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TABLE OF CONTENTS

APRIL 2014



Human Connections

<i>From</i> “Travel Narrative”	4
Cayla Lang	
“ <i>On the Road: A Wasted Journey</i> ”	5
Kathryn Fossaceca	
“Thoughts on Bin Laden’s Death”	10
Michael W. Petrovich	
“Lifting the Mental Blindfold: Examining the Role of Society in Achieving Self-Actualization”	12
Samuel Aydlette	
“In Pursuit of Humanity”	20
Rebecca Stibrik	
“The Delicacy of Reading”	25
Stephanie Barros	
<i>From</i> “ <i>On the Road: A Wasted Journey</i> ”	31
Kathryn Fossaceca	

Gendered Roles

<i>From</i> “Inner Power Inner Peace”	32
Courtney Dorsey	
“To My Dutiful Loving Wife”	33
Perla Gonzalez-Chavira	

“The Exploration of Sensibility in Jane Austen’s <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> ”	38
Anne Tulloch	
“Portrayal of Restoration Women in <i>The Rover</i> ”	46
Angela White	
“Deceitful Foils: The Use of Literary Foils to Satirize Deceit in <i>The Country Wife</i> ”	52
Anne Tulloch	
<i>From</i> “Inner Power Inner Peace”	57
Courtney Dorsey	

Traditions

<i>From</i> “My Thousand Lives”	58
Stephanie Barros	
“The Home Game”	59
Basil Al-Qaneh	
“Demons and Norwegian Cod on Easter Day”	63
Perla Gonzalez-Chavira	
“My Thousand Lives”	66
Stephanie Barros	
“The Camino de Santiago in Stone: A Travel Narrative”	70
Amanda Bourne	
<i>From</i> “The Camino de Santiago in Stone: A Travel Narrative”	77
Amanda Bourne	

Biographies

Contributing Authors	78
Board of Student Editors.....	80

HUMAN CONNECTIONS



It was rainy season in Northern Spain, and the ground was just mud. Not the mud that makes you slide or just makes a squishy sound, no the kind of mud that clings to everything and transforms your shoes into pieces of workout equipment.... The mud not only bonded to our shoes, but also bonded people together. Everyone was going through the same thing (literally the mud) and it gave us something to talk about. It turned out that once we started talking, we didn't stop for the rest of the trip.

— Cayla Lang, *from* “Travel Narrative”



ON THE ROAD: A WASTED JOURNEY
by Kathryn Fossaceca

The critical reception Jack Kerouac's novel, *On the Road*, received when it was first published was surprisingly good. Kerouac thought critics would be harsher on his new style of writing, which went against most acceptable forms. *New York Times* writer Gilbert Milstein published the first review about *On the Road*. He remarked the publication of Kerouac's work marked "a historic occasion in so far as the exposure of an authentic work of art is of any great moment" (27). Another reviewer of *The Village Voice*, Arthur Ossterreicher, claimed *On the Road* was, "a rallying point for the elusive spirit of rebellion of these times...beneath the beatness on the surface of everything, Kerouac finds beatitude" (qtd. in Amburn 277). *On the Road* even "changed the lives of many people, and influenced the rich and famous like Bob Dylan (Amburn 276). Adding to the novel's prestige, some universities have dedicated whole classes to *On the Road*. Kerouac's creation is considered a great achievement—BUT WHY? When I picked up this piece, I expected as it said on the back cover to be "changed." I read the book once, and no change. I read it twice and still NOTHING. I wondered how this book made such a large impact on so many people. Maybe I read the book wrong, I don't know, all I only know is I did not expect what I read.

I expected to read about a heroic adventure-- what I got was a whole lot of sex, and a whole lot of drugs. I thought Sal and Dean would be these two great friends, traveling across the United States, meeting interesting people, and learning about themselves. On the contrary, I read about a bunch of morons traveling across the US for no real good reason. At the beginning, Sal is getting over a lousy divorce and the “feeling everything [is] dead” (1). For me, this seems like the perfect circumstance for someone to take a long journey. By traveling, we are moving, and by moving, we are moving on. A journey has the power to awaken the human spirit, and drive our sense for adventure. The journey allows us to discover who we are, our true selves. At least that is my experience. I was sixteen years old the first time I travelled to Nicaragua alone, which marked my first real journey. I wasn’t completely by myself, I left as part of a cultural exchange program with my high school. This was at a point in my life when it was time for me to grow up to start having my own self-discovery. I did not realize this would happen, but the Kathryn that left for that trip did not return as the same Kathryn. I changed completely, I grew in my independence, and I learned about ME. Based on my experience I thought the journey causes a person to change and grow in ways that make them a stronger and better individual. Then again, maybe I am wrong.

The Sal that I met starting his journey stayed the same stagnant Sal. Initially Sal seems like he will have an interesting road trip “filled with dreams...[going to] Chicago...Denver, and then finally San Fran” (9) to travel on an “around-the-world liner” (10). Sal meets new people along the way, but he never develops a real lasting connection with anyone except Dean, Sal’s mistake. Dean is the “HOLY GOOF...just goofing all the time” (183). He has “no regard for anyone...[just] how much money or fun he can get out of people...” (183). A road companion like Dean is fun to have around because he brings entertainment and excitement. He is the one to try new things, maybe sparking curiosity in others. However, Dean cannot keep a faithful relationship period. Dean has his fun

then drops everyone and runs to the next best thing, like cheating between Marylou and Camille, “making love to two girls at the same time...who waited for him in a hotel room” (37). Dean proves he cannot make commitments, so it is not surprising when he leaves Sal practically dying in Mexico after they vowed to “stick together and be buddies till [they] died” (180). Someone like Dean limits the growth of an individual because he does not provide him or her with real help or support. Dean only provides a false sense of companionship to those he interacts with and this causes the stagnation of the human spirit.

In Nicaragua, I lived with a beautiful family who took me in as their own daughter even though they did not know me. My “mom,” Doña Sandra, always made sure I had plenty of food, that I felt good, she gave me advice, and took care of me just as my own mother did. Her daughters, Claudia, Elda, and Sandrita accepted me without judgments as my own sisters do. I stayed with them for two weeks, just seventeen days, and by the end of my stay my “host” family was my family. I promised to always talk to them, and to this day, we talk about everything—Skype helps a lot. My family taught me the meaning of being a true friend. They lived in a poorer barrio of Nicaragua, so some families who could not earn enough went without food. One day a woman came to Doña Sandra, knocking on her door and asked her for some food. Without hesitation Doña Sandra prepared a whole meal for her of *frijoles*, *platános fritos*, *gallo pinto*, it was so much food! Doña Sandra worked to help the people in her community thrive no matter who they were. She acted as a companion to everyone, and promised to never leave anyone alone. Her actions showed me the way we survive the human condition and grow as stronger individuals is not by abandoning others, but rather by embracing them.

Sal in particular has the opportunity to embrace people as Doña Sandra did, but he wastes his opportunity on his selfishness. Instead, Sal exploits others. He first does this with Terry. He wants to know Terry for the wrong reasons, more for his sexual interests. He is attracted to her body, noticing how “her breasts stuck out...her little flanks

looked delicious...her hair was long lustrous black..." (74). Sal is superficial with his initial impressions of Terry and he just wants her to satisfy himself. He decides to stick with her for a little longer. They both talk about going to New York together, making plans. They spend time working in the cotton fields together living off the land with "nothing to do but sit in the grass all day and eat grapes" (91). As Sal has to depart from Terry it seems like he might try to be a true companion to her, but he really has no intention of making a lasting connection with her. All he has to say is, "well lackadaddy, I was on the road again (93)", suggesting there is no real value in the relationships he makes, they just come and go, similar to how Dean treats people. In Mexico both Sal and Dean had the same opportunity that I had in Nicaragua to explore a new culture, and meet new people, but they decide to go to a whorehouse. All they look like is a funny show to the Mexican men watching them. They have their fun with the girls, and when it is time to go they leave without making any lasting connections; the detachment Dean and Sal exemplify is sick.

The way Dean and Sal exploited each other and those they met troubled me. When we have to survive the human condition on our own, it becomes a real struggle. Journeys we take by ourselves thrust us into situations where we must learn to survive, but survival comes easier if we have someone to help us, and through the companionships we make we create bridges between people that allow us to blossom as better individuals. In Nicaragua, a family who did not know me took me in, and took care of me. I still maintain the relationships I made with them today. I even made some other friends in Nicaragua who I have invited to Marymount and they have done workshops here. When I went on my journey, I tried to make relationships that would last for the rest of my life with the people I met. Sal and Dean wasted their journey, by their poor interactions with people, and not leaving room for themselves to grow. They ended where they began, as detached people and lonely souls. I transformed myself by creating bridges and building lasting relationships.

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THOUGHTS ON BIN LADEN'S DEATH

by Michael W. Petrovich

On September 11th 2001, I stood in the Pentagon as the room around me was engulfed in flames. The shock of the event, and the deaths of twenty six of my coworkers, stays with me to this day. I feel the pain of injury suffered that day, I feel the terror of what I saw, and I feel the loss of close friends and colleagues.

Recent course work here at Marymount led me to recall a particular event and how it shapes my thoughts on Islam in America. On May second, I sat and waited for President Obama to announce to the world that Osama bin Laden had been killed by American forces. This was a direct and fair response to his orchestration of his attack on the United States on September 11th 2001.

The morning after, I drank morning coffee and watched the nation's reaction; I found myself feeling less than elated. I knew that Osama bin Laden's actions had earned his death, and I knew that President Obama had taken a step to make the world safer with his actions. As a former soldier I knew the dedication and hard work put in by those who slew Bin Laden should be lauded. I had no qualms with the actions of the President or those serving in our military, but the reaction of the American people troubled me deeply.

I was watching a news clip of a girl, no older than five, standing in a cheering crowd. She was waving a sign that said, “yaay -- Osama is dead.” I could not help but notice the similarities to the many newscasts from over the last ten years. I had watched news clips where a group of people in a distant land applauded a set-back to our nation or loss of American lives. Yes, the picture was more colorful with the red, white and blue waving in every corner of the screen. If I added cement buildings, sand and earth tones, it would have looked like all those broadcasts that made me angry to feel so despised by a people I never met.

My nerves began to build as I anticipated the political discord that was sure to follow. The President would certainly come under fire from his political opposition. I was certain they would find some flaw with his action to spin in their favor. It would be months of politicians trying to stir the public to greater like or dislike of one candidate or the other. Proof of Bin Laden’s death would be sought, and any proof given would be insufficient.

Diplomacy is often called our first and best line of defense. But I have never seen a crowd spontaneously break out and cheer a peaceful resolution. I have never seen a child with a sign that read, “Yaay -- no one died.” I wonder if diplomacy is considered the best line of defense because it works or because of what it could make us if it works.

I thought about that young girl and wondered, “Is the world getting any better?” I asked myself, what we are as a people saying to that young child? What are we saying to our allies and enemies across the globe? Surely we are saying we are not to be trifled with, but are we also saying we can revel in death as much as any of those we oppose? Are we saying we can stoop to their level?



