se está  
arrastrando las montañas  
para hacer carbon

que produce combustible  
para la demanda abrumador  
de todo el mundo

ir adelantado y estar tibio  
que hace gente ocupada –  
algun gente muy rico –

muchas personas cómodos –  
aunque la mayoría menos y menos  
seguros –



**The Royal Hare**  
*Erin Urbanus*

**I am a Vacation**  
*Jeanne O'Halloran*

I am a vacation  
Not a home

I am that which  
You pass through  
Seeking comfort and escape

But I am not the place  
You choose to stay

I am the tree  
You left standing  
After you cut the rest down

I am the life you run to  
When the ones you destroyed  
No longer please you

But I am too wild  
For your weak will to survive

So you run back  
To your cities  
Afraid and Revived

## The Manner of Your Scramble

*Henry D. Goldkamp*

A bearded man, probably a neighbor, muttered “asshole” when you did not hold the door open for him in your building this past weekend. You did not see him behind you. After not doing much of anything except reading, eating, and watching television, you’ve decided to make an effort to become a better person because of this.

Now it’s Monday, August 6th, 2007, it’s after work, and here you are in your dilapidated apartment on the seventh floor of your lurid tan building. Inside the countertops, and cabinets, and laminate, and everything, are tinged with a yellowness that comes with affordable rent for the poor, though you aren’t exactly proletarian—you just don’t mind its shoddiness. Outdated kitchen appliances are aching with different gravities, creaking with gossip, and you can hear it in the sounds of their settling. They are quite fond of their inability to shut up, you think.

Your walls also squeak with different lives surrounding you—mice, tenants, other things. Their denizen they talk incessantly about has remained the same for thirteen years—which is Mr. Boothe, which is you, who plays pretend. You get a kick out of being the apartment celebrity, everyone wondering what you’re up to in there. You have a good imagination to distract yourself from your loneliness, which you are aware of, but do not mind much. Why let a thing such as that, such as anything really, detract from you living your life outwardly, albeit inside the same apartment, quietly with your expert-level crosswords, game shows, and instant coffee?

If your fantasy paparazzi of microwaves and egg timers were to finagle their way in, they would see that right now you are inside the bathroom closing the door. This poses some difficulty for you, a man of sixty-three years old, as the door is too big for its threshold, perhaps not unlike a woman who gains weight with age. You think of Cynthia, your ex-wife, and catch yourself sighing. You have to strain yourself to shut it tight, all the way until the knob clicks. The fact you live alone makes this bathroom door the closest thing you have to a relationship with a woman, and so, too, with privacy being a non-issue, the situation grows increasingly strange. So you are an aging man espoused with an aging apartment afraid of being walked in on in an embarrassing

state. A handful of people might call this a match made in heaven, but it is most certainly not that. You are mildly satisfied with your life, but understand that life’s ceiling is much higher than that, and therefore want more out of the finite amount of time you call a life.

You are sitting on the toilet seat, which you’ve always enjoyed, though not in any sort of weird way—it is a relieving experience to rid yourself of anything unnecessary, whether bodily waste, facial hair, or outdated telephone books (you’d throw out old Christmas cards, too, if you had any). This is a crucial part of your self-betterment. You try to remain focused on this, disregarding the olfactory pleasures from odors of your own effluvia, for you don’t know if anyone else feels the same way. Trying not to think about (or breathe) this too much, you move on, consider how your toilet is the same material as expensive decorative dolls and collectible angel figurines, sold in shops whose billboards deem them as inspirational gifts—you smile at the silliness of it. This is short-lived, however, for you remember the feeling you are going to catch ill soon, most likely the next day or the day after that. With this in mind once again, you set off on a mental stroll through a tidy collection of absurdities. They are an evening dream of the most trifling productivities, one with the microscopic desire to ease the time between now and your cold, much like a lullaby. You soothe yourself by keeping a gnawing reality at safe distances.

