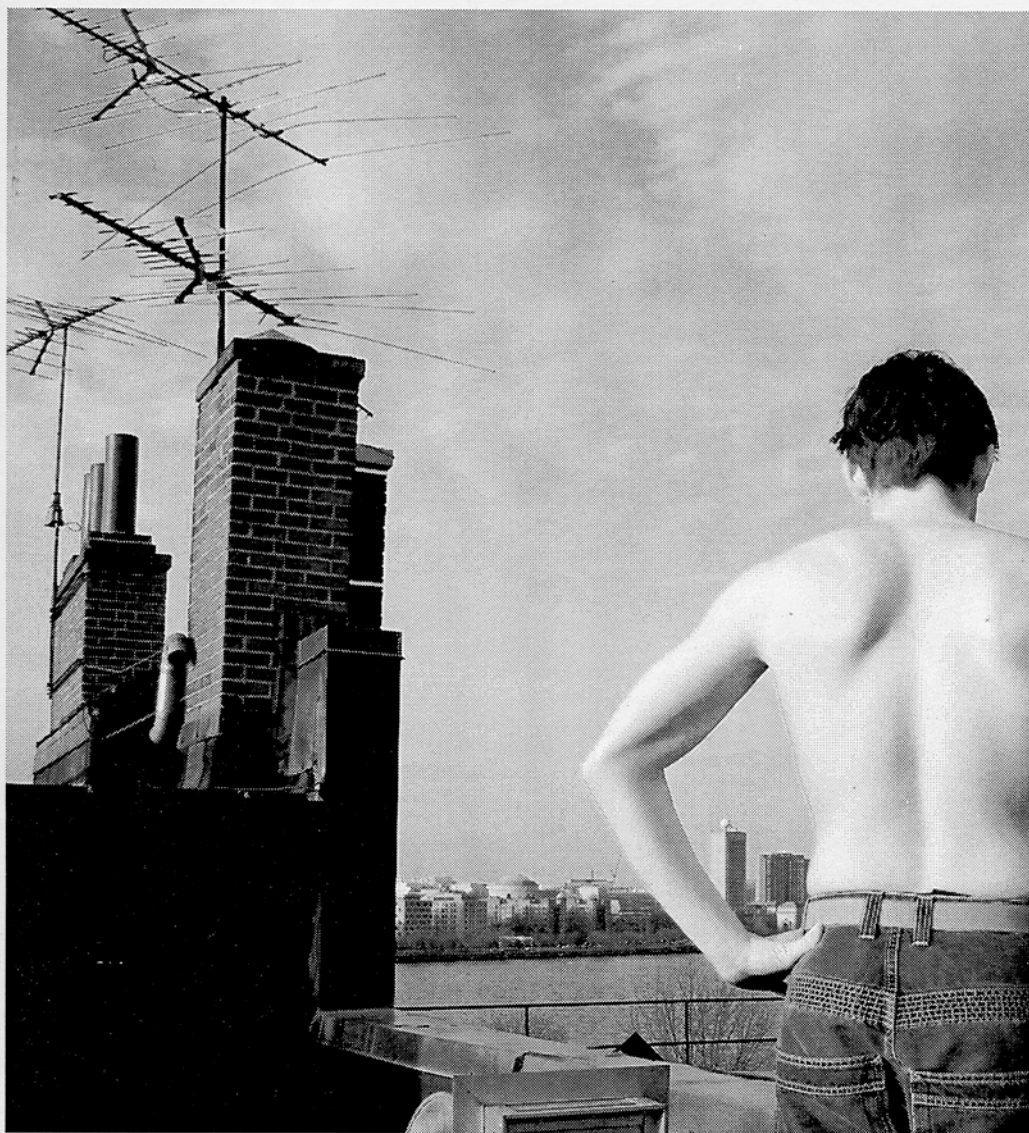


# Back Bay Review



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*Spring 2005*



# Back Bay Review

*Spring 2005*



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**P O E M S**

## Jonathan Wooding

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### Dessertif

Let's call a heart a heart.  
This dinner-date is all but done,  
the witty banter's lost and won,  
but still you do not comprehend.  
Give me your hand. See here, the lines?  
The thing's no paper valentine,  
but wet and pugilistic: bound  
veined-glorious, and always singing,  
a prophet preaching in his prison.  
His warning rings from deep within:  
"old age has only what youth's given."

Why contemplate the empty glass?  
If you've a question, ask, but just  
unmind yourself and understand:  
the laden table has turned;  
what promised now is empty,  
and desire's roots push deeper  
being only half-fulfilled.

Build a cache against the winter.  
Artless, barren days from now,  
you'll look back and say certainly  
I didn't mean that at all.  
Maybe a vision of passionate love,  
if useless to age-shaken hands,  
will do your old heart good.

## Jonathan Wooding

---

When bones lament their shoddy cell,  
I'll dwell on burning scarlet marks,  
the cost of brand-new high-heeled shoes:  
the souvenirs of a small, dark room  
our testament, the living proof.

Come close. Someday we'll both be bald,  
rough-handed, bare, and hollow-mouthed.  
It happens every day, but now  
while ears still prick at whispers  
and your waist can feel my hands,  
while our lips want things to kiss,  
let's spend our force before it's spent.

## Melissa de Jesus

---

### My Father, Nowhere Near the Charles River

Boston. The city stretching out from my folded knees  
my skin blurring in the heat, the moist sounds of my processes  
washed off by the lapping, traffic squeals, human shouts.  
I have no borders if I don't close my eyes.