LIFTING THE MENTAL BLINDFOLD: EXAMINING
THE ROLE OF SOCIETY IN ACHIEVING SELF-
ACTUALIZATION
by Samuel Aydlette

Imagine three prisoners are chained to a cave wall. Since all they can see are the shadows on the cave wall from everything passing behind them, they assume that there is no greater reality than the shadows on the wall. But one day, one of the prisoners escapes her shackles and turns around. For the first time, she is able to see actual reality and realizes that the shadows are nothing but an echo of a much larger world. Plato wrote of this allegory in his book, *Republic*, to illustrate that one should attempt to see reality as it actually is and not merely how it appears to be. For most people in middle class America, our lives revolve around the things that affect us most directly. Most of the time, our minds find themselves dwelling upon our finances, our relationships, or how to improve our social status. However, much like the prisoners in the cave, the American middle class see only the “shadows” of reality and are ignorant of the broader reality going on. There are economic, social, and psychological constraints imposed upon us by many of society's most powerful institutions, which largely go unnoticed by the general public. If these controls were removed, people would have a greater chance

to achieve self-actualization.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) is most famous for identifying the theory of “Self-Actualization.” In his essay *A Theory of Human Motivation*, Maslow submitted five distinct human needs. Each of these needs build on one another. The most basic needs are based on survival: food, water, and shelter. Without them, we would die in a matter of hours or days. The next set of needs are security based needs. These needs rely on our sense of general safety from imminent danger. If we are worried about potential danger, we cannot focus on anything else. The next set of needs are based on love and belonging. We need a social environment of friends, lovers, and family in our lives in order to avoid being lonely. Next are self-esteem needs. We need to feel valued and respected. Our sense of our appearance, our belief in our skills, and our confidence are based on fulfilling these needs. Finally, once we have achieved all of these needs, we are free to focus on obtaining what Maslow terms “self-actualization”. Self-actualization describes when a human being has met all of their basic needs and is free to express their true self. Unfortunately, we are compelled to meet the first four needs in the hierarchy (survival, security, social and self-esteem) before we can attempt to live such a life. If we do not have these needs met, we must devote all of our energy towards meeting them, at the expense of anything else that we wish to accomplish.

Regarding middle class American society, survival needs are, for the most part, well met. For example, the U.S. Federal, State, and local governments ensure that clean drinking water is available to the general public at an affordable cost. Food is plentiful, and government programs like food stamps and free lunch in public schools attempt to help those who cannot afford food. However, it is important to consider that this is not the case for the majority of the world. The documentary *Blue Gold: World Water Wars* explores the tragic consequences that occur when people's very survival is threatened by corporate or Government interests. In rural South Africa, a system is in place where people must pay for a key to unlock a water

counter before they can have access to fresh water. The water counter charges by the volume of water consumed and many people can only afford about two “toilet flushes”, or approximately 10 gallons of water per month. So they are forced to consume water from the polluted streams carrying malaria and other diseases. The system in place there is literally threatening their very survival, forcing them to work an inhumane amount just to have access to water which won't kill them. Thankfully, the American middle class is unlikely to experience such deprivation. However, this may not be due to the benevolence of those who control our system. The reason that our survival needs are so well met may be determined by economic factors rather than egalitarian ones.

Although survival needs seem to be well met for most of the American middle class, meeting security needs is a different story. Contrary to popular opinion, many experts believe that the media's role in society is not to inform the public but rather to convince the public that actions that the powerful elite have decided to pursue are justified and in the common interest. Barry Glassner, sociology professor and president of Lewis and Clark College, tackled this subject in a research paper entitled *Narrative Techniques of Fear Mongering*. The paper describes how the media uses specific fear mongering techniques in order to provide justification or distract attention from actions taken by powerful institutions within our society. These actions would be unacceptable to the public except for the fact that we are fooled to believe that our security needs are being threatened, which supersedes all other needs except for survival itself. Of course, in reality our security needs are being met quite well. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the American middle class has enjoyed the most peaceful existence of any group of people in the history of mankind. But it doesn't matter if our needs are *actually* threatened, it only matters if we *perceive* that our needs are threatened. If the media is able to convince us that our safety needs are not being met, then it can count on our consent to do “whatever it takes” in order to meet those needs. More often than not, “whatever it takes”

happens to be an action which is profitable for the elites that control society but is exploitative towards the rest of society.

Those skeptical of how a conspiracy of such magnitude is possible need look no further than the ownership of the media itself to discern how an organized fear mongering campaign could occur. Noam Chomsky wrote *Necessary Illusions* in 1989 about the role the media plays in shaping public opinion. He writes,

Concentration of ownership in the media is high and increasing. Furthermore, those who occupy managerial positions in the media, or gain status within them as commentators, belong to the same privileged elites, and might be expected to share the perceptions, aspirations and attitudes of their associates, reflecting their own class interests as well.

Journalists entering the system are unlikely to make their way unless they conform to these ideological pressures, generally by internalizing these values; it is not easy to say one thing and believe another, and those who fail to conform will tend to be weeded out by familiar mechanisms. (8)

Regrettably, media ownership has continued to centralize since 1989 (“Who Owns the Media?” 2013).

Believe it or not, manipulating security needs is not the only tool that the powerful use to control our behavior. Our need for love and belonging is manipulated by those in power as well. Marketing has incredible power over almost every decision we make as a consumer. In *Losing Consciousness: Automatic Influences on Consumer Judgment, Behavior and Motivation*, Yale University social psychologist John A. Bargh illustrates through extensive research that marketing can affect our decision making process. In fact, it can literally make us do things that we otherwise would not do had we not been exposed to the marketing. Using a

technique called subliminal influence, marketers can frame the context of an action within a known need of a consumer. For example, a male who is struggling to meet their love and belonging needs could be easily manipulated into buying “Axe” body spray if the advertisement put the use of the fragrance in the context of being loved and accepted by friends and lovers. Unfortunately for the consumer, purchasing the fragrance probably does not have the same effect in reality as it did in the advertisement. So that leaves him vulnerable for the next round of ads which target his social neediness.

Unfortunately for many consumers, more and more people are having a difficult time meeting their social needs. This leaves them exposed to being preyed upon by marketers who use subliminal influences in advertisements. In the book *The Demise of Guys*, famed psychologist Philip Zimbardo and Nikita Duncan lay out new research which links the heavy use of video games and pornography to impaired social functioning and decreased self-esteem. Also, the research indicates that both video games and porn compare to extremely addictive drugs like cocaine in terms of how they affect the brain neurologically. Considering that one in three young men are heavy porn users, and almost forty percent of adolescents are heavy video game users, this research is truly disturbing both in terms of the lives of the young people and their susceptibility to behavior modification that benefits the agenda of the powerful through subliminal influence techniques.

People lucky enough to avoid being exploited due to their inability to meet security or safety needs are once again faced with challenges when attempting to meet their self-esteem needs. In the study *Effects of Scarcely Dressed Models in Advertisements on Body Esteem*, Swedish researchers Nathalie Dens, Patrick Pelsmacker, and Wim Janssens show that people experience a significant drop in self-esteem when they are exposed to advertisements which center around a semi-nude model. The effect occurs regardless of the gender of either the model or the viewer. Of course, everyone who lives in the western world knows that it is virtually impossible to go even a single day without seeing

advertisements with half naked models. This is unsettling because it completes a circle of consumption controlled by marketers and disconnected from consumer's rational thought process. Like puppeteers manipulating the actions of string puppets, marketers can simultaneously decrease our self-esteem needs while using subliminal influencing techniques to frame behavior within the context of meeting our self-esteem needs, thus effectively controlling consumer behavior.

This cycle of consumption forces people to devote themselves to gaining enough monetary resources in order to meet their self-esteem needs (assuming that they are fortunate enough to have all of their other needs met). This is critical because most of the American middle class depend on the salary provided to them based on their labor. Famous business mogul and notorious elitist John D. Rockefeller is attributed to saying, "I don't want a nation of thinkers, I want a nation of workers" (Marrs 2010, 204). Rockefeller and his family have contributed heavily to many of the institutions, such as the Council on Foreign Relations, which greatly affect social discourse and decision making within the Government. This quote illustrates a dangerous mindset that could explain the constraints placed upon the middle class. If the goal of the powerful is to enrich themselves by profiting off of the labor of the middle class, then the mechanisms described above are surely a clear means to that end.

Unlike almost any other society in history, the American middle class is uniquely free to act as we wish. Unfortunately, the constraints discussed above create mental boundaries, keeping us from achieving true freedom by imprisoning us within our own minds. But we are also very lucky, because unlike societies of the past, there are few physical barriers to achieving self-actualization. There is no caste system in which we are born into serfdom, there is no institutionalized slavery, there is no forced conscription, no laws banning certain types of speech, and no overt political oppression. The keys to our freedom are present in our minds, waiting to be used. We can increase our own power to become self actualized by changing our

environment. Research from *Losing Consciousness: Automatic Influences on Consumer Judgment, Behavior and Motivation* shows that merely being aware of the subliminal influences present in advertisements reduces our suggestiveness to them. Better yet, we often forget that we have the power to limit our exposure by turning off the TV and instead seek out activities where we interact with other people. Our interactions with others is the key to empowering ourselves and setting up a community in which we can rely on each other to meet our basic needs and enable us to reach self-actualization. These self-reliant communities can wield immense power which can rival the external forces that seek to exploit us. If, as a community, we can control the production of the food we eat instead of allowing massive international corporations to control the means of production then we gain power. If we can control the way we raise and educate our children instead of allowing a huge federal bureaucracy founded and controlled by corporations called the Department of Education to raise them, we gain power. If we realize that the apathy we feel towards politics is manufactured through subliminal messaging techniques delivered to us by the media, and looked at our elected representatives at all levels of government the same way we scrutinize our favorite football players, we gain power. All we have to do is ignore the shadows on the cave wall, unlock our shackles, and be brave enough to walk out of the cave into the light of the real world.

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IN PURSUIT OF HUMANITY

by Rebecca Stibrik

When it came time for me to choose the degree I wanted to pursue and the job I eventually wanted to have, I had an interesting conversation with my father. He was of the opinion that I should become an engineer, as they are always able to find jobs. If that career did not appeal to me, he could see me as either a laser eye surgeon or a biologist working to find vaccines. However, I am not fond of math, and biology holds no appeal for me. My father, an aeronautical engineer, did not see the value in my pursuit of a degree in graphic design. He did not understand how I would be able to find a job with such a degree that was part of the arts and humanities. Much of the public would agree with my father's opinion about my choice in degree because they feel there is neither money nor value in the arts and humanities.

Many people simply do not realize the value of the arts and humanities. As a result, these disciplines are often underfunded, preventing students from gaining the valuable skills and experience that are necessary for the job market, and for a student's personal development. Colleges and universities exemplify this problem the most. Many claim to support the humanities, but do not show it in their budgets. Colleges have a tendency to create little robotic students focused on science and mathematics who forget what makes them human. Everything that is logical and technical

is emphasized, and everything has to have a formula. Imagination and creativity are lacking due to their undervalued nature. The misconception is that not much work goes into creativity, and creative work is a waste of time and potential. Plain and simple, colleges are slighting their students. There is, however, a remedy for those who choose to act. While the arts and humanities programs of universities are unfortunately undervalued and underfunded, they do have merit. Many useful things are learned due to the humanities. Thus, universities should be giving more of their funds to these departments.