So you certainly would set out the coffee packet for tomorrow morning. You would pick and lay out your clothes for work, pleated khakis, shirt, tie that matches the sepia toned rooms you breathe in. You might even take a shower, though you took one last night, and do not need one. You nod your head in approval of these ideas, gazing into the flecking paint of the opposite wall, as if it were the wall itself that thought of them in the first place. You wipe your rear end, then suddenly your brow furrows into vexation.

This act of touching your anus through bargain toilet paper reminds you of something very inappropriate that Eric, your office manager, had said at work today— that some people do not get over the anal stage of psychosexual development for their entire lives. “The fascination comes from the fact most people have never actually seen... it... and so they become obsessed by this and can’t get over it.” These words do not belong in the workplace, and although he said this in a low tone, not meant to be heard by anyone else but the intended audience (Bonnie, a very nice lady in the records department), it was close enough to your cubicle for you to make out. As you wondered how they got on this topic, Bonnie didn’t seem to mind: “You know I saw a sale for those full-body mirrors at Bed Bath and Beyond the other weekend.”



They both laughed. You pictured Bonnie grabbing her ankles, peering upside down between her legs, trying to explore unseen reaches. And beyond.

Your dyspepsia finally subsides and you place Eric's comment beside your own surroundings—the stuffy air of tobacco smoke (though you don't smoke and have no idea where it comes from), the grout's detritus in the corner, which could easily be crumbled away if touched, where a little pile lay below. Perhaps Bonnie would think of that as disgusting. This is you trying to equalize yourself, not judge your fat office manager, but as you finish your business, thoughts of Eric prattle on inside your little room behind your eyeballs.

You wouldn't consider yourself a killjoy by any means, but Eric's glib remarks have attached themselves to you over the course of his two years at your company (well, not yours, exactly—the one you work for, you mean), and his confidence makes you uneasy. You guess most folks at the office would consider him funny, but to you he is more of an irritant, like an open bottle of bleach, his words scour like Comet powder, his personality fills the room like soft chopped onions, unprovoked and pungent. You've never seen such impropriety except on bad TV shows.

In your opinion, Eric holds a slightly better-than attitude and takes night classes downtown for, as he claims, bettering himself. Subjects like printmaking, world religions, even culinary workshops. You understand that this feeling is one of jealousy, that you wish to bring yourself out of the dusty comforts of your home to learn new skills, but you also know you would not envy this at all if Eric didn't make a verbal parade of his extracurricular activities. You've collected this information gradually, as he says things in passing your shriveled desk, wrinkled with data catalogs and smelling like stale tea (you don't drink tea, and also have no idea where this smell comes from). Eric shaves away a bit of your faith in the future of youth and country, though not too much. Actually—maybe this is another one of those unnecessary things that are good to get rid of. As you know, you are mildly satisfied, and as much time as you've spent on the toilet, thinking things not meant to be uttered out loud, that is not to call all matters of your life feculent. In walking to the pantry retrieving a good-sized can of beef stew, you are content, a human cup.

With a full stomach gurgling its thanks, you turn on Wheel of Fortune to meditate before bed. And so they come: the dings, the alphabet, the applause, like dirty waves lapping upon saddened factories of rust, naturally and without cessation, shaping something larger than a letter or a single clap. The category is Before and After. You grumble

the answer well before the contestants—Change Your Mind Over Matter—then thumb the rubber OFF button and go to bed.

You begin Tuesday morning thinking that humankind shouldn't know so much, particularly matters of the body. There is no need to research why aspirin makes your bum knee hurt less, save the concise description printed on the back of the bottle. There is no need to know what vitamin C is or why it occurs naturally in orange juice. There is no need to question or complain about taxes or death, as they are forever going to grasp ineffable truths man cannot alter. And for you, there is certainly no need to pray. You and God have had a lengthy understanding of looking up or down at one another here and there, and like an adolescent bickering with her mother before a large family function: "We'll talk about this later." Usually you two just catch up at funerals, and it is enough.