My father  
pneumatically cooled in his subbasement lab  
gloved elbows deep in radiochemical, isotopes, and neuroslices  
on his stainless steel clipboard ticking off one two three  
I flick a dappled brown spider from my ankle.  
He hovers like a white bubble over the city  
where I recline in matted moss riversmell and sun

Lord, a pestiferous postmodern tongue  
Offends your ear. Yet, listen to the voice.  
Did you hear Milton? Did you not hear Joyce?  
Did you smear Adam's lips with dust or dung  
With your smooth hand that touched and made him long,  
Or did your roving tongue moisten that boy's  
And made the life you breathed in him rejoice?  
Father, don't grumble how I do you wrong.  
My mouth burns for you not the wooly lamb  
That Chaucer brought you from the Latin teat.  
If you so "hate being battered by a dead-beat,  
Horny posteriosclerotic ram,"  
Make this dry Englissh lusty, fressh and fat.  
Your tongue was living. Why should mine be dead?

## Lindsay Dolan-Templeton

---

"a night out"

quick, quicker!  
grab the ringer, give a call to  
ezra pound, tell him  
i have seen the wet, black bough--  
and i  
want to go home.

## Jon Busch

---

Defies Logic

"Radioactive isotopes are the only isotopes  
as far as I'm concerned!"  
I screamed across the back  
yard. A long, too long  
pause before  
an almost un-  
intelligible echo bounced  
from the hills and  
whimperingly failed to contradict me.

Pittsburgh

Pittsburgh, to think, there was a time when I  
Shivered beneath the cold caverns of your  
Downtown. I was too young to speak your tongues  
Of spark and steel and steam. The Liberty  
Tunnels would open as we drove to you—  
In that resuming sunlight, buildings gleamed.  
Alone, I shrunk before you, but I knew  
the dust of streets would coat my feet and I  
would find within your furnace—something—truth?  
or freedom—I was sure of nothing but  
the questions posed by your metallic voice....

Pittsburgh, I was five minutes in New York's  
Air when you curled, suffocated and small.  
Fresh from Penn Station, met with Vertigo,  
The compass needles suddenly became  
Necessity. The aching miles of 8th  
Avenue—perhaps they ended further North—  
But what was North? I wanted those sidewalks  
As sailors want for stars. New York reduced  
me and I wanted to ingest its fumes—  
to feel its firmaments for my sinews.

Pittsburgh, I never saw your mills' insides  
But coke dust coats the antique boulevard.  
The gutted mills weigh like shipwrecks along  
The river's undertow. The city spasms  
And clenches in its emphysema lung.

## Kimberly Cristensen

---

Le Rossignol ("The Nightingale")  
Paul Verlaine (1844-1896)

Comme un vol criard d'oiseaux en émoi,  
Tous mes souvenirs s'abattent sur moi,  
S'abattent parmi le feuillage jaune  
De mon cœur mirant son tronc plié d'aune  
Au tain violet de l'eau des Regrets  
Qui mélancoliquement coule auprès,  
S'abattent, et puis la rumeur mauvaise  
Qu'une brise moite en montant apaise,  
S'éteint par degrés dans l'arbre, si bien  
Qu'au bout d'un instant on n'entend plus rien,  
Plus rien que la voix célébrant l'Absente,  
Plus rien que la voix — ô si languissante ! —  
De l'oiseau que fut mon Premier Amour,  
Et qui chante encor comme au premier jour ;  
Et, dans la splendeur triste d'une lune  
Se levant blafarde et solennelle, une  
Nuit mélancolique et lourde d'été,  
Pleine de silence et d'obscurité,  
Berce sur l'azur qu'un vent doux effleure  
L'arbre qui frissonne et l'oiseau qui pleure.

(1866)



The Nightingale (“Le Rossignol”)  
*a translation*

Like a frantic flight of birds in shrill song,  
Down upon me my memories crash strong,  
Crash amidst the lofty leaves of yellow  
As my heart mirrors the folded willow  
With a tint of violet silvering  
From waters of Regret sadly flowing,  
Crash, and still the terrible rumor  
Outsoared by moist wind that calms the clamor,  
Softens while lofted in the tree, so well  
That it sounds no more and silence now swells,  
Only the voice for Love Absent remains  
Only the voice — oh such longing pains! —  
From the bird, my First Love whom I adored,  
And who now sings the first song from before;  
And, from a moon whose sad splendor expands  
Rising in pallid solemnity, an  
Unfortunate night where sad summer weighs,  
Full of silence and of formless haze,  
Enfolds in sweet wind that touches the skies  
The tree that trembles and the bird that cries.

## Christine Whitlock

---

### Granpa

Granpa doesn't eat  
sandwiches.

He eats cold cuts and cheese  
on bread; no mayo, no mustard.

Granpa doesn't eat sandwiches:  
it's a sangwich.

Granpa doesn't take  
naps.

He sits in his chair in the basement  
with the Daily News and his reading glasses.

He just rests his eyes.

Granpa doesn't say  
his o's right.

He watches basebawl,  
drinks cawffee, black.

He answers the phone, "Ye-llow."

Granpa doesn't give  
compliments.

"There's two kindsa good  
in this world—no good,  
and good fer nothin'.

Which one're you

Granpa doesn't talk  
about feelings.  
He says, "I'll see ya  
when you're better dressed,"  
not "I love you."  
Granpa can't afford it,  
and Granpa won't talk about feelings.

Granpa doesn't say  
his t's.  
He says he was raised in da Bronx,  
and "boy, that's bru'al."

## Matthew Kelsey

---

### Gardens

Gardens are kept well, maintaining posture  
so that their fruits drip with moisture  
throughout the day filled with heat.

Houses are kept well, the tables and coffee  
mugs retain personalities given to them  
by their owners, by the children of the owners.

The city holds a simple motion, like a globe  
slowly revolving, its air wrinkling wave  
after wave. The city contains culture

with its flora in the heat, surrounding  
houses filled by owners holding  
coffee mugs and children.

With the Dawn

Dressed in morning come ...  
What wild fancy haunts me this time?  
Only your five-fingered lightning:  
Falling edges.