What many do not realize is that the arts and humanities are necessary for a person's personal development. These disciplines create and foster unique skills that help a person to succeed in life in a way that the sciences just cannot provide, something that is even recognized by biochemist Mary Sue Coleman and computer scientist John L. Hennessey in their article "Lessons from the Humanities and Social Sciences." They go so far as to claim "These disciplines play an important role in educating students for future leadership and deal most directly with the human condition," something that is not often recognized (par. 3). The arts and humanities allow a person to improve upon their creativity and problem solving skills, which are needed in the current job market. Additionally, English falls under the humanities, and skills honed in an English class can be applied in some way to just about any job. While it may not be an absolute requirement of a job that one has good reading and writing skills, it is certainly preferred by employers. The humanities also teach valuable communication skills. With the humanities, students learn various ways to convey their ideas, which is particularly important in today's job market.

In spite of the badly needed skills they develop, arts and humanities are continually being cut. Often, these areas take budget cuts before any other department. This is in spite of the fact that they have smaller budgets to begin with, as Robert N. Watson describes in his article "The Humanities Really Do Produce a Profit." Watson describes how at his University, for example, the humanities are being

cut, going so far as to say that “The dean of humanities’ office at UCLA warned a few months ago that the proposed budget would require programs in this division—already the leanest in staff per faculty—to fire most of their lecturers and teaching assistants, making [their] curriculum unsustainable” (par. 10). How can a student be expected to get a well-rounded education and wide range of skills when the department needed to teach these skills could barely afford to pay its teachers? The answer is simple: they will not, which reflects very poorly on the university that awarded them the degree. What will happen is that these students will be lacking in critical skills, and thus will have a more difficult time finding employment.

While many have claimed that humanities have little to no value in the job market, there are actually many viable job options with a degree in the arts and humanities. Communications is becoming an increasingly desirable degree and skill as the world becomes more global and more focused on the media. Now more than ever, there are many markets and types of media in which to display information. Information is displayed to promote sports, movies, and social awareness, just for example. As a result, someone who can display that information effectively becomes highly valuable. Graphic design is another emerging field with many job prospects. Graphic designers have the important job of designing pretty much everything a person sees, from an ad for a product to the box it comes in, from book jackets to movie posters, and many other things. The skills needed in order to create and communicate effectively lie in arts and humanities education, and the unfortunate lack of funds and recognition for these programs prevents many from being able to take full advantage of these jobs, much to the disappointment of numerous students.

Generally speaking, most people are under the impression that the arts and humanities are unnecessary and lacking in value. Many believe that the only value in the arts and humanities are the joy they provide for the participant, as Stanley Fish claims in his article “Will the Humanities Save Us?” People tend to think that nothing profitable can

come from this knowledge. They simply do not see the value in things like art or writing skills, and are not able to understand how they can be useful in daily life. What the public needs to realize is that the arts and humanities are very important, and are a largely untapped resource. Many valuable skills are either made or developed by the humanities. There are jobs that can be found with these degrees. Moreover, there are successful, well-rounded individuals who have succeeded because of these departments. Investing more in the humanities means investing in the future, and creating better-rounded, better-prepared, skillful group of people. The sooner universities and the public realize this, the better. Because really, who wants a bunch of inhuman, robotic shells for employees or students?

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THE DELICACY OF READING

by Stephanie Barros

“Oh, I don't read.”

Just like that my jaw dropped, nose crinkled like a foul odor had just seeped into the air, face twisted in disgust and a thousand newly sharpened knives came flying into my body and heart.

This simple kind of response has become popular to my ears when I question someone on what their favorite novel is. They haven't even picked up enough books for pleasure to be able to mindlessly spurt out a random title at me. It is mind bending and heart twisting to me every time I come to the realization that people do not read the way we as a society once did. Television, computers, cell phones, and the World Wide Web have appeared and festered themselves deep within our culture, absorbing any and nearly all attention. With all the snazzy new technology appearing around the world, books seldom bring pleasure to the easily distracted mind.

In 2007 a 99 page report was released by the National Endowment for the Arts which included more than 40 studies by universities, foundations, business groups, and government agencies since 2004. Among its findings was that almost half of Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 never read books for pleasure (Mehegan). According to the United States census in 2010, there are

approximately 30,672,000 people within that age group. In other words about 15,336,000 people in that age group alone never pick up a book to read for enjoyment. Bewilderingly, over fifteen million people never walk into a library to find a novel, never enter a book store to find their newest form of entertainment, and never sit down to read just because they want to. Similarly, in 2004, another report, "Reading at Risk," found that fewer than half of Americans over 18 read novels, short stories, plays or poetry (Rich). Undoubtedly, many have lost sight of the value of literature.

As an avid reader and lover of books, I could never fathom a life deprived of, in the words of Stephen King, the "uniquely portable magic" that are books. I must visit a library at least two times a week so that I may find a new treasure to entertain myself with. Books can provide entertainment wherever you go. They allow you to never again experience a dull moment while waiting at a bus stop or waiting for calming drowsiness to sink in before going to bed. A good book can fix any predicament of boredom, but often even that promise doesn't provide enough motivation to read.

Not everyone has the time or can manage to put in the effort to visit bookstores or libraries frequently or read regularly, especially since we are all so different from one another. Interests, hobbies, dislikes, and personality, in general, differ uniquely from person to person. We all may have different passions and varying hobbies, but reading isn't just about the entertainment factor. It is not just about the joy that can come from sitting down with a genuinely astounding, well-written book. It also involves the enrichment and growth that comes out of it - enlightenment and illumination that you simply cannot find anywhere else.

Like many other things in the world, reading is a skill that is developed and polished over time. If you leave it untouched long enough, it will become rusty and tarnished. Leaving such a valuable skill wasted and neglected inevitably reflects throughout school-life and work-life. One out of every five American workers reads at a lower level than necessary to do his or her job (Mehegan). To walk into

a job you believe to be qualified for but, in reality, do not possess the reading skills to do with the best of your ability, is disappointing and presents a considerable disadvantage. It is particularly upsetting because it is something that we can work to avoid purely by enriching our lives with alluring literature. Delighting in the written word will benefit in the professional world in more ways than just the ability to skillfully and effectively fulfill your occupational roles. In addition, better reading skills are correlated with higher income (Rich). This problem with an aversion to reading frequently arises when people are younger and, often never getting fixed, follows them into their career endeavors, as well as holds them back from advancement and further success.

Prior to affecting a person in their career, lack of reading becomes apparent while people are in school and undergoing examinations. When it comes to kids that are still in school, reading scores seem to stay flat among middle school students and began to decline throughout high school. This trend continues once they enter college. Students who read for fun nearly every day, however, appear to perform better on reading tests than those who never, or hardly ever, read recreationally (Rich). Without question, a lack of reading produces lower reading scores - Wow, big surprise. Although, that isn't all. Young scholars who don't passionately avoid books but embrace them daily, overall, excel in school. An increase in the average scores in science, civics, and history, subjects that are all reading-based, is also seen (Mehegan).

Irrefutably, keeping away from books and the act of reading doesn't just hinder people's ability to read. It also inhibits a person's ability to fully comprehend these other subjects that rely heavily on reading skills and comprehension. Surely, while we are all guilty of it, sitting in front of a computer for innumerable hours, mindlessly watching videos of kittens and laughing babies on the internet, will not provide anyone with these necessarily abilities.

Technology is an element that contributes significantly to the reasons why people seem to be

growingly less interested in books. Having hundreds of words staring back at you from inside of a book can seem daunting. Especially when it is far easier to unwind your mind and sit in front of the television screen. In response to this observation, I conducted an online survey asking participants whether they spent more time in front of a television or with their nose buried in a book for fun. An overwhelming majority of 76% of respondents said that television occupies more of their time. Similarly, a separate survey found that the average person between the ages of 15 and 24 spends about 2 to 2 1/2 hours a day watching television, but only about 7 minutes reading (Mehegan). Those short seven minutes more likely than not, for most people, are spent distracted. Whether they are spent while pulling out the cell phone to check for text messages from the stud at work, eyeballing the online inbox for e-mails or stepping away for a moment to do something on the computer, it is evident that our society is preoccupied by these electronic conveniences which surround us.

These devices, enhanced with the internet, make our life easier in so many ways. They provide us with answers for those random questions we have throughout the day and keep us connected with the people we care about. However, they also consume our attention and our ability to see the immense and overwhelming beauty in literature, poetry and the rest of the written word that so many have strived their entire lives to contribute to.

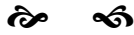
“God, it’s so boring” were some of the first words that came out at me when I read a blog post on the topic of reading from a 22 year old man in Canada. That crinkle of my nose and twisting of my face was beginning again, but I pushed through, curious to see how his opinion differed from my own. And it did. Dramatically. “I sit down, I open the book, and there’s, like, words... God it’s so boring. I have a television sitting right there... Reading is out dated. People read because they had no television” (Harakiri823). I’ve picked up a boring book, but I’ve also flipped through a hundred channels on a television and had nothing catch my attention or intrigue my mind. Books are unexciting if you pick up what doesn’t interest you.

The glory of reading for pleasure is that you can select whatever you want. When you walk into a library or bookstore hundreds of books are lined up for you - books that would suit any and every personality or interest. If one gives them the opportunity, those words will provide you entertainment, while also granting further development of the mind for the academic and professional worlds. Of course, if you prefer... Sit down, throw that book aside, turn on that television and let those hundreds of frames per second enter through your vision while you ignore the pages that can provide your mind so much more substance.

Books can aid in your ability to read and write, teach you a spectrum of morals and lessons, push you forward in school and your career, as well as be a companion and distraction in times of stress, boredom, sadness, or contentment. They can bring out the best in places that technology cannot. That is not something anyone should avoid. Books are a delicacy so few enjoy and so many do not take the opportunity to indulge in. So, read. Be unhesitant in the devouring of books. Soak yourself in the enticing literature the world has to offer instead of drowning yourself in the technological possessions that consume you. Surround yourself with books and reward your mind with their extraordinary presence.

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“When we have to survive the human condition on our own, it becomes a real struggle [. . .] survival comes easier if we have someone to help us, and through the companionships we make we create bridges between people”

—Kathryn Fossaceca, *from* “On the Road: A Wasted Journey”

GENDERED ROLES



“In order for change to occur in our society men and women must work together to dismantle the inherent patriarchal structure of society. By encouraging each other, rather than oppressing one another, all people can acknowledge their inner sense of self that will awaken their inner power rather than exhibit power over others that often results in physical force and verbal abuse.”