You are at your desk. Eric, that young nudnik, is walking towards you in one of his fancy, overpriced shirts barely holding his corpulence. He often lewdly references his obesity while grasping the belt beneath his full paunch; a certain self-loathing not humorous to you, for it encompasses too much indignity to engender your laughter. He has running jokes about swimming laps with Sam, or getting kicked out of a bounce house at RJ's niece's birthday party. You picture Eric in a rainbow ball pit, like he wants you to. Maybe you are a killjoy, because you are holding back a smirk. You stare at your bulletin board, which is mainly thumbtacks without paper, feeling like a jerk, a cork unable to absorb anything but sharp metal objects.

You notice the tan space where a photograph of Cynthia used to hang. It was of her blowing out candles on her fiftieth birthday, in a big denim dress, well before you knew her. You'd asked if you could keep it anyhow, and she said of course you could, you're my husband, you can have anything. She must have forgotten it after you divorced, or just didn't care all that much about it. Maybe she wanted you to have it.

"Good morning, Mr. Boothe! How are we doing today?" Eric's daily congenialities have shaken back this thought. He is genuinely smiling.

You decide to smile back. "Oh fine, just fine. Another day in paradise." You chuckle, wondering if this really is paradise. It's not so bad if it was, you think. There's air conditioning and free coffee, and people to talk to if you want. He continues to make his rounds. At least Eric calls you Mr. Boothe like you've requested, while everyone else goes with the trend of calling people by their first names. You never

thought about this as a form of respect until now, not that you didn't deserve it after twenty-one years as the company accountant.

You enjoy your job, especially the security that comes with it. As an accountant, you firstly are accountable for something so organic to a business that your job is far-removed from jeopardy—the numbers accumulate themselves, you sort them out, you show them the remainder, and if need be, you show your work. The equations wait patiently for you into the next working day, just like a pet shop employee and his small aquariums, a car salesman and his automobiles, a pastry chef and his jellies and frostings and dough. It reminds you of when you first got into crossword puzzles. You'd buy them not knowing many answers, then just fill it all in from the answer keys in the back. Although you didn't know any of the answers off the top of your head, it felt like an accomplishment anyway.

The higher-ups have even let you keep your preferential methods, and though a computer is essential for your work, they agreed that you only need three programs and approved your request to remove any internet browsers on yours. You made this suggestion as a matter of distraction versus productivity, but really you just don't know how to use it very well. Because of this, your coworkers call you "old school" on occasion, but they say this in a kind, complimentary way. You feel better than usual as you leave today, and no longer feel that cold coming on.

Driving home, you think of simplicity and beauty as sisters with a good, healthy relationship, calling often to invite each other to lunch. Upon entering your yellow apartment, you can smell its emptiness—the phantom scent of smoke, its lack of a pet, your window unit not running because you have not turned it on. This place was not always so lonely. Years ago you had a woman love you in this very apartment, all smelling of Chanel No. 5 (her one and only luxury), with the same coffee-ringed tablecloth you have now. You again think of Cynthia, the attractive gap between her front teeth, her long, telluric hair like straw or dirt that you think was very pretty. She is a good woman. Your marriage was your peak floruit, your own ruthless jolie laide who lived by your side, who smiled on fair occasions, who would help you in her presence, pray for the both of you to a cross, who really liked you and thought about you, always impressed by the timely manner you could finish your difficult crosswords in.

The look of surprise on your face when she asked nicely for a divorce seemed to hurt her. She explained that you were distant, that she felt disconnected and it stung her daily. But she did not say "cold and distant," which opens up the chance that you may have been warm

and distant, which is some consolation. Either way, you thought this accusation to be nonsense, as you were always around her, early evening until morning at least, and also the times you went with her to the bingo hall where she worked, the same place you met her on that wild weekend years ago.

Several months before your divorce, you had celebrated your fifth anniversary by purchasing a computer, though it was more of a final attempt at staying current than anything. Anxious to leave with her belongings, she'd left the computer behind with a bit of hope you'd become more in touch with the times. You did not understand exactly how it worked (it was much different than your office computer) and thought the world wide web's words were often dishonest. Your last attempt to win her back was a complete failure—you had tried to Mapquest your way back into her heart, plugging in both your names on the "Get Directions" page. Later you learned that Mapquest is not a search engine, like Google is, and felt foolish. The series of misunderstandings that composed the life of you, Mr. Boothe, are infinite, almost magical. You have a bit of trouble falling asleep tonight, the Price is Right, muted, flickering over your pockmarked face. The final thought before drifting off is that you are now the thumbtack.