Shadows fear your laughter.  
Throw the street roads between buildings,  
Give the heart its beat back, dance closer  
Sunlight, nearer, barefoot.

Your blush brashly swears  
You hold like the round horizon –  
Charlatan, you'd forge a nighttime  
For some starlight.

Yet my morn you come  
Tomorrow? Sweetest scoundrel hoarse with smiling  
Pilfered my sharp angles, discords  
Took my tears for dew. (The villain!)  
Next time –

Dress in evening.

## Jamie Teot

---

### Le Tombeau d'O'Hara

I can't love you  
because you come in late  
and clap in between movements,  
and because you always want  
to know how long will it be?  
and then you expect me to sleep  
with you because you came.

I heard that bugle, even though  
you say nonsense – it was wailing  
about beauty and sex, but you  
had your eyes set on  
the superhero. Sometimes  
they know the imbalance  
of things, and that is why  
you are still on the payroll.  
Well, you wondered. You are in  
Istanbul, Buenos Aires,  
Siena, and I am in this little  
piano box and Rachmaninoff comes  
to mind. Why must you insist  
that Rome doesn't have evergreens?  
Or that there is no such  
Cathedral, or that our azure  
dome will soon be smeared  
with lanolin and howling?  
The only one you ever liked was  
the Pavane, and she was covered  
in white lace and buried.

It doesn't always hurt,  
except that your steak is  
just so and you hate the painting  
in the dining room. Well,

don't worry. I'll get the wine  
anyway, and soon  
I won't have to.

Alcaics

Swelled Foot had Delphi's word: he was dangerous,  
A dark pollution, cursed from the start. He left  
To swap, or shift, his fortune; to balk  
Fate with logistics. He killed a man, claimed

A wife. He called on seers when a plague whipped Thebes;  
He held the State together, despite the curse.  
(We hear his fate approaching, close now,  
Ready to ruin his double-kin house.)

So Oedipus burst both of his eyes, ashamed  
At seeing little. Keeping his ears, in times  
To come he found the tune we dance to—  
Sound over sight over thought—a shared lay.





**LITERARY  
CRITICISM**

## Emma Hawes

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### Retelling an Old Tale: A Close Reading of Dan Joseph's "Alcaics"

First, a definition. Alcaic meter is named after the Greek poet Alkaios. His work is written in a meter that mixes long and short feet, making the reader feel as if she trips over her own tongue to say them. Because syllables in English are verbalized as stressed or unstressed, rather than long or short, attempts at any type of Greek meter often stumble. Joseph's poem takes after Auden's "In Memory of Sigmund Freud" in that the mock-Alcaic meter is detectable only to those who have been educated in Greek meter and who stop to count the syllables of each line.

The tripping cadence of Alcaic meter, to those who can hear it, puns immediately on Oedipus' name. Sounded as "Oide-pous," it means, as the poem notes, "swelled foot." Oedipus can also be sounded "Oida-pous," meaning "know-foot," but the poem chooses not to mention this, focusing on Oedipus' tragedy rather than his wisdom. "Delphi's word" reminds the reader of the seriousness of the prophecy, playing on the standard phrase "to give one's word," "to make a promise." However, the poem also mentions that Oedipus was "cursed from the start," recalling the Delphic oracle's words to Oedipus' father at the time of Oedipus' birth. Oedipus has taken after his father in his effort to "swap, or shift, his fortune." The use of the casual diction in "swap" and "shift" mocks Oedipus' futility. "Logistics" (one of the best word choices in the poem) has come to mean anything regarding the details of an operation, but it primarily refers to supply chains supporting troop movements. It implies Oedipus' attempted war against fate while retaining the mundane tone of the previous line. If we speak even of Oedipus' war-making so flatly, he must be doomed to fail.

The next few lines are patently plain, rehearsing Oedipus' tale with a narrative as boring as those found in freshman term papers. However, I would argue that this dullness is intentional. The poet knows Oedipus' story, as do his readers. Why bother dressing it up? Joseph is not out to retell Oedipus' story; Sophocles has done that well enough. What, then, is he doing? With a tale as familiar as Oedipus', it is difficult for the reader to recall the shock and horror she felt on reading or hearing it for the first time. For this reason the reader may disengage slightly from

the first half of the second stanza. However, the third line leans in. Parentheses mark it off, as if the speaker has cupped his hand around his mouth to whisper. "We hear his fate approaching, close now," he says. It sends shivers up the reader's spine, drawing her into a group, a "we" that is eavesdropping on someone else's tragedy. At the same time, the line retains the declarative plainness that marks the stanza; one almost feels that here the speaker ruins the story, telling you the end before it comes.

And, in a way, the end doesn't come. We hear of the doubly dirty "double-kin" house, but the poem does not need to spell out Oedipus' crime for the reader to understand. Oedipus' self-mutilation, usually performed offstage, is related here in more of the poem's preferred plain speech. "So Oedipus burst both of his eyes," it says. The offhand "so" leading into the sentence gives the impression that blinding is the kind of event that naturally follows from others, as if it were regular, normal. But in the context of the story, it is. The speaker has pulled back again, intoning the tale without emotion. The reader's goosebumps, which pricked up in the second stanza, have died down. We can read about a blinding blindly, unmoved.

I must admit, the second to last line and the last are a bit obscure to me. That the progression of senses, "Sound over sight," refers to Oedipus and his new way of navigating through the world. However, the reader must note the "over thought." Oedipus, for all his wisdom, was not thinking when he killed his father, nor when he blinded himself. Then again, "Sound over sight over thought" may refer to the reader. We hear and see the Oedipus story, but because it is so familiar (familial, too) we are not moved by it. Our "thoughts" bend not to the tragedy presented but to the literary tradition. The poem ends on a dirty pun, "a shared lay" being both a song and Oedipus' mother Jocasta, shared with his father. The reader who finishes the poem unmoved shares this dirtiness, this guilt, when she realizes that she was unmoved by it.