—Courtney Dorsey, from “Inner Power Inner Peace”



TO MY DUTIFUL LOVING WIFE

by Perla González-Chavira

“Honey the lunches are made, the kids fed, and the dishwasher is loaded,” my husband says as he kisses our sons and me goodbye before rushing out the door to go to work. I must confess that my husband not only brings home the bacon, but also cooks it, to the dismay of my own mother and, not surprisingly, mother-in-law. It is interesting to note, however, that we both come from the same old country, where macho men and meek, subservient women are modeled by mothers and fathers, with the expectations that these sons and daughters will one day fulfill their respective roles in society.

In *Herland*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman explores the same conundrum in the society of her time. In early 20th century America, the socio-economic conventions were such that husbands had all the legal rights, while wives had none. In her clever and insightful novel, Gilman creates a utopian society where “[the] traditions of men as guardians and protectors had quite died out. These stalwart virgins had no men to fear and therefore no need of protection” (49). Gilman thus proposes that such a society can only exist if men see women as equally capable human beings.

It is evident that Gilman's portrayal of a woman's strength and intelligence is an act of rebellion. She gently but assertively points out a woman's potential in society. Unfortunately, this arrangement was only true in *Herland*, because in reality Gilman lived in a time when blatant inequality between men and women was the norm. Fortunately, not all was lost; because as time passes, culture and ideologies evolve. It is because of this evolution that many changes through history have given women more legal rights. I think that one important contribution to these changes is that both men and women are educating their young daughters and sons "not by competition, but by united action" (Gilman 51).

So, what am I to do, a mother of three young sons? Raise them in the old country's traditions, traditions that dictate that the mother is to wait hand and foot on her sons' every whim and desires (as both their grandmothers dutifully did for their own sons)? "Over my dead body," says my husband. He thinks that our boys should most certainly know how to care for themselves. So, he had taken matters into his own hands, and he is determined to teach his sons how to cook, iron a shirt, and change a tire. But most importantly, my husband has shown his sons that when work needs to be done, it can certainly be done equally well by both men and women.

In *Herland*, Gilman suggests that men ought to give women the opportunity to equally partake in the constructions of a society because only then "[can a society begin]... at once to plan and build for their children, all the strength and intelligence... [with] ideals such as... Beauty, Health, Strength, Intellect, Goodness" (51). Then men and women would surely create a harmonious society with no wars, poverty and unhappiness.

Gilman is wise in her observations about the specifics of the upbringing of a child, and I concur, that it is vital. However dubious, such upbringing will ultimately determine who a child will grow up to become, once he or she integrates into society. But how does Gilman account for the likes of my husband? He certainly is the anomaly of his culture's expectations of a man. Some in his culture may even doubt that he is a man. Sometimes I tend to think that his upbringing was "corrupted" somewhere, and luckily for me, he grew up believing that if a woman can make a nice home cooked meal, why shouldn't a man.

I once asked my husband, "How come you are not like the rest of your brothers (die hard, macho men)?"

"I hated seeing my mother taking crap not only from my father, but also from my brothers, and I figured, I shouldn't be one of them," he said.

"Just like that?" I asked.

"Just like that!" he said.

Why is it then, that the difference between men and women will perpetually be subject of debate? The reason is because as long as our society insists on viewing men and women in their "assigned" roles, the roles of the strong male sex and the weak female sex, then there is little room for giving each gender a chance to fully realize each other's potential. Furthermore, gender ideology will continue to be a heated discussion until we as a society become knowledgeable enough to realize that "it seems rather cold-blooded to say 'we' and 'they' as if we were... separate couples, with our separate joys and sorrows..." (104). Surely in the end, neither of the sexes can do much without the other in terms of the continuity of humanity. And as such faltering to realize the invaluable benefits that both sexes can contribute to the flourishing the whole, the debate will go on and on.

Now, how to soothe the unhappy, whiny child, who is always complaining about daddy's peanut buttering technique on his sandwich, one slice as opposed to two? Well, I guess the time has finally come for me to teach my darling boy how to make his own peanut butter sandwich. I'd rather like to think, that I should be glad he will learn now, and my loving guidance will inadvertently spare him from the future nagging wife, who no doubt, will try to tell him that peanut butter sandwiches must have butter on both slices of bread. And indeed it is true, every society needs to have a harmonious "we" to make it flourish in peace and love.

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THE EXPLORATION OF SENSIBILITY IN JANE
AUSTEN'S *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY*
by Anne Tulloch

Sensibility versus Insensibility: the differentiation between using personal feelings and emotions to understand nature and man, and the active, if not completely conscious, overwhelming of oneself in his or her emotions to the point of an unhealthy obsession with them for the sake of nature. This is the distinction that Austen explores and illustrates through her characters in *Sense and Sensibility*. Her particular study of sensibility is illustrated in the characters of Marianne, who is the epitome of insensibility near the end of the novel, and in Elinor, who represents sense, with traces of sensibility, who together impart to the observer the need for balance between the two. Austen uses this novel to illustrate that Sensibility is a useful means to understand and connect to nature as well as man, but it must be guarded by reality to avoid the possibility of emotional instability conquering rational thought entirely.

The late eighteenth century presented a new philosophy dubbing it acceptable to be sensitive about nature and emotionally vulnerable to both nature and man. This evolved into the 'cult of sensibility' (Brodey 1999). It was understood to be the "genesis of goodness and virtue associated with: humanity, of generosity;...the service of

merit” meant to fortify reason and the mind (Diderot 1755). Jane Austen belonged to this period where the ‘cult of sensibility’ developed rapidly. But she did not agree with this opinion that hailed the character of intense emotional vulnerability as entirely worthy of practice. In her title *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen makes an allusion the argument she will make in this fictitious work: that ‘Sense’, the use of the intellect to understand the world, and ‘Sensibility’, the emotional perspective of life, could either create friction or balance when used together.

To illustrate and argue for the potential for balance, Austen wrote several characters in to this work with personalities of different degrees of either or both of these character traits. In this case, Sense is understood as the use of reason to understand the world and build the intellect. Sensibility, on the other hand, used the emotions to understand nature and connect to the feelings of others. With such simple definitions as these, it is easier to pick out the characters that Austen used to argue for or against the use of these two emotionally inclined traits. Elinor and Marianne would represent a balance of or too much of the more dramatically emotional state, respectively, with the horrid Mrs. John Dashwood as exemplifying the completely calculating intellect without feeling, and Colonel Brandon exhibiting a goodly amount of both, but perhaps not enough.

To begin with too little sensibility: Mrs. John Dashwood embodies the idea of too little sensibility throughout the novel because of her high ability to use reason over emotion as her means to an end. She does not have much more sense than sensibility per se, because if she had too much of the former, she would not be able to justify taking away their fortune; and she has practically none of the latter since Austen depicts her as unfeeling and rude, especially in the way that she connives to get her husband to give his step-mother nothing to live on. This she illustrates when she says to her husband that “when the money is once parted with, it can never return...it strikes me that they can want no addition at all” (Austen 16-17).

Mrs. Dashwood also becomes the part of one with too little sensibility because of her manipulating way with words.

Sensibility is often characterized by the inability to use words, but Mrs. Dashwood brandishes them with ease. This woman has just enough of a calculating mind to manipulate the variables around her to try to get what she wants, even though it does not always succeed, as is seen in her conniving attempts in Elinor and Edward's case. Another example where she illustrates a lack of sensibility while exhibiting highly refined rational thinking is when she slights Elinor during a party and the narrator comments: "Perhaps Fanny thought for a moment that her mother had been rude enough...[b]ut then again the dread of having been too civil, too encouraging herself, probably came over her, for she said, 'Do you think there is something in Miss Morton's style of painting?'" (214). Here Fanny begins to consciously rationalize her responses to her mother and in the act, slight Elinor, without feeling it would hurt her. Mrs. Dashwood would rather appear too harsh than too affectionate, even towards a sister-in-law. In this way, she illustrates the danger of becoming cold-hearted through the practice of rationalizing everything, and in doing so, quenching any sensibility she may have had.

To further emphasize Austen's argument for the need for balance in Sensibility, a second character with perhaps only just enough is Colonel Brandon. This character holds great esteem in the novel; all the characters praise him, Elinor finds a true companion in him, and in his love for Marianne demonstrates a tender and faithful heart. He illustrates sensibility several times, although not verbally, especially when he is watching Marianne. A line from the narrator explains the depth of his character: "Colonel Brandon alone, of all the party, heard her without being in raptures. He paid her only the compliment of attention..." The narration continues: "His pleasure in music, alone could sympathize with her own, was estimable when contrasted against the insensibility of the others" (40). Already, small amounts of sensibility seem visible in this description, along with fortifying elements of sense. Later, Marianne notes that he is the only one who shares her love

of music in the same reverent way as herself, since he “alone could sympathize with her” pleasure in music. In her estimation, he does not allow his emotions to judge his perception of what is good music which draws a strong contrast to the others at the party who were completely unintelligible in their ability to appreciate good music. To Marianne, Colonel Brandon is similar to herself since they both seem to share a love of truly beautiful music. But his demeanor also proves he has command over his sensibility by reason. The narrator tells that the Colonel “paid her only the compliment of attention”; He did not go into raptures about the beauty of the music, or praise her highly for creating the sound. His silence confirmed that he was not one to be whisked away on a cloud of emotion as Marianne was wont to do. The narrator tells that “[Marianne] was reasonable enough to allow that a man of five-and-thirty might well have outlived all acuteness of feeling and every exquisite power of enjoyment” (40). Marianne can sense that he seems to control his emotions so well, that he could possibly almost be dry of them. And so in practice, Colonel Brandon has a bit of sensibility to do him credit, but he is almost too controlling by Marianne’s standards, in his sense.

As the plot develops, Austen’s characters Elinor and Marianne Dashwood become the illustrations of both the practice and regulation of sensibility, and excessive routine of insensibility in their respective stories. In order to understand what a good balance is between these two character traits, one would have to look at the effects of allowing the emotions to rule, unguarded. Since the healthy growth of sensibility relies on the regulating of emotional health and stability, this state of emotional openness is almost always susceptible to becoming ‘insensibility’. The alternative to having a healthy emotional understanding of nature is the self-absorbed kind that implodes on itself, and becomes solely interested in the unhealthy obsession of the self’s emotional state. This becomes what is termed ‘insensibility’ by default and is the more dangerous of the two states because in the obsession of one’s state, physical health and a clear perspective of reality become contorted and hardly comprehensible. With the inability to see reality

through this screen, the mind gives way to a heavy heart and is lost in the world of emotional instability that is created by insensibility.

If Fanny were the extreme right of sensibility with Brandon towards the middle right, Elinor would be left and closer to the center, with Marianne at the far left. Marianne has extreme sensibility even in the beginning of the book. In her goodbye to Norland she bemoans her state with great grief: "Dear, dear Norland!...When shall I cease to regret you!-when learn to feel home elsewhere?" (32). She finds emotional stimuli in what is beautiful, and looking at the sky asks, "Is there a felicity in the world...superior to this?" (45). Up to this point, she still has a lot of sensibility, but not yet unhealthy; she simply feels very deeply. Austen would most likely have used this to show a very visual picture of what sensibility looks like while it is still in a healthy, yet slightly over emphasized, stage.