You wake up to find yourself staring at her pillow you have not washed since she left last year. Her peachy stains of makeup still linger, adding an odd tinge of color for the seeming theme. You wonder if your coworkers even know that you were married, and if it is your fault that they don't. You feel strange and your chest feels light. You wonder why you married so late in life, and you start to feel lucky, though this luck is of the past. This morning, you brush your teeth harder than usual.

You find Eric has left you a new calculator atop your keyboard. Last week, you had mentioned the numbers had started to fade on the screen, that it might be time to upgrade if it was in the supply budget. Apparently he had listened, and the new one has oversized buttons, which gives you more joy than perhaps it should have, but you revel in it. You are grateful, resentful—why couldn't he remain compartmentalized in your mind, sputtering more claptrap in such a blithe way that the other workers could not see him for what he was? You decide to avoid him for the rest of the day, and then see him coming after you.

"Hey Mr. Boothe, you got a minute?"

"Eric, yes, sure. I'm not too busy." He steps foot inside your cubicle and crouches—you almost forgot, "oh, and thank you for the calculator."

"That's no problem, sorry it took so long. The deliveries don't come in until Tuesday afternoons, and I didn't have time to dish



everything out yesterday, so I apologize.” You are shaking your head and shoulders like it’s no problem. “Anyways, I just wanted to remind you that tomorrow is RJ’s birthday—I know you don’t have Facebook or anything like that—so just wanted to remind you that we’re going to have a get-together at lunch in the break room. No presents or anything, just singing and cake and whatnot.”

“Great. I’ll be there.” You’re doing pretty good, if you don’t say so yourself.

When you get home, you immediately start up your computer and go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) on Internet Explorer. You search for “anal stage of development” and refuse to be scared of catching up to the times, that knowledge (even strange knowledge about bodily functions) is just another thing in a world of things, and that it shouldn’t be any different than the pile of white dust in your bathroom corner.

At first the computer suffices as an acceptable means for passing some time—you learned that Sigmund Freud fancied cocaine, that the first five years of life are crucial for adult development, and that dreaming of thumbtacks may mean you are about to solve a problem at work or at home. However, in time, the websites you haply parse through lead you out of a forest of advertisements and into the cloudless, empty desert of perverted nudity. You are dumbfounded by what you discover.

Without pleasure, you watch a hodge-podge of sex slipping across the screen, nightmarish fetishes, an unimaginable world spreading its legs before your very eyes. Most disturbing, besides their foul-mouthed exchanges of words (you have quickly unplugged your speakers), is that nearly all of the clips end the same: The woman, or women, or men, “T-girls” (folks with both lady-parts and man-parts), even human-sized stuffed bears (you catch yourself saying “jeepers,” out loud—what else could you say?), cease coitus or oral sex or what-have-you, and then ejaculate upon a face, at times even spreading this ejaculate further with the penis (or other phalli) itself. It seems the more area covered, the more cause for excitement or disgust. The question of “why?” implants itself in your mind. Why would they possibly do that? Why would they let it happen if they don’t want it to? Why is everyone indulging in this bizarre activity? Why is this a sexual stimulus for anyone? In shock, you leave the monitor to wash a plate and fork you used for dinner. The soapy dish bubbles are no longer themselves, but something else, and you must finish them some other time.

Thursday morning is here. You haven’t really slept—your eyes burned through the night as you peeled back the nubby foreskin of some demonic underbelly of this world, writhing underneath your feet this entire life, all yours to disrupt the degradation, these horny

This Thursday has been exhausting, to say the least. From the tweed couch, you listen to the hum and rattle of your window unit, filling the living room with the slight dankness of a motel, which you’ve always rather liked. It reminds you that all things are temporary—something helpful to remember, especially today.