## Soren Michael Hessler

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### The Inscription: Introduction to the Theme of the Absence of God in Dante's Hell

Per me si va ne la città dolente,  
per me si va ne l'eterno dolore,  
per me si va tra la perduta gente.  
Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore;  
fecemi la divina podestate,  
la soma sapienza e 'l primero amore.  
Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create  
se non etterne, e io eterna duro.  
Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate.

*Dante Alighieri*

La Divina Commedia: *Inferno*, Canto III, lines 1-9

In Dante's *Inferno*, the inscription above the gate to Hell defines the poem's perspective on the existence of the soul in Hell, existence in the absence of God. The diction in the first nine lines of Canto III signals, through allusions to the Bible, God's absence in the infernal realm, a topic that remains a theme for the remainder of the canto.

The written inscription serves much the same purpose as a dedication plaque in a modern building or a corner stone in a building of Dante's time. It describes in brief detail the structure of which it is a part and notes what was responsible for the creation of the structure, in this case, Hell. The first three lines of the inscription quickly but exquisitely characterize Hell. Line 4 reads, *Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore* (III:4). Mark Musa translates the final three words as "my great Creator" (Musa, III:4). The noticeable absence of the name of God, *Dio* in Italian, as the builder in line 4 serves as the most striking evidence of the absence of the Almighty within the walls of Hell, pointing to Dante's desire to distance God from association with the infernal creation. The inscription's words are an obvious allusion to the almighty creator of the universe, God, but Dante purposefully does not use *Dio*; he cannot achieve his purpose of illustrating the desolation suffered in Hell caused by separation from God unless God is truly separated from Hell in all instances in the poem.

The third line of the inscription describes the gate to Hell as an entrance to the *perduta gente* (III:3). Musa translates these words as "for-

saken people.” (III:3). This is a potential reference to one of many uses of the verb “forsake” within the Bible. *Perditus*, the Latin adjective most literally related to *perduta*, in its various forms in the five Latin declensions appears in the Vulgate Bible<sup>1</sup> only eight times, but the active voice of the verb *perdere* and another word similar in meaning, *derelinquere*, appear far more frequently in the Vulgate and help to create the body of stories from which a fourteenth-century Catholic would draw conclusions about the characteristics of a “forsaken people.” The Second Book of the Chronicles 15:2b in the Latin Vulgate reads: *Dominus vobiscum quia fuistis cum eo si quaesieritis eum inuenietis si autem dereliqueritis derelinquet vos*. The King James Version, a near-literal translation of the grammatical structure of the Latin Vulgate of this same passage reads: “The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.” This passage, together with a stunning illustration of the furor of God, where *furor* means a fiery wrath, paints an outline of what a Catholic in Dante’s time might have associated with being forsaken: *et irascetur furor meus contra eum in die illo et derelinquam eum et abscondam faciem meam ab eo et erit in devorationem inuenient eum omnia mala et afflictiones ita ut dicat in illo die vere quia non est Deus mecum invenerunt me haec mala* (Vulgate, Deuteronomy 31:17). The King James Version reads: “Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they will be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?” According to the Bible, forsaken people are a group who cannot see the face of God, meaning they cannot feel his presence. This implies His absence from the people in Hell, an unfortunate condition caused only through the fault of the sinners as being forsaken by God or lost to Him is the direct result of turning away from the ways of the Lord. With that understanding, the *giustizia* (III:4), “justice” (Musa, III:4), of Hell may be explained. Moreover the verse from Deuteronomy suggests that

## Soren Michael Hessler

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the “eternal grief” (Musa, III:2) or “eternal pain” (Robert Pinsky, III:2) of Hell can only be experienced in the absence of God, and it alludes to specific sufferings visited upon the members of certain circles of Hell. The Gospel of John states, in the words of Christ, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (14:16). In the presence of an immortal Comforter, the Holy Spirit, a part of the triune God, it would be impossible to experience either eternal pain or eternal grief. Because of this, the second line of Canto II also suggests an absence of God in Hell.

The directive on the final line of the inscription, *Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate* (III:9), puts aside any doubt about the absence of God in Hell. *Speranza* is derived from the Latin verb *sperare*, which is associated with *spes*, the Latin word for hope. The first occurrence of *spes* in the New Testament is in the Acts of the Apostles. Nearly every reference to hope within this book involves some juxtaposition with the resurrection of the spirit or life eternal. Acts 24:15 captures the spirit of Christian hope illustrated in Acts and throughout the entire New Testament: “And [I] have hope toward God . . . that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (KJV). When the soul crosses the threshold of bodily death, hope ceases to have meaning as it is an expectation for something better. When the “hope of eternal life” (KJV, Titus 1:2) is realized at death, the soul reaches a level of happiness which will be unvarying for the continuation of time. In Heaven, there is no hope because there is nothing better. In Hell, the only reason to “abandon every hope” (Musa, III:9) would be if there were no possibility for something greater. If it is true that “with God all things are possible” (KJV, Mark 10:27), then a warning to hope no longer would signal that nothing better was possible, in which case the inhabitants of Hell could not be with God. Furthermore, it is written that those without hope are without God: “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (KJV, Ephesians 2:12). When examining the first line of the inscription, similar in structure to the third line, a comment from the Dante scholar John Freccero may come to mind: “Knowing Dante as we do...we can be sure that the poet had his reason” (“The Firm Foot on a Journey Without a Guide.” Reprinted *Back Bay Review* 21

in: *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion*: page 36). The first line of each canto asserts information important to the understanding of the poem. Among the many purposes of the first line of Canto III is the contrast of Hell to Heaven. Hell is described as the *città dolente* in the *Inferno*, whereas Heaven is described in the Bible as the *civitatem sanctam* (Vulgate, Revelation 21:2), “holy city” (KJV, Revelation 21:2). Revelation 21:2-4 presents Heaven as a foil to the Hell which Dante portrays:

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. (KJV)

The holy city is compared to a tabernacle. In Old Testament times the Tabernacle was the sole dwelling place of God on Earth: He could be found there and nowhere else. By comparing Heaven to a tabernacle, an implication is made that the holy city is the sole dwelling place of God, in which case He could not be present in Hell. The description of God “wip[ing] away all tears . . .” suggests that in an eternal habitation associated with the Lord there would be no more pain. However, as the second line of the inscription boldly states, there is “eternal pain” (Pinsky, III:2) in Hell. Therefore, the first line of the inscription affirms the theme that existence in Hell is existence in the absence of God, while it also draws a comparison between Heaven and Hell. The theme of God’s absence in Hell is scarcely touched upon in the first two cantos, but it is hinted at in lines 71 to 73 of the second canto: “I [Beatrice] come from the place I am longing to return to; / love moved me, as it moves me now to speak. / When I return to stand before my Lord...” (Musa). These lines state clearly that Beatrice

## Soren Michael Hessler

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must return elsewhere in order to see her Lord, implying that God is not present in any way within the lower realm. Also, the noble ideal of love, which moved Beatrice, is not shared by any of the members of Hell. Love is a righteous action, as attested in Matthew 22:37-39: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (KJV). The absence of love, a form of righteousness among the inhabitants of Hell, as illustrated in the final thirty-two cantos, reinforces the theme of God's absence in Hell: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (KJV, 1 Peter 3:12). This theme, however, can only be important when the action of the poem is set in Hell or when Hell is the focus of the discussion of the characters; otherwise it is an unrelated issue. Therefore, the placement of the introduction to the theme of God's absence in Hell at the beginning of the canto where Hell is first directly addressed is appropriate.

The theme of God's absence in Hell continues to be reinforced throughout the poem and is again revisited in the last lines of the *Inferno*. The theme is most clearly represented in Canto V, where Francesca da Rimini addresses Dante: "If we could claim as friend the King of Kings, / we would beseech him that he grant you peace" (Musa, V:91-92). It is a rare occasion that one of Hell's sinners speaks of her relationship with the Almighty. But her statement emphasizes God's absence from Hell because if He were there, He would address her as "a man speaketh unto his friend" (KJV, Exodus 33:11). Finally, some closure is brought to the topic as God's presence is finally felt again by Dante as he emerges from Hell in the last lines of Canto XXXIV: "Through a round aperture I saw appear / Some of the beautiful things that Heaven bears, / Where we came forth, and once more saw the stars" (Pinsky, XXXIV:138-140). It is only in the absence of Hell that Dante may see signs of God.

### Endnotes

1. (The Latin Vulgate was the standard translation of the Bible for the Roman Catholic Church in the time of Dante and would have been the translation with which Dante was also most familiar.)



Discourse concerning the ingenious Hidalgo  
Don Quixote de la Mancha  
and his valiant biographer, in three voices.

Let us speechify:

ONE— . . . the predicament of the censor: in order to judge (most thoroughly) the appropriateness of books, he must be an expert on inappropriateness, lasciviousness, immorality, and the like. He recognizes corruptive thoughts because he has them himself. His head is swarming with vicious and innovative philosophy, brilliant denials of God, and all the smut the human mind can devise. And what stops him from becoming wildly dangerous, a threat to the regime, since within his mind converge all the ideas most harmful to the security and well-being of society? Selfishness. Yes. Avarice. He wants to hoard all the heady material of everyone else's imaginings. To wrench it from them and shut it away in his own study to stroke at night, seeking solace in his vast power over ideas. In his greed, he comes to conceive of himself as more-than-human, because he has the power to know and to judge what others should not know. He would judge himself indecent, but for the delight of reading such indecencies.

TWO—So Don Quixote's books of chivalry, those that are not condemned to flame by the priest and the barber, are not saved on account of the innocence of their content, but because they are the most delightfully scandalous to read? And the priest and the barber are eager to partake of such guilty pleasures?

ONE—I was thinking of Cervantes.

TWO—Cervantes.

ONE—He intended to illuminate the danger of reading frivolous chivalric romances, due to their corrosive effect on good serious morals. So he wrote *Don Quixote*.

TWO—Which is about as far from censorship as he could get! He discourages the general populace from the dreamy fallacies of glory and chivalric honor by sticking them all in one great book?

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I rather think that spreads them around. Perhaps you would say his poking fun at the adventures of the knights-errant shows how very foolish they are, yet Don Quixote, for all his madness, is honorable. He wants above all to revive the moral codes of the knights to set things aright in his world. This vision is glorified, not denounced.

ONE—Cervantes claims he intends to destroy the great influence of the books of chivalry, as their values are vain and fruitless and lead to idle dreamings and false hopes, excesses due to unrequited love and injured honor, and a general distaste for the plain and realistic. If this is truly his intent, he cannot suppress such ideas as a censor would as they are already widespread, practicably impossible to round up and burn, and he has no authority to do so. Instead, he apprehends all the knights and adventures and lofty values and high romance and joustings and hackings-up and great chivalry of these books and writes them all into his own. He has captured them all, placed his foot upon their necks in attitudes of conquest, and then as he is an adventurer and not a censor (therefore not quite shriveled up with illusions of mastery as an invincible prison-guard of ideas), gives them back to the world with a mischievous grin. After having tilted them all a little sideways.

TWO—The censor cannot control ideas because he tries to contain them, while Cervantes manipulates ideas instead? And so changes our conception of books of chivalry forever?