After her first love, Willoughby, leaves her, Marianne begins to digress from a balanced to a progressively unbalanced state. She starts moping and does not communicate to Elinor as usual. The emotions she feels begin to take over her thoughts and she takes a sort of distorted pleasure in her sorry state: "Marianne would have thought herself very inexcusable had she been able to sleep at all the first night after parting from Willoughby" (Brodey 1999). Such a gesture signals the stage of insensibility coming on. In not wishing to sleep, Marianne consciously begins to allow her rapidly growing emotions to overtake what reason she had previously been exercising. Reason would have dictated the need for sleep for one grieving, but Marianne would have it this was a sort of rite to forget him properly. The more she thinks about the recent events and what she feels, the more sorry she feels for herself and she strains her body with the strain of her emotional turmoil. In London, as her withdrawal from Willoughby evolves, the climax of the emotionally filled life she has been living collapses. "Marianne had now been brought by degrees so much into the habit of going out every day, that it had become a matter of indifference to her whether she went or not...she prepared quietly and mechanically...and often not

knowing till the last moment where it was to take her” (225). By now, Marianne’s sensibility has turned to insensibility and she is emotionally broken. She had grown so accustomed to thinking and feeling about Willoughby that when the source of affection was extracted, she began recycling her empty, grief-filled emotions, thus affecting her physical and mental well being. Once she no longer has control of her perspective of the rational, she becomes violently ill. It takes this physical sickness for her to realize the depth of her insensibility and the damage it has done to herself physically and emotionally. As she regains her ability to live in the reality of her now single life, she understands how her insensibility shook her.

Elinor, in contrast, is the epitome of discretion and sense. From the very beginning of the novel, Elinor illustrates a clear sense of reality in her helping the family cope with change. Elinor practices sensibility as she is familiar with nature through the tenderness of her personality and especially her growing attachment to Edward Ferrars. However, she continues to remain in control of her emotional state. She is quite similar to Colonel Brandon as they are both observant, thoughtful people, who grow in tender affection for others: Elinor for Edward, and the Colonel for Marianne. But the difference between Elinor and Brandon is that Elinor speaks of her emotions to a degree: “‘I do not attempt to deny’ said she, ‘that I think very highly of him-that I greatly esteem him, that I like him’” (27). In this way, she shows more sensibility than Brandon in verbally expressing her emotions and not using sense to hide them. She sees emotion as helpful, and even better to express, but carefully. This skill of carefully watching the emotions and not often making them known is what sets her apart from Marianne, who expresses her emotions frequently and has no shame in letting the present company know them. Most of the time, Elinor keeps her perspective in reality, as painful as it is at times, creating a sharp contrast between the sisters. When the news of Edward’s engagement to Miss Steele becomes public, Elinor shows the greatest strength over her emotions when she tells Marianne of knowing the secret

and not sharing it: “By feeling I was doing my duty...I have very often wished to undeceive you and my mother’ added Elinor...‘Now I can think and speak of it with little emotion.-I would not have you suffer on my account” (236). Here, Elinor proves that she did indeed feel much affection for Edward, but knew it would hurt her family to know ‘the secret’. This illustrates her deep sensibility and her care for the feelings of others, while at the same time, she proves that she has the sense to remain silent for the comfort of those around her, if not for herself. In this way, Elinor becomes an example of a humanly perfect balance of sense and sensibility.

Through *Sense and Sensibility*, Austen gives the reader examples of rationally censored sensibility, as well as sensibility left to its own devices. In writing about the concept of sensibility, Austen seems to express to the reader that sensibility is essentially emotional and comes naturally to some. It is a characteristic that can bring those who have it closer to nature and become more sensitive to their feelings. She uses the examples of Marianne and Elinor to clarify the fruit of sensibility which is dangerous if not regulated with reason, and those of Mrs. John Dashwood and Colonel Brandon to show the need for sensibility in moderation, but not to the extent of an eradication of emotion. In the dialog and action of these characters, Austen gives the reader a better understanding of what it means to have sensibility, and how one should keep this quality in check. Within the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen seems to illustrate both the genuine quality of having sensibility in comparison to the potential evil of insensibility, as well as the possibility of not having enough or too much sense to balance them out. Through her characters, she shows that sensibility is a slippery characteristic to have and if not regulated, as exemplified by Elinor, it can lead to the loss of the self within the self. Besides being a warning of the dangers of sensibility, Austen shows sensibility is a good characteristic to have and can be used for the good of others, as long as it is tempered with reason within the boundaries of reality.

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PORTRAYAL OF RESTORATION WOMEN IN *THE*
ROVER
by Angela White

In late seventeenth-century London, Aphra Behn was the first woman to earn her living as a writer. As a playwright, she wrote plays that reflected historical and cultural aspects of the Restoration from a female perspective. In 1677, she penned one of her most notable plays, *The Rover*, or *The Banished Cavaliers*. Behn's play debuted during the height of the Restoration period, which for theater meant more female agency on the stage because women were allowed to take on female roles for the first time. Behn places the action of her play in Spanish Naples, just before Lent in the midst of carnival, which is a setting fit for emphasizing the urge to break free from societal constraints. Through the stories of Florinda, Hellena, and Angellica, Behn integrates strong elements of feminism and libertinism by focusing on issues of marriage, self-identity and representation. Each of these character types represents a different aspect of a woman's struggle to define herself during the Restoration.

Florinda's character encompasses the Restoration woman's struggle to gain agency in marriage. Before arriving at carnival, Florinda is trapped in the midst of a battle between following her own desire and the desires of her family. She wants to marry the English colonel Belville,

but must obey the patriarchal orders of her father and brother to marry who they see fit for her. In Katherine Quinsey's book *Broken Boundaries: Women & Feminism in Restoration Drama*, Peggy Thompson points out that during the time that Behn wrote, male relatives often negotiated marriage contracts for the women in their family, but did so "not to protect their wards' autonomy and property, but to enhance familial and dynastic interests" (Quinsey 73). In Florinda's case, these interests would lead her to marry a rich elderly man named Don Vinciento. In a conversation with her brother Don Pedro during the opening scene, Florinda claims that she hates Don Vinciento, despite the fact that her brother says he could provide a good life for her in his "ancient villa belonging to the family of Vincientos these five hundred years," (1.1.113-114). However, the prospect of marrying a man for property and stature is not appealing to Florinda, and she goes on to compare the tradition of arranged marriage to slavery, calling it an "ill custom" (1.1.77).

This "ill custom" was not generally espoused during the Restoration. In Susan Staves' article, "Behn, Women, and Society", she describes how prior to the challenges of the Civil Wars, the Church of England taught that children had a "religious obligation to honour and obey their parents" (13). But during the Restoration, the church clergy and "most decent people" felt that while the daughter was still obligated to listen to her parents in terms of a suitor, she should still have the ability to choose who she wanted to marry (13). This shift in perspective gave women a sense of agency in who they chose to marry, which is important to Florinda's character because it allows her to break free of her social limitations. In her conversation with Don Pedro, Florinda rejects the patriarchal order of marriage and then ventures off to carnival with her sister Hellena, defying her brother once again as he had just ordered her not to go.

With Florinda's sister Hellena, Behn exposes the struggle of self-identification, specifically in terms of faith. Hellena has been set on the path to become a nun, and as she ventures off to carnival with her sister, the masquerade is a tool for her to free herself from societal restraints and

experience real love. As noted earlier, the Church of England was very influential during the Restoration. Behn incorporated religion into *The Rover*, but she presented a critical view of church customs by portraying such strong libertine ideals from a devout character like Hellena. In the first scene Hellena tells Florinda that she would like to see her and Belvile together because she hopes he has “some mad companion or other that will spoil [her] devotion” (1.1.42-43). She is enraptured with the idea and confesses to her sister that she thinks it is “very pretty to sigh, and sing, and blush...and long to wish to see a man” (1.1.13-14). Throughout the action at carnival, Hellena is determined not to return home and become what is expected of her. This illustrates the libertinism that goes against the patriarchal order ingrained in her religious devotion.

Hellena's libertine values are very apparent when she meets Wilmore. Their courtship begins immediately and she tells him that vowing to die a maid is “foolish” (1.2.179). Wilmore and Hellena are both looking for an escape at carnival. When he arrives on shore, Wilmore tells the cavaliers that his “business ashore was only to enjoy [him]self a little this carnival” (1.2.77-78) hinting that he is looking for female companionship to occupy his time on the island. Hellena's feelings of oppression, curiosity and yearning for male companionship connect the libertine elements of these two characters together. In her article, Staves discusses how a central problem for Behn “was to work out the sharply different consequences of libertinism for women” (19). While Wilmore, the libertine man, thrives on sexual conquest and fails to yield anything constant outside of the moment, Hellena, the libertine woman, experiences her feelings as “proof that she is desirable” while also threatening her sense of identity (20). This contrast is evident in the plot since Wilmore has sexual desire for Hellena as well as the fair courtesan, Angellica Bianca.

Despite their increasing agency in choosing a marriage partner, women in the Restoration were nonetheless valued as commodities. Angellica Bianca is an example of this as her struggles stemmed from social

perspectives of value within the marketplace. The Staves article mentions that Behn was intrigued by the “value' of women in her society and experiment[ed] with dividing and isolating elements of conventional female value” (21). In her profession, Angellica usually takes on the dominant role in choosing a mate. “Nothing but gold shall charm my heart” (2.1.164), she proclaims after hearing about the cavaliers seeking to purchase her for the 1,000 crown price tag. The amount that the men are willing to pay represents her value and elevates her idea of self worth.

Angellica's role reflects a need for representation and agency for women during the Restoration. She wears no mask, unlike Florinda and Hellena when they go to carnival, and has a reputation outside of carnival based on her profession. Staves insightfully describes her character type as “Behn's version of a maximally desirable woman [who] simultaneously possesses beauty, the power to evoke desire in men, wealth, and wit” (21). Unlike Florinda and Hellena, who seek to gain independence, Angellica's conflict is between the powerlessness of love and maintaining control of a powerful commodity. In the second act, the cavaliers gaze at Angellica's picture and discuss the contracted price. Words such as “stock” (2.1.21) and “quality” (2.1.60) are used. When Wilmore meets with Angellica's woman in the second scene, he proposes that he split the cost with his friends and each would share an equal portion of her time (2.2.48-56). Though this is a blatant insult to her profession, Angellica is intrigued and implores Wilmore to continue his pursuit. She claims that she has never been in love before (2.2.123) but she falls for Wilmore, who argues that placing a price on sexual pleasure is a “sin” (2.2.15). With the argument of conventional morality on her mind, she in turn gives him her power by breaking the rules of her profession, allowing him to be with her at the cost of his love alone (2.2.155-65). Like Florinda and Hellena, Angellica broke the rules of her society for love, but the end result did not help her position in the marketplace.