What to do now? There is no ignoring what you’ve seen. For the rest of your life, must you pick up your steps in the street; shift your eyes downward for danger of witnessing runlets of semen dripping from the jowls of these oversexed creatures? How strange they are! These bathetic “facials”, as they are called (among other things), have infiltrated your perception of the human race—but to what degree? Is this the manifestation of humanity’s *esprit de corps*?

You list the barrage of obloquies being put upon these men and women within the surfeits of such prurient activities. You’ve found your Gordian knot, insoluble of itself, your mordant electric brain waves now inextricable at last, a middle-aged prison, accidentally claspings shut on itself. The aftermath—like some impossible crossword, a clue in each glistening papillae, every gooey whisker, any blood-shot eye—has rubbed itself everywhere. There is no answer key to flip back to, to clean the empty boxes with ink and letters. You are at risk of an orgy of the skull.

Yet, still laden with the question, the meretricious nature of pornography still rings an alarm. You remember how nice it felt to draw Eric in a room full of balls—you thrived in this moment of non-judgment. After all, “selling your body” is something everyone does—these folks simply do it naked (and usually loudly). After all, haven’t you sold your body to an uncomfortable office chair, for most of your waking day?

But perhaps it is not enough to simply keep on living like this. Your couch is comfortable, but you are looking into the empty seat beside you. You are distant, but you can change that. You decide to strike up a conversation with Eric tomorrow and really put yourself out there. As for tonight—there’s not much left to do but shower and have a meal.

You undress as the hot water is running, warming up. Your belly sags in the mirror; many things sag in the mirror. Suddenly, a new question stares back—a blend of horror and fascination interdigitate a strange sense of duty. You open the mirrored cabinet, reach for a couple alka-seltzer, your usual anodyne, to fend off what may become of your back and neck after this affair. You’ve been losing sleep over the ordeal for goodness’ sake.

imps carousing in sin. Your heart thumps as you pull into your parking space, but even this thumping invites last night's images to foray your mind—a clash and clang of the thwaps, the squishes, the smacks, the palsy of the hand masturbating, red-blooded philanderers abound. There is Eric, smoking a cigarette outside talking on his phone. He hawks a loogie into the bushes. But is it a loogie? You are thoroughly tormented and jog upstairs immediately into the bathroom to think.

Here in the musty echoes of the stall, you can think more clearly. Surely not everyone is doing this, and those that do must have some sort of reason for it. You decide to fade these images away, to continue your work, to keep your head down. You will look rattled, but no one in the office talks to you much anyway. The bathroom door swings open into mid-conversation: “I can’t believe RJ is 40, she doesn’t look it at all.”—“I think she’s been doing pilates or something pretty hardcore for a long time now.” Your stall cannot protect you from the party in the breakroom happening in less than an hour. In the midst of your mental situation, you’d forgotten. Rats.

Back at your desk, you are determined to stick to the plan you’d concocted yesterday afternoon—to travel outside your usual pathway, to participate kindly in turn. You take a piece of computer paper and start to sketch Eric falling into a ball pit. This is actually coming easily to you (after you’ve pushed out any ideas about what kind of balls they might be), draw kids laughing at him in the corners. You add a few details—his woven brown belt, his five o’clock shadow, not at all hyperbolizing his body to the point of cruelty. It just looks like Eric falling in a ball pit. It’s funny.

You sing along, get a slice of cake. After things settle down, you approach RJ—she looks pleasantly surprised. “Oh my gosh, Eric look—it’s you trapped in a ball pit!” She’s laughing, probably not faking. She reads it out loud upon opening: “Have a fun birthday—we won’t pull out... we won’t pull out? we won’t pull... you?... out... until you’re ready..! From Mr. Boothe—PS you look much younger than 40.” She trails off at the end. Oh my God, you think. You peer over into the card to confirm your fear: In your excitement you’d skipped over the word “you,” pull you out. Stiff with embarrassment, you can’t find words to correct yourself. “Well thanks Mr. Boothe, this is so nice of you!” She gives you an awkward hug, basically a stranger, and you stifle a crying sensation that blindsides you. People commend you on the illustration. Eric laughs, pats you on the back, tells you to check your fly. You do and you see your fly has been unzipped this entire time. On the drive home you feel like a fool, but you admit to yourself that you tried.