ONE—He reinvents the books of chivalry. *Don Quixote* is self-conscious, extremely aware of itself; it lauds the adventures and loves of the knight-errant and in the same breath criticizes their ridiculous idealism. It places chivalry in a world that no longer understands it, and in the resulting madness, both worlds are made strange. Cervantes himself is totally immersed in the world of the books of chivalry, which is why he sets out to criticize them with such tenderness and untrammelled hilarity. The censor loves his secret knowledge of the writings he forbids. But Cervantes does not forbid. He bestows upon us the anachronistic knight-errant, an embodiment of all that is utterly compelling in the books of chivalry, and pushes him out into the world where chivalry is a dreamer's concoction. Taken at odds, we see both worlds for something new. Novel, in fact.

THREE—I must make a declaration. I protest against the depiction of women in this great novel of yours. They are either objects upon which love is projected (and always cruelly unrequited), or they are low, accessible, friendly whores. Don Quixote's great love, the lady Dulcinea del Toboso, is a figment. She is a speck of grit upon which he builds up his layers of pearly imagined love and honorable devotion.

TWO—But what of the story of the beautiful shepherdess Marcela who refuses all the multitudes of honorable men who fall madly in love with her, disappearing into the woods to free herself from the desires of men?

THREE—Her tirade *is* justifiably the best part of the novel. She overturns the blind expectations of men, their claims that it is her fault (cruel temptress), if she does not return their love. But the men do not even listen to her. They blame her for their desires. This is a world where women are enchained by whatever fantasies men project on them. Chivalry is demeaning in the very fact that knights always go about defending women's honor, which is just another fiction men have invented to keep women under their dominion as their property. Marcela has to separate herself from the world of men in order to resist their ruthless attempts to own her beauty, to live unburdened by their inconsiderate fallings-in-love. Yet Don Quixote still runs around thinking he can defend her honor. Will they never get the point? She can defend herself, and does.

ONE—We had been discussing something different altogether.

THREE—The conflict between reality and idealistic dreamings? Yes, I know. This is what I'm going on about.

TWO—Must you deny the greatness of this novel because it does not satisfy your modern ideas of a liberated woman?

THREE—I rather love it, actually. Cervantes is a literary genius, no doubt about it. And Marcela's tirade—oh! To hurl *that* from a craggy mountainside at a bunch of greedily lovelorn men!

ONE—Greed. That's what we were discussing.

TWO—The greedy censor keeping other people's ideas all for

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himself.

ONE—This is why censors can never be great men. They try to lock up what is not theirs, and fail in the end to contain it.

TWO—Ah, but Cervantes. He lavished us with all the glory of his mind.

ONE—And with the entire chivalric tradition.

TWO—Yet his work could never be described merely as a book of chivalry...

THREE—Such is the nature of academic discussions: they remain safe in their little realm by never coming to any conclusions.

The Texture of *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*

Jonathan Safran Foer's second novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* is littered with, even weighed down by, the written word. Writing appears in places both expected and unexpected—inhabiting not only letters, journals, and newspapers but also the palms of an old man's hands, envelopes hidden inside vases, bedroom walls, and even bathtubs. The way that the written word pervades the novel makes us increasingly aware that we, as readers, are interacting with a text ourselves. However, most of the texts that the characters in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* encounter are not pieces of literature in a conventional sense. Instead, the characters work in media that are seemingly more informal—reading letters, writing them, signing their signatures and keeping notes. Foer, then, underlines the presence of texts in everyday life while interrogating the role of the reader. By interspersing exact replicas of letters, newspaper articles, business cards, and notes that belong in the world of the novel into the narrative itself, he imposes the experience of his characters upon us, forcing from us a level of involvement uncommon, perhaps unwelcome, in fiction.

As readers, we often resemble Foer's precocious nine-year-old narrator, Oskar Schell. As Oskar flips through his scrapbook, *Stuff That Happened to Me*, we turn the novel's pages, glancing at the same pictures that Oskar has printed out and pasted in the scrapbook. Although Oskar mentions looking at his scrapbook, he never gives us permission to open it. An excerpt suddenly materializes when we turn the page of the novel. The question of permission, then, is a complicated one. Of course, since Foer has provided us with these pages, as readers we have every right to look at them. Still, we cannot ignore the sense that Oskar is unaware that we have access to these texts, which suggests a violation on our part. For instance, when Oskar is in an art store thumbing through test pads, replicas of the pad's pages appear in the novel—mostly signatures or names of colors scrib-

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bled in variegated inks. As he does with *Stuff That Happened to Me*, Oskar tells us about the pad, "She showed me a pad of paper that was next to the display" (44). Then a page appears unsolicited, its presence never invoked by Oskar himself - he only alludes to it. Another mention of the pad has the same effect. As soon as Oskar says, "I flipped back through the pad of paper" (46), three more of its pages emerge. With a reference from Oskar, we see the photographs he has taken, letters he has received, and newspaper articles he has read interspersed within his narrative. Foer involves his readers on a level that becomes more than observation; it becomes nose-y participation. It seems as if we are constructing the story ourselves, fitting these texts into the narrative, replacing lost links to a nearly complete chain. As Oskar searches the five boroughs of New York for clues to the solution of his father's final puzzle (a weekly game they shared), we scour the Upper West Side apartments in which Oskar spends his time, shadowing him, as his grandfather does, while he remains unaware of being followed. Foer has made voyeurs out of us.