Though each of these women was a valuable social commodity in their respective situations, Florinda began with no sense of agency, and the power shift in her

patriarchal environment gave her more agency to choose who she would marry. Hellena began with the same level of agency as her sister, being forced into a life as a nun, but the shift in power allowed her to take on a new identity with a man which in turn gave her more agency in her devotion. Angellica, on the other hand lost power by falling in love. It left her vulnerable and decreased her level of agency which lowered her social value and self-worth.

Through Florinda, Hellena, and Angellica, Behn was able to bring to life some of the ideals of the Restoration while also critiquing popular movements within the era. Each of these characters endures a social struggle that fits into a bigger picture for the time. Marriage, self-identity and social representation are all topics that women of the Restoration were faced with and characterized what it meant to be a woman during that time. Behn's execution of these elements makes *The Rover* a critical part of the history of Restoration Theater.

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DECEITFUL FOILS: THE USE OF LITERARY FOILS TO
SATIRIZE DECEIT IN *THE COUNTRY WIFE*

by Anne Tulloch

The Country Wife opens with the main character Horner preoccupied with the task of having the falsehood of his sexual state widely broadcast. Under this deceitful guise, Horner is then able to gratify his own sexual desires without suspicion. Similarly, Horner's friend, Harcourt, is wooing another man's fiancée and uses the cover of wit to do so. In addition to their common use of deceit, both men employ theatrical personalities to confuse those around them. In this way, Harcourt and Horner set themselves up as literary foils of each other. By setting up a theatrical foil, *The Country Wife* points out the absurdity of over-theatricality in order to cover a personal scheme.

To first address Horner and Harcourt as foils: One must look specifically at how these men create and maintain the personas that set them up as foils. Horner's first appears conversing with the Quack (1.1). Horner plans for the town to think him a eunuch. The point of this is to make the women believe he is safe to be with and to assure their husbands that he is not capable of making them cuckolds. He tells the Quack: "...now, I/ can be sure, she that shows an aversion to me loves/ that sport..." (1.1.177-179). Horner believes that the women who wish to be sexually active will be horrified at the sight of a eunuch, who is of no use to them. While carrying out his plan, Horner begins

to create a persona of lies and deceit in order to find women to gratify his sexual urge.

In the case of Horner's friend, Harcourt, his false persona is created by acting as only an admirer of his friend Sparkish's fiancée, Alitheia, when in reality, he is wooing her. In answering Sparkish's question concerning Alitheia's beauty, Harcourt says, "I could gaze upon her till I became as blind as you are" (2.1.211-212). By this comment, Harcourt is not only saying how brilliantly beautiful he thinks Alitheia is, but also calls Sparkish "blind". This blindness refers to Sparkish's being unable to see Harcourt's aims to woo his fiancé. In this way, Harcourt imitates Horner in creating a deceitful façade as the means to his end of marrying Alitheia.

Horner and Harcourt both become very playful in their plans to fool the other characters. In some ways, they begin to stage their own plays within *The Country Wife*. In Harcourt's case, his wooing is double-edged. It would seem to the simple observer that Harcourt is simply supplying a polite answer and nothing more. But Wycherley puts an informed character into the scene (Pinchwife) to point out the two-sided nature of Harcourt's replies. Pinchwife remarks to the audience, "Insensible fop, let/ a man make love to his wife to his face" (2.1.200-201) (Candido 30). It should be made clear: Harcourt's theatrical nature does not reside in props and costuming, but in his two-edged dialogue with Sparkish and Alitheia. This extra voice of Pinchwife is a way for the play of *The Country Wife* to point out that Harcourt is making fun of Sparkish as if it were a small play. This also shows how ridiculous Harcourt's theatrics are. In an article on the dysfunctional nature of social structure within the play, entitled "Horner and His 'Women of Honour': The Dinner Party in *The Country Wife*", Harold Weber mentions this scene and its two-sided nature. Weber writes, "We discover such conversation[s] everywhere, particularly when Harcourt makes love to Alitheia in Sparkish's presence... Such scenes [show] significant emphasis on the disjunction between appearance and reality..." (115). By using the word "appearance",

Weber points out Harcourt's seemingly pretty compliments, as opposed to the "reality" of his love-making.

Horner's use of theatricality to cover his tracks is even greater than Harcourt's. The greatest volume of theatrics from Horner is displayed in the presence of Lord and Lady Fidget. With them, Horner's theatrics rely even more heavily on the double entendre of his words. Such an example is during Act Four, when Horner essentially tells Sir Jaspar that he will become a cuckold, "...if ever you suffer your wife to trouble me/ again here, she shall carry you home a pair of/ horns,...though I can not furnish you myself, you are sure yet I'll find/ a way" (4.3.126-130). He also says he could not make Jaspar a cuckold himself, thus referring to his appearance as a eunuch, but at the same time, he says that he could find a way if he tried, and so refers to his healthy state. Horner's language recalls Weber's commentary on Harcourt's wooing, when Weber mentions the difference of "appearance" and "reality"(15). This scene is practically identical with Harcourt's wooing of Alithea, but they are slightly different because Horner is telling the man to his face what he is doing, whereas Harcourt is only communicating his wishes to Alithea, who understands.

Once it is understood that Horner and Harcourt are foils in using theatricality to cover their deceit of others, it is possible to see how the play calls the audience to understand that this idea of a theatrical cover-up is ridiculous. Characters from *The Country Wife* point this out themselves: Alithea tells Harcourt, "Sir, Master Sparkish has often told me that his/ acquaintance were all wits and railleurs, and now/ I find it" (2.1.163-165), and Dorilant calls Horner's acting, "theatrical impudence" (1.1.199).

The Country Wife means to expose the theatrics of the characters. Its purpose is for the audience to understand how silly and ridiculous it is to conceal a plan by over-acting. In his article, "Theatricality and Satire in *The Country Wife*", Joseph Candido comments on this playing within the play:

"We are invited to see the focal character not as a mimetic representation of our

own humanity, but as a comic, sometimes grotesque embodiment of a particular eccentricity which the dramatist chooses to expose" (29).

The audience should be able to laugh at the stupidity of Sparkish and Lord Jaspar for not seeing how they are being taken advantage of. Horner and Harcourt's behavior can also be taken in a humorous light. In this way, it is possible to see *The Country Wife* as an exploitation of the absurdness of using theatrics to cover up a deceitful plot.

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“The outrageous principles our society has placed around proper characteristics of males are not a constructive way for anyone, males or females, to function in a healthy society.”

—Courtney Dorsey, from “Inner Power Inner Peace”

TRADITIONS



“The routine of spending time in this building while flipping and searching has been done dozens, if not hundreds, of times before, since I was younger. The library has always been a place of refuge and collection for me.”

—Stephanie Barros, *from* “My Thousand Lives”



THE HOME GAME

by Basil Al-Qaneh

As the sun kissed my forehead, my heart raced in excitement at the sight of the giant fluorescent orange and green letters that spelled “FedEx Field” at the top of the football stadium. From the mere sight of the sign, I already feel sucked into the electrified atmosphere, which has captured every Redskins fan in the stadium area. After a long and arduous car ride, the mere sight of the enormous sea of burgundy and gold jerseys herding into the stadium to watch their favorite team play is as refreshing as returning home after a long journey.

With the inside of my jersey feeling like a sauna in the eighty plus degree heat, I feel agitation with euphoria until I am temporarily relieved by the shady oak and pine trees that accompany me on my way through the parking lot. The whole crowd marches together as one, carrying this infectious positive energy into the stadium. Everyone feels the same, no matter what race, gender, or sexual orientation; today we are all Redskins fans.

The dark pavement is glistening from the previous night’s rain as it absorbs the heat and welcomes tailgaters from all over Virginia. The charcoal and gas powered grills fill the air with the aroma of barbequed chicken, sausage, and burgers. The sight of my fellow Redskins fan’s tailgate makes my mouth water while my stomach reminds me that

it has had enough food for the time being. Viewing these total strangers having fun and sharing food, alcohol, and music together gives me a kick of adrenaline that feeds directly into my subconscious as an amazing feeling of camaraderie. This only accelerates the electricity, feelings of pride, and unity of the stadium. The giant lampposts are both impressive and intimidating with their height and mass, while the thought of “what if this falls over and hits something?” begins to creep into my head.

The zigzag pattern of our walk to the stadium is both tedious and exciting as my brother and I begin to see more clearly exterior workings of the stadium. We leave behind the sight of the tailgate and our fellow fans, the smell of grill smoke, gasoline, and barbeque, the sound of “Go Redskins! Woo!” in the background as we feel a touch of sweat running down our foreheads in the summer heat. However, when the sound of “Skins suck! Go Bills!” comes from one feisty fan, there is a simultaneous glare from every Redskin fan in the vicinity that lasts a good 5 seconds until we all yell “Boo!” in a semi playful manner. We welcome in the sight of the beige stairs as well as the un-pleasantries of a long line through security. My brother and I stand in the line as the tall and decorated columns that hold up the coliseum known as FedEx Field fascinate us.

The musty atmosphere in the interior of the stadium has an almost construction site like feel to it that is comparable to the inside of Home Depot. This was complemented by a flurry of concession stands that spanned the whole circumference of the stadium. The shiny taps at all the stadium bars catch my eye as my nose is ambushed by the delicious smell of burgers in French fries. As we struggle to weave in and out of the condensed crowd, I cannot help but notice the stream of televisions attached to the ceiling that broadcast the game. The banners of ESPN and NFL network attract my attention for moments at a time. As I walk by the Redskins store I am blown away by the sheer amount of merchandise it contains. The products range from bobble heads, jerseys, hats, sweaters, scarves, and sunglasses that all have the unifying colors of burgundy and gold. The sight of these

props only amplifies the feelings of Redskins pride and camaraderie I have building up in my subconscious.

As we finish buying our delicious Johnny Rockets burgers, I am hit by another enormous wave of anxiousness and euphoria when we begin to make our way to our seats. With each step that I take towards the seating area exit, I feel like a man who rushes to the first sight of light after being trapped underground for a very long time. When my brother and I finally capture the field with our own two eyes, we are hit with the sight of a long lush green football field with the Redskins logo in the center. As we make our way down to our fluorescent orange seats, we are ambushed by the sight of the flag twirlers and cheerleaders performing on the field with high enthusiasm.

The ten-minute countdown until the start of the game feels like an eternity as the excitement continues to build up in the hearts and minds of every Redskins fan in the stadium. As I wait for the countdown to be over I begin to think to myself “What if I ever became a professional athlete?” However, soon after I tell myself “I wouldn’t be able to come to a game like this!” This thought sends a contagious wave of joy of excitement to my subconscious that feeds into the already volcanic energy of the stadium. As the countdown reaches less than 5 minutes, my brother, and I decide to go back inside and buy another batch of golden delicious French fries that would taste as if they had been sent down by the fast food gods.