You pull back the shower curtain to examine the stage, put out a hand to test the water. Gingerly, you sit inside the tub; its metal shell is still chilly in places so you plug the drain to let it fill with a bit of warmth. Your legs extend their full length and you look at the opposite tiled wall below the showerhead. You feel now that this will certainly do. You slide down into a supine position with your feet gripping the wall. You notice that there are cobwebs on the ceiling around the yellow lamp. Slowly, you baby-step towards the ceiling, letting gravity press upon your unkempt nape. Your body slumps upside down and somewhat erect; your bedraggled penis looks like a cockeyed dog, confused as to what you are really after.

You are in the uncomfortable balance of the inherent narcissism of masturbation: your coppice of pubic hair, your dendroid member being treated to a rough hand, following the singular movement like some sort of simple-minded dervish, trying to abandon yourself to the iterated motion. Though it has been some time, it feels surprisingly natural. You briefly think of Cynthia, her beauty, but stop yourself—you are not sure if it is right without her permission.

Instead you focus solely on the pleasure, your head only filling up with motley purples, blues, pinks, a white fluttering into harsh vermillion, at last, in this wet chamber—a morass of healing colors stacking themselves higher and higher, golden coins trickling towards the “money shot,” as it’s also called. Quickly, you correct the aim as your murky offal drops upon your poorly shaven face—a quiet splat.

Not that you’re surprised, but this peculiar taste is far from toothsome. You ease yourself down, readjust. Still soaking in your nescience of what you’ve just done, you’re left with a natant tip, swaying about, a little buoy without a purpose. You consider your animal contortions, your anserine sounds rushing from your yellow teeth. The spraying water sounds like television static, a scrambled channel that you wish to watch deciphered.

If it were only a month ago, there would be no epiphany. There would be no ignominy. The “why” would remain graveless and impalpable, an eternal lacuna between the eye and when the happenings on the screen really happened. You would still be drooping somewhere in that apartment, still fretting over coworkers’ shaggy dog stories, still brooding upon brainchildren, destined for abortions. And what’d be left in Mr. Boothe’s life—your life—would be nothing more than haircuts the first Tuesday of each month and brown sugar in your oatmeal—smaller things you could hold onto, exactly how it is supposed to be, without question.

But this all occurs at a special time, a week where you promised yourself to be a better person. And Cynthia has left you over a year ago, but you have found the unlikely overture of pornography, and in turn the bravery to mark yourself, to let shame and elation pool together at your drain in their opaqueness. You are now just as confused and debased as the rest of the world, and you feel a part of something like you never have before, like you've traveled several decades ahead in a very short while. You are current. You find yourself on the long walk down the concrete stairwell, heading outside to the trash bins. There they are—still stacked exactly how you've left them.

Now with your readers on, flipping through tissue-thin pages full of mattress ads and carpet cleaning services, you find the number to her bingo hall. Cynthia may not love you anymore, may not answer, may not ever call back, but the phone is ringing because you have made it ring. You are calling her to see how things are, to invite her maybe to a cup of instant coffee with powdered creamer if she'd like to, and you are more than satisfied. You hear the floorboards, and junk drawer, and toaster, and everything, cheering you on from all sides.



**Microcosm**  
*Luciano Duran*

不要後悔  
**Don't Want Regrets**  
*Ratnak Sokhom*

不要後悔  
 要衡量的標準:  
 好像我有事後看到的能力, 做出決定, 使我沒有後悔,  
 接受我做出最好的決定, 那時候我沒有後悔,  
 為了能夠雙目向前, 而不是因為遺憾而向後看,  
 要被告知, 我的未來如此明亮, 我需要太陽鏡, 但我厭倦  
 了, 忘記我穿著它們, 所以現在  
 看起來很暗淡.  
 所以我會接受邀請去看電影,  
 所以我會用雙腳跳進冰冷的海洋,  
 所以我會同意與陌生人的日落騎自行車,  
 所以我會喝酒, 快樂, 直到鳥兒唱歌,  
 所以我會和我看到的每隻狗一起玩, 每一個機會我都能得到,  
 所以我會在我的身邊沒有一個人在傾盆大雨下行走,  
 所以我會花費額外的時間學習, 他媽的收益遞減,  
 所以我會即使我知道我會在結尾哭泣開始對話,  
 所以我會再花一年才能獲得第二學位,  
 所以我會一會兒打電話,  
 所以我會當我看到需要時, 承擔責任, 不需要承認,  
 所以我不會後悔  
 因為我的決定, 是為了我.