The reader's role becomes even more complicated when Foer introduces letters written by Oskar's grandparents. These letters comprise their own chapters and intermittently break Oskar's narrative. Exploring why we have access to them only magnifies the sense that we are rummaging through the apartments and digging up papers hidden in dresser drawers. Although his grandmother writes to Oskar, we never know if he actually receives the letter. Whether or not Oskar has found his grandfather's letters is dubious, since they are not addressed to him, but they probably sit unopened in his grandmother's apartment. While we could read *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* as if our access to the letters is dependent upon Oskar's, which seems to be the case with the photos, letters, and papers that appear within his chapters, not much else in the novel supports this position. Oskar never mentions the letters in the way he notes his scrapbook or the store's pads. Instead, it seems as if we are allowed to see letters that Oskar was not familiar with, at least at the time he writes his narrative. His grandparents' letters, while they explain history that is not directly relevant to Oskar's story, provide answers to some of the questions he poses in his narrative. When Oskar sees his father's signature on the pages of the art store's pads, for example, he insists, "He'd tested out markers and oil sticks and colored pencils and chalk and pens

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and pastels and watercolors.” At the same time, since Oskar visits the store in 2002 and his father died in the attack on the World Trade Center, he admits, “I didn’t get it: that had to have been more than a year ago” (50). Only after more than two hundred pages does his grandfather mention a trip to the art store and signing his name over and over again; we now know that it was Thomas Schell, Sr.’s signature, not Oskar’s father’s. A seemingly more accurate way to read the novel is to consider ourselves privy to information that is withheld from our hero.

One letter in particular becomes strikingly poignant because it is one of the few occasions in the entire novel where we have direct contact with Oskar’s father. The letter is actually written by Oskar’s grandfather and addressed, like all his letters, to Oskar’s father. However, the circles of red ink, like a copy-editor’s markings, betray Oskar’s father’s presence; we know that Oskar marks mistakes in the *New York Times* with red ink. As the red marks increase in frequency, we sense his mounting frustration with his absent father. We see Oskar’s father as a son, a position in which Oskar never sees the father he admires so much. Because we gain knowledge of Thomas Schell in a very private, emotional way, we may feel guilty for obtaining so easily what Oskar yearns for throughout the novel. The letter is even more troubling for us as readers because we know that we are reading it years after Oskar’s father has died. We cannot possibly share an intimate moment with him; instead we trespass upon it, displacing it, suspending it in time.

By varying the types of text in *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Foer redefines the relationship between the reader and the world of the novel. We are not only visitors in a foreign world, but we are inspectors of it, busy-bodding our way through it. As a result, we should not be surprised that Foer writes in an e-mail to a reporter, “I write to end my loneliness. Books make people less alone” (Solomon). Since Foer not only involves us as readers but implicates us in a violation of his characters’ personal lives, he manages to create a relationship with us that moves

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beyond storytelling. He pushes our limits of comfort as readers, forcing us to decide our own level of involvement until we either submit emotionally or look on voyeuristically.

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*The Parallel Plot of the Handkerchief*

Thomas Rymer's critique of *Othello* asks rhetorically, "So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an Handkerchief? Why was not this call'd the Tragedy of the Handkerchief?" While the contemporary academic community has dismissed his views as presumptuous and misinformed (Kernan 147), he makes the point that, "Had it been Desdemona's Garter, the Sagacious Moor might have smelt a Rat: but the Handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no Booby, on this side of Mauritania, cou'd make any consequence from it" (Rymer 27-28). Without probing further, Rymer's objections merely orient the critical reader at best and appear ignorant at worst. He views the handkerchief's banality as its shortcoming. However, another perspective more appropriate to the handkerchief's role as a prop in a performance might be ascertained if we view its banality as the highlighting characteristic, considering its value in relation to those who possess it, rather than its cultural meaning or "intrinsic value."

Othello describes the handkerchief's origins twice. First, during his interrogation of Desdemona (*Othello* 3.4) and then again when Emilia refutes his claims that Desdemona has been unfaithful (5.2). The identity of the initial bearer of the handkerchief differs in each telling. This difference reflects the deterioration of Othello's attitude toward Desdemona. Othello first states:

That handkerchief  
Did an Egyptian to my mother give.  
She was a charmer, and could almost read  
The thoughts of people. She told her, while she kept it  
'Twould make her amiable and subdue my father  
Entirely to her love; but if she lost it  
Or made a gift of it, my father's eye  
Should hold her loathed, and his spirits should hunt  
After new fancies. She, dying, gave it to me,  
And bid me, when my fate would have me wived,

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To give it to her. I did so, and take heed on't.  
Make it a darling like your precious eye.  
To lose't or give't away were such perdition  
As nothing else could match. (*Othello* 3.4.55-68)

The character uses this speech to illustrate the gravity of the token in his mind. While unapparent to an audience member, the text isolates "that handkerchief," establishing its significance in the first line. The remaining lines approximate blank verse; while most feet are iambs, there are occasional trochees, but all lines save three have five stressed syllables. These three are the previously stated line 55, line 63, "After new fancies. She, dying, gave it to me," and line 68, "And nothing else could match." Although Desdemona's response, "Is't possible?" (3.4.69) completes the final line, if we view this speech in isolation, we can see that "That handkerchief" completes it as well. Thus, the frame of the speech is "That handkerchief, as nothing else could match." The author invites the reader to consider his choice of token, as Rymer had. The remaining anomalous line anticipates Rymer's confusion. Rather than understanding "new fancies" contextually in the speech, we might consider them contextually in the play as Othello's new fancies regarding his wife. He initially "fancies" her to be virtuous but now imagines her unfaithful. The precedent, established here, links the possessor of the handkerchief with Othello's perceptions of events, especially those involving male/female interaction.