Making our way back to our seating area, we turn to sidelines and see the Redskins players dressed in their burgundy jerseys and gold pants forming a circle around a single player in the center speaking to the team. As the players move closer and closer to the center player and begin to chant, I feel a rush of adrenaline shoot up my spine as their intensity and focus echoes to my own body. As the team’s fight song blasts through the speakers at the stadium, I take my seat, feast down on the crunchy golden French fries, and watch the home team’s place kicker put the ball on the tee. At this moment, the electric atmosphere that has been steadily climbing since the tailgate at the parking lot erupts. With a thrust of the kicker’s foot, the ball is

launched off, and rocketing through the sky, it signals that the game has finally begun.



DEMONS AND NORWEGIAN COD ON EASTER DAY

by Perla González-Chavira

Traditions in my family were rooted in what my mother would do for a holiday, be it Christmas, Independence Day or Easter. Easter, in particular, was a very interesting holiday, because my mother was a descendant of Sephardic Jews, and she herself knew little about her roots. My father was agnostic and I was born in Mexico, a predominantly Catholic country, where celebrating Easter was a massive undertaking. I remember Easter more vividly than any other celebration, because it was then that I found myself growing closer to my mother, especially when she was preparing our home and meals for this holiday.

Easter was a time for cleaning our house from top to bottom. This deep house cleaning occurred only once a year, and the work and effort that it took was exhausting. Rooms were cleaned according to a system that Mamá Flavia, my grandmother, had taught my mother when she was a child. The bedrooms were cleaned first, storage areas and living rooms were next and finally the kitchen, which required the most detailed and grueling work. I must admit that I was never so keen on cleaning my own room, however, for I feared that by moving furniture I would surely disturb any creepy crawlies of any size and any shape imaginable. But I always found so much comfort and

delight when I unearthed toys and notebooks that had been lost for ages, from under the bed, that even a grumpy dusted spider could not lessen my joy. My mother would often remind us what Mamá Flavia told her; those evil creatures dwelled under filth, and that a house must first be cleaned before the cooking could begin.

So, once again it was that time when my mother would hand me five pesos and tell me to get a little bottle of olive oil and a jar of Spanish green olives. And she would remind me to get them from the old man's shop, which stood next to the florist's stand. I really liked shopping at this store because this old man's kind face and sweet smile reminded me so much my grandfather, only he had blue eyes. And he will always give me a paper cone filled with animal crackers that tasted so good on the way home. It was only once a year that my mother bought olive oil and Spanish green olives to make Mamá Flavia's Norwegian dried cod for Easter. My mother would desalt the cod several days in advance in a pan filled with water. She would also place an inverted heavy dish onto the fish to hold it down in place.

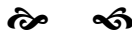
I remember returning home to find the chopped onions and the piles of red plum tomatoes running with fresh juices on the cutting board, and the aroma of Easter wafting through the entire house. I remember dragging a chair to where my mother was preparing the fish, and I would stand on the chair next to her and marvel at her hands dripping with tomato juice. Her swaying body would move rhythmically with every stroke of the knife. The smell of fried onions and garlic infused the entire house as I proudly stirred the frying pan. But what I loved most was listening to my mother speak quiet words that I could not understand. When I asked what they meant, she would only smile, and she would hold my face in her hands and kiss my forehead, urging me to continue stirring the pan. My mother will softly say that during this time, we should reflect on Jesus' Crucifixion and not to be angry or mean with our siblings.

The buzzing of the prominent Catholic town where I lived made Easter more interesting with its fairs

and vendors of candies and fruits. The constant movement of the crowds hurrying to mass at the sound of the tolling bells made Easter full of excitement and fun. However, my mother strongly opposed the church's depiction of Jesus' Crucifixion, which the faithful took part in every year.

My mother could not understand why it was necessary to relive a sad moment every Easter. My mother believed that once the body dies, the body must be buried and remembered in your mind and prayers only. And she would not allow my siblings or me to go see the rendition of the Crucifixion or even hear about it from other people. My mother's resolve became even stronger, when unbeknownst to her, my older brother sneaked out the house and went to the church to see it. When he came home he could not stop talking about what he had seen. And it made my younger siblings so upset that they were constantly tearful and terrified of the man "crucified" on the cross.

Of all the holidays that my mother ever celebrated, Easter was the most meaningful to me. I loved the anticipation of the holiday, the cleaning and the constant cooking and the quiet soft singing by my mother. These events reinforced my love for her and fortuitously taught me about her heritage. My mother unconsciously kept her ancestral tradition in new nontraditional ways that had slowly morphed to accommodate her life, a life that was neither Sephardic nor Catholic. This allowed me to connect with a history and culture that we both longed to know, by preparing our house, with the aromas that only her Easter traditions could bring.



MY THOUSAND LIVES

by Stephanie Barros

A medium sized brick building sits gracefully at the edge of a field of fresh green grass. There is a long walkway that leads to the front doors, bike racks stand nearby with bikes locked and lined askew. It isn't grand or awe inspiring until my hands push open the doors and I step inside. I am instantly surrounded by one of the largest comforts I have ever known: books.

The fresh air outside has vanished and been replaced by a unique, heart-warming scent. The one of old, tattered, worn down books impossible to duplicate and capture inside a bottle of air freshener. As I stroll through the aisles, my eyes dart through the novels that linger upon endless shelves, hoping to be picked by eager hands. Lined up against the shelves are thick spines for the daring and patient, and thin spines for those hoping to finish before their third cup of tea. As I pass by the fiction novels organized under authors whose last names begin with 'B,' I can't help but notice where a book of mine would be placed if given the lucky opportunity.

I hear the rusty wheels of a cart full of stories being pushed by a helpful librarian. It is making its way around the different divisions through the otherwise silent air as I stand alone in the middle of an aisle. I take hold of the first book whose spine catches my eye, the text printed

along the edge bold and seeking my attention. I tug the book off the shelf and balance the glossy, smooth cover on my left hand. My free hand flips through the worn and thin pages, ones that have obviously been enjoyed dozens of times before me. Each turning page brings new words to my view. I search for anything that intrigues me – a word, a phrase, or maybe a snippet of sharp dialogue. I rummage its contents looking for anything to raise my confidence that taking this particular novel home with me is the proper path to go. I'll be spending time with it, typically long evenings that drag into the night, the record player spinning its vinyl effortlessly and a candle burning nearby. It will absorb my time and my mind as I give it a decent chance. The least it can do is be a good date.

The routine of spending time in this building while flipping and searching has been done dozens, if not hundreds, of times before, since I was younger. The library has always been a place of refuge and collection for me. It is a place I am most at ease. The very moment I step inside, the creativity and hard work of hundreds of people spills around me entirely. I picture the stressful moments that go into writing each of these novels. Those moments where the ideas seem to come crumbling down, no words seem to form properly on paper, and a small voice in the writer's head echoes, telling them it isn't worth it, to just give up and walk away. But most of all, I picture the moments of brilliance behind the minds of those who kept on writing. Those moments where their fingers couldn't possibly glide across the keys quick enough, where ideas burst into their mind at the most ridiculous of times and they were forced to scribble them down on a scrap piece of paper crumpled in their pocket. Even more, those moments where everything finally came together in the way they dreamed it would. And the triumphs they experienced when they truly begin to see the story they envisioned in its final stages of completion. This new story is finished, printed, and set on a shelf for people like myself to enjoy whenever I please. Books are there on rainy days, on sunny days, when I need something to ease my mind, when I need something to get me thinking, when everything seems to be going wrong and

when everything seems to be going right - always. They have always been the ultimate friends, always there.

The hundreds of books around me are filled with characters that I may never grow to know and that may never be real to me. There is not enough time in my life, no matter how many years are given to me, to read the words printed on every one of those pages and get to know the fictional characters that live within them. Nevertheless, they are real to their creators, to the writers who made them come alive. I have felt genuine care and empathy for my fictional companions. I have felt what it is like to become fully absorbed by a character's experiences, so much so that it becomes physically upsetting to witness them encounter any more terrible events. I have also experienced the adventure it is to get there.

I have witnessed what it means to start with a simple idea and allow it to flourish, allow the characters around the idea to develop. After hours upon hours of pulling a life together from thin air, if the writer doesn't care, why should the reader? Every new book I pick up I learn something new as a writer. I learn what I like to hear in dialogue, what kind of details stick out to me, what is unnecessary to mention but may be difficult to resist mentioning. But, most of all, I discover what I like to read and what I do not like to read. Whether a book is my vision of good or bad, it teaches me what I would love to both see and avoid in my own writing. Through all of these lessons, perhaps, one day, my name just may fall into those alphabetically organized shelves.

I shut the book in my hands as a satisfied smile tugs at the corners of my lips. I have finally decided on the story that will become my ultimate companion for the next four weeks. I can already taste the warm, sweet, Yorkshire Gold tea I'll enjoy as I balance the book on my lap this evening. The warm steam will hit my face as I bring my mug close to take a delightful sip, while I prepare to absorb the inspired words that have been thought out and contemplated before being etched onto those pages. The very idea of it makes me want to rush home instantly. It won't be long before I'm diving into another life so

different from my own, eavesdropping on conversations,
and going on adventures I would otherwise have found
inconceivable.



THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO IN STONE: A TRAVEL
NARRATIVE
by Amanda Bourne

The Camino de Santiago was an intentional journey of self-discovery reflected in the stones across Spain. Although an ancient medieval pilgrimage route, “the Way” proved to be far more than just a walking experience. Some parts of the Camino were little more than well-worn hiking paths, while others were paved in flagstones. To children, the Way would be a secret trail, and the only people they would meet would be kids who knew the secret too. Deer trails would transform into paths that led to a magical destination, and they would imagine that destination with wonder. For me, however, my imagination lay in the past as I pondered who had also traveled the Camino. It has been said that Saint Francis himself made the pilgrimage - the thought of his feet having touched the ground I walked upon was magical in itself. The greeting that travelers exchanged on the trail was “*buen Camino!*”, like a secret password. Those who said it had found the Way too, and we all were somehow journeying to the same place: Santiago. Those who traveled, past, present, and future, all knew the lure of the Camino.

Our group was made up of twenty-four students and faculty members, spread across a wide variety of majors, brought together by a creative literary non-fiction

class that advertised a Spring Break trip to Spain. Now that we were on the Camino, this trip had become a reality. We started our first day by walking seventeen kilometers through the countryside between Burgos and Leon. The sun shone brightly, but stretches of nothing but mud told of recent rains. Piles of stone lined the Camino path alongside the fields they had been pulled from. Stone proved to be an integral part of our experience along the Camino. Pilgrims create small stone cairns (*milladoiros*) along the Camino. Traditionally, they are used to mark the path for others following, but also act as symbols of being present in a place that has been sacred for thousands of years (Nilsen). These cairns state *'I was here. I somehow, in some way, made my history intertwine with the Camino's. I will in some way live on even when I am gone because of these stones.'* We saw many of these *milladoiros* stacked alongside the path and on top of stone piles. On those long stretches of the Way that were void of civilization, these small piles of rock motivated us to keep walking towards Leon.

Our second day of walking started on the top of a mountain. The town of Foncebadón sits on the highest part of the Camino. Just a few kilometers from the Iron Cross, this village has its roots in the Roman road over the mountain pass. Our brief visit there resembled Gitlitz and Davidson's description in *The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago*.