Don't Want Regrets  
 A standard to be measured against  
 To make decisions as if I had the ability to see with hindsight  
 so that I have no regrets  
 To accept that I made the best decision I could at that time so  
 that I have no regrets  
 To be able to look forward with both eyes, instead of looking  
 backwards because of my regrets  
 To be told that my future is so bright that I need sunglasses but  
 I get weary and forget  
 I'm wearing them so the present seems      bleak.  
 So I will accept an invitation to go to the movies,  
 So I will jump into the freezing ocean with both feet,  
 So I will agree to a sunset bike ride with a stranger,  
 So I will drink and make merry until the birds sing,  
 So I will play with every dog I see, every chance I get,  
 So I will walk beneath the pouring rain with no one by my  
 side,  
 So I will spend that extra hour studying, what diminishing  
 returns,  
 So I will start a conversation even though I know I will be  
 crying by the end of it,  
 So I will take an extra year to get that second degree,  
 So I will call when it's been a while,  
 So I will accept responsibility when I see a need, without desire  
 for recognition,  
 So I will have no regrets  
 Because the decisions I make, I make for me.

**CO<sub>2</sub> Prayers**  
*Mark C. Childs*

Once more I open all the doors  
 harvest the morning's assurance,  
 gather its cool inside my house  
 against the fierce afternoon sun.

Once more I piss on my compost,  
 hang laundry in soil-cracking wind,  
 gather the last green tomatoes,  
 adjust the garden's parasol.

Once more I tune my bike's old spokes,  
 hand pump hard air into tires,  
 gather speed in sunrise's calm air  
 and peddle to work -  
                     quiet prayers.



**The Baron**  
*Erin Scofield*



**Six Meter Surge**  
*Mark C. Childs*

(hexagram Ta Chuang)

The surf shines with  
No more palm shade.  
The waters retake the earth.  
Our sagas, stories, lies and  
legends lie quiet beneath  
broken ocean. We set sail.

prismatic oil.  
No more taro.

## Editorial Statement

Toyon is an annual literary magazine, which started at Humboldt State University in 1954. Its beginning was made possible by a group of students who were committed to providing students with an opportunity to have a sneak peek into the publishing industry, which includes gaining hands-on experience at HSU. We have currently completed our 64th issues of Toyon, and look forward to continuing the legacy of Toyon that the founders started all those years ago. Writers and artists of all kinds are welcome to submit to our magazine, and a student-run staff evaluates each submission. The process of evaluation is accomplished with much consideration by each staff member. Toyon has blind review process with criteria that changes with each new group of members that join every fall semester. Within this issue we have pieces of work that fall under many different genres, including: translation, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, literary criticism, environmental justice, spoken word, and visual art. For this issue of Toyon, we have the newly included Fuerza award given in spoken word, audio, and multimedia. This specific award is courtesy of the Lambda Theta Phi Latin Fraternity, Inc. at Humboldt State University. Next year will be our 65th issue, and we are planning to have a special call for submissions specifically for migration. Toyon is opening and welcoming to all cultures, and we want to represent writing, creativity, and art with a diverse variety. Our staff hopes that you all enjoy this issue of Toyon. Happy reading!

Toyon Literary Magazine would like to acknowledge and celebrate the life of Richard Cortez Day. His unwavering generosity toward the journal has had a profound impact on its development and in the lives of the many students and faculty that had the pleasure of working with him. He will be deeply missed.

Toyon Editorial Staff  
Arcata, CA