When we first visited Foncebadón in 1974, the 2,000-year-old village was in its death throes. Only 4 human inhabitants remained to tend a couple of cows and a handful of sheep... On our last visit, in 1996, a handful of former inhabitants had reconditioned some of the ruins as summer homes, but anyone wishing to spend the night needed a tent...(282)

The thick fog on the mountaintop limited visibility, and I couldn't see the church bell tower referenced in another part of Gitlitz and Davidson's description. The two small restaurants were closed because of the season and the rest

of the buildings were slowly crumbling into ruin. I walked a little further to see the many buildings half-covered in snow - some partially standing - the remainder of their walls dissolved into piles of slate. At one time in history, this place had grown prosperous from the Roman road. It thrived on trade, and people once lived here. Now that road had been replaced by a highway that completely bypassed the ruins of Foncebadón.

After Foncebadón, we climbed the two kilometers to the *Cruz de Fierro* - the Iron Cross. The Way's tradition of leaving stone cairns seemed to cumulate in this monument. The modern pile of stones topped by a pole originated in the Celt tradition of "marking their high mountain passes with piles of rock" (Gitlitz 284). A cross was probably added in the 12th century by the hermit Gaucelmo. It is a pilgrimage tradition to bring a stone from home or elsewhere to the foot of this cross. Whether the stone is thrown over the shoulder, or left as a symbol of the pain or sin that the pilgrim would like to leave behind, this practice has accumulated a small mountain's worth of stone atop one of the highest points on the Camino (Connolly, Gitlitz 283, Nilsen).

The actual *Cruz de Fierro* structure was a tall wooden pole topped with an iron cross. The base of the splintering wood was wrapped with hundreds of prayer ties in all colors. Photographs of children and loved ones were tucked in these strips, each a supplication or memory that lingered long after the departure of each pilgrim. The Camino was lined with objects such as these. As we walked through the pine-filled forests descending from O Cebreiro, a Buddhist prayer flag waved in the breeze; worn threads in once-bright colors that had seen many days of sun and rain.

The third day of our Camino started when we met with the other half of the group. We headed out on the Camino while exchanging questions and stories from the night before, when we were split into two places of lodging. *Was your casa rural warm? What did you have for breakfast?*

The terrain was different from what we had experienced the past two days. If trekking to the Iron Cross in early March was like climbing Mount Everest, then

walking through the Lugo province was like frolicking through the hills of Ireland. The countryside was divided into small pastures by stone walls, creating a patchwork of green that covered the many hillsides. Cattle, sheep and goats grazed on the new greenery. Other walled areas were tilled; umber soil exposed to the sun's rays. The path itself was an adventure, since the recent rains had created sections in the Camino that were entirely made of mud. A farmer clad in knee-high rubber boots walked along the Camino - I have worn similar while herding cattle - and the hoe and rake over his shoulder showed that he was going to work the wet earth. I had a sudden urge to join him. The beautiful Spanish countryside reminded me of my childhood home on a farm, and I suddenly became more homesick than I had ever been at college.

As the day wore on, the stones and muddy paths turned to highways and steep hills. We turned a corner and suddenly, across a broad expanse of water, Portomarin rose up in the distance. The Camino took us across a large bridge where trucks roared by - Saint Francis would not have traveled this way - and we ascended the stairs that led into the city.

After our countryside walk and a bus ride, the only thing that stood between us and Santiago was the four kilometer walk into the city. The sun that had been shining all day disappeared behind the clouds. As we started on the walk, I felt a few drops of rain. *The rain in Spain falls mainly in the plain* and especially in Santiago, as we soon discovered. Walking into the Santiago was symbolic in many ways. We did not wash in the river before entering the city (a traditional rite of purification), so the heavens opened up and poured rain upon us. I walked without a jacket, finally knowing the physical meaning of being drenched in the Holy Spirit. As we walked into the cathedral square, the rain was joined by a sudden golden light from the sun's rays beaming over the Compostela.

During our full day in Santiago, the rain barely stopped. We stood under the arches of the city hall, staring at the cathedral that loomed across the square - a huge mass of stone against the grey sky. However, weather in Santiago,

as proved by our entrance into the city, is unpredictable. The rain stopped just in time for our tour of the cathedral rooftop, which although damp, proved to be one of the most memorable experiences of the trip.

Standing on the roof of the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela brought to mind a photograph like one might see printed in *National Geographic*. The city spread out in front of me like a miniature village, red roofs against a blue-grey sky. I'd grown up with those types of photographs, but to see the view with my own eyes was ethereal. Ethereal. That one word seemed to encompass the state of my soul while atop the cathedral roof. The heavens, covered with clouds, felt closer than ever and, for an instant, I understood what the builders of Babel sought.

The rest of the day in Santiago was free, and after the tour, everyone scattered to explore different parts of the city. Dr. Carney, Dr. Peebles, and I stopped in a small two-story restaurant where hazy light drifted in from a large window. I brushed my hand against the wall and felt the cold, rough stone. It was filled with small crevices that created a porous texture. Within these crevices, guests had tucked small coins; others were balanced precariously on slightly jutting ledges in the stone. Meanwhile outside, rain that was only a light mist before started to pour down upon the large camellia below the window. These trees were all over Santiago, seeming to prophesy the return of spring with their bright pink and white blooms. We fell upon *caldo gallego* and *croquettes* and basked in the promise of spring from the dry indoors.

Later that evening, Dr. Peebles and I headed out into the rain to seek *churros y chocolate*. We found shelter from the weather in Café Botafumeiro, which was a few streets away from the Santiago Cathedral. Tucked into a side street with a chalkboard sign advertising 10€ meal specials, the cozy cafe was paneled in chocolate wood and the same textured stone that we found all over Santiago. Behind the counter, bottles of wine were displayed on shelves above a glass case holding breads and sweets. We waited for tea and churros under golden lamplight, surrounded by coin-filled walls. By asking the barista, we

discovered that the tradition of leaving a coin in the wall is considered good luck, similar to throwing a coin in a wishing well or fountain.

While we enjoyed our *churros y chocolate*, the television overhead blared a trivia show... in Spanish. I knew before leaving the States that traveling to a country where I didn't speak the language would be difficult, but the experience of traveling there made me *want* to speak Spanish. There was something magical about the ability to have a conversation with someone in their native language that called out to me and drew me in. Alas, we were only there for a week. There was not enough time to spend at any one place, let alone learn to speak adequate Spanish. I asked Dr. Peebles what they were talking about on the trivia show. Richard the Lionheart. My knowledge of history was a bit shabby, and the ensuing conversation provided many opportunities to laugh at it. (Apparently Richard the Lionheart *did* live in the Medieval time period.)

The light faded as we traipsed back to the hotel. Streetlights threw yellow casts on ancient flagstones, and the streets shimmered as small pools of water reflected the lamplight. The streets of Santiago shone, and as I walked, I could hear the feet of the thousands of pilgrims that had tread those stones before me.

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*“and as I walked, I could hear the feet of the thousands of pilgrims
that had tread those stones before me.”*

—Amanda Bourne, *from* “The Camino de Santiago
in Stone: A Travel Narrative”

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS



Basil Al-Qaneh is a Communications major who anticipates graduating in May of 2016.

Sam Aydlette is an Information Technology major with a focus on networking and cyber security, and a minor in Economics. His current areas of interest include critical theory, cybernetics, feminism, the human narrative, and figuring out how to survive within the postmodern condition.

Stephanie Barros is a third year English major with a focus on writing, and a minor in Criminal Justice. She aspires to one day become a young adult and contemporary fiction novelist. Her foremost areas of interest include writing, reading, music, and animals.

Courtney Dorsey is an English major with a concentration in writing. She practices mindfulness and believes exercising compassion has the capability to transform lives. Courtney has become increasingly interested in feminist theory and hopes to eventually be half as cool as bell hooks.

Perla Gonzalez-Chavira is a Biology major. Her area of interest is in research, and she is looking forward to start working in a clinical research lab after graduation in 2014.

Even though the natural sciences are her first love, she admits to have a very soft spot for writing. Currently she volunteers at the Genome Zone in the Natural History Museum and loves spending time with her three young boys and husband. And she cherishes every free minute she gets for reading and writing.

Cayla Lang is a Math Education major, CTL tutor, and DISCOVER peer mentor.

Michael Petrovich is a husband, father, and veteran of the U.S. Army. He is currently studying psychology at Marymount with intent to graduate this spring. After graduation Michael intends to continue on to graduate level studies. His eventual goals include assisting other veterans as a mental health counselor and becoming a university professor.

Rebecca Stibrik is a freshman Graphic Design major. She is very interested in photography and music and is also an avid reader. After graduation, she hopes to travel abroad and one day work in the design industry as a print designer. She currently works at the Marymount University Registrar's Office.

Anne Tulloch is a senior English Secondary Education major. Her goals after graduation are to teach British literature at the high school level and eventually receive a Masters in the same subject. Her inspiration to read, write, and teach comes from studying the Oxford Inklings authors, traveling abroad, and Eucharistic adoration.

Angela White is an English major with a focus on media and performance studies, and a minor in Communication. After graduating this year she hopes to one day become a screenwriter for the film and television industry. Her main areas of interest include music, film, cultural studies, writing and reading.

BOARD OF STUDENT EDITORS



Amanda Bourne is an English Writing major with a minor in Media and Performance Studies. Her research interests include Virginia Woolf, film and transmedia adaptations, and Sherlock Holmes. A sophomore Honors student, she has studied abroad in Spain and at Oxford University. She currently works at the Reinsch Library, and hopes to pursue a career in lifestyle journalism.

Joanna Chenaille is an Interior Design major in her freshmen year at Marymount. She would like to someday work for the Smithsonian Institution designing exhibits. She is still trying to figure out her life, but is enjoying college and the exploration college has to offer. In the meantime, Joanna enjoys smiling and making people laugh. She is interested in film, poetry, and musical theater.

Kathryn Fossaceca is a senior biology major with interests in computer science. After graduating this May, she will begin a Master's in teaching to become a secondary biology teacher in Richmond City Public Schools.

Madison Herbert is an English major who anticipates graduating in May of 2015.

Julia Lopez is a Communications major with a focus in press and journalism. She plans to attend graduate school with the intentions of working at a media organization or nonprofit in the future. She currently interns with United Way Los Angeles and hopes to continue exploring different fields of English and Communications during her time at Marymount University.

Karen Oliva is a junior majoring in politics and double minoring in economics and international studies. Upon graduation, she looks forward to starting a career abroad before pursuing graduate studies. Her main areas of interest include traveling, learning different languages, and reading current events.

A senior double-majoring in Biology and English, **Melany Su** has dissected both frogs and literature (though the latter happens much more often). When not reading in the library or monitoring turtles in Dr. Rimkus's turtle lab, she enjoys being outdoors, where she finds most of her writer's inspiration. Melany has enjoyed serving on the *Magnifical's* editorial board all four years of her college career. As she begins medical school in the fall, she hopes to continue pursuing her interest in humanistic medicine.