The handkerchief functions as an agent of chaos in Othello's claim that an "Egyptian...charmer" gave it to his mother. The use of sorcery reminds us of Brabantio's claim earlier in the play that Othello used magic to win Desdemona. Like Brabantio, Othello fears that he has lost something. His perception of the handkerchief's journey is that it was given to his mother by the Egyptian, to him by his mother, to Desdemona by him, and to Cassio by Desdemona. Overhearing Cassio's conversation with Iago and Bianca, Othello knows that Cassio had asked Bianca to "Take me this work out" (*Othello* 3.4.178). The unstitching of embroidery is analogous to the erasure of words; Cassio's request has a rich and diverse textuality that has implications beyond the scope of this critique. In relation to Othello's aforementioned speech, the unstitching of the embroidery reiterates the rift between what the audience sees and what

Othello “knows.” Bianca says:

O Cassio, whence came this?  
This is some token from a newer friend  
To the felt absence I now feel a cause...  
(*Othello* 3.4.179-181)

Her reply provides Othello with what we discover to be false information. As far as Othello knows, the handkerchief’s path has been between lovers.

Returning to line 63, we learn that Othello’s mother had given him the handkerchief on her deathbed. Othello’s perception that Desdemona gave it to Cassio as a token of her love violates the initial contract established by his mother; Desdemona is not dying, nor does she give the handkerchief to her son. While this disruption of the handkerchief’s journey incites Othello to query in the plot line, there are two other, more thematically important disruptions regarding the handkerchief’s real or imagined journeys. One is identification of the initial bearer and the other is Emilia’s theft, about which Othello does not learn until after he announces the second version of the handkerchief’s origin.

After Emilia’s protests of Desdemona’s innocence and the Ventians’ shock at the death scene, Othello attempts to justify his actions. He says:

‘Tis pitiful; but yet Iago knows  
That she and Cassio hath the act of shame  
A thousand times committed. Cassio confessed it;  
And she did gratify his amorous works  
With that recognizance and pledge of love,  
Which I first gave her. I saw it in his hand.  
It was a handkerchief, an antique token  
My father gave my mother. (*Othello* 5.2.207-214)

Here, Othello names his father as the initial bearer of the handkerchief. Against the backdrop of deceit, the father’s role in the

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origination of the handkerchief provides stabilization where the Egyptian charmer created unease. The great struggle for his character stems from his conflicting conceptions of his mother's classification with order (his father) or disorder (the charmer).

Disregarding any motivation Othello might have had to deceive in either of these scenes, we might see a parallel between Othello's and Brabantio's perceptions of Desdemona's actions. Both, in states of shock and uncertainty, confuse love with sorcery, the event with an object. In Brabantio's case this would constitute the objectification of Othello as bestial. Iago catalyses both men's outbursts at Desdemona's alleged deceptions.

The most significant break in the pattern of the handkerchief's path is Emilia's theft. She disrupts the pattern of intergender exchange by stealing it from Desdemona. Although she gives it to Iago, he then passes it to Cassio. Iago creates the second intragender path. If we understand each connection between lovers as a unit, we know that Othello sees three units: the father/mother unit, which we have already examined, Othello/Desdemona, and Cassio/Bianca. The audience knows that Emilia and Iago form the fourth relationship unit, but Othello does not. We see the tragedy of this ignorance in Othello's attempts to pinpoint the source of his company's corruption in both the handkerchief's path and his relationships with his kith. His uncertainty manifests itself in the play's gender relations; the Othello/Desdemona unit typifies the noble husband and virtuous wife, while the Cassio/Bianca unit provides the more coarse and banal relationship between a lusty young man and his whore. However, the Emilia/Iago unit falls outside traditional relationship stereotypes. Although the audience infers that Emilia steals the handkerchief to please her husband, we never see Iago manipulate her in the manner that he manipulates the other characters - especially the men. Iago banters with the women in Act 2, scene 1, making disparaging remarks. While Desdemona decides in an aside to play along, Emilia's responses remain ambiguous. Rather than viewing them as complacent and idle remarks from a weak willed woman overshadowed by the awe-inspiring Desdemona, they could be seen as patronizing and exasperated responses to complaints she had had to endure throughout her marriage to an unrelenting man. She may have stolen the handkerchief not to please Iago, but

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to appease a nagging husband.

The characterization of Emilia mirrors some modern analyses of Iago; Madelon Sprengnether says:

The feminine posture for a male character is that of the betrayed, and it is the man in this position who portrays women as whores. Since Iago occupies this position in relation to Othello, it makes sense that he seeks to destroy him, in the same way that Othello seeks to destroy the agent of his imagined betrayal, Desdemona. There is no reason to suppose, moreover, that Iago's consistently degraded view of women conceals any less hostile attitude in his actual relations with women. He, after all, like Othello, kills his wife. (Sprengnether 193)

We can elaborate on this hostility with William Empson's point that, "Iago playing 'honest' as prud[ish]<sup>1</sup> is the rat who stands up for the ideal...Iago has always despised his pleasures, always treated sex without a fuss, like the lavatory." Iago's femininity is synonymous with his passivity (his military status notwithstanding); not until Roderigo's death does Iago take an active role in his own machinations. Although the nature of theater dictates that characters' main tool is language, Iago's insinuations are nothing like Othello's bold orations. Conversely, Emilia catalyzes the handkerchief's role in the plot by stealing it from a dear friend out of her own volition. This action has shockingly aggressive and almost violent connotations. Although Iago kills her in the end, Emilia, unlike Desdemona, defies her husband by publicly humiliating him. Iago was not exposed by a soldier or a comrade but by his own wife.

Enveloped in the action, Othello cannot see and does not know the nature of these relations. We see the significance of Iago and Emilia's gender role reversal in what we can infer to be Othello's uncertainty surrounding his own masculinity. The implications of the Cassio/Bianca unit threaten him more than Desdemona's imagined infidelities. Had this been a play about

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jealousy and infidelity, Iago would have stolen the handkerchief, preserving the intergender dynamic while implying the sexual violence of rape. Instead, Emilia's actions defuse the implications of her husband's theft of Desdemona's wedding gift.

The cultural associations and symbolism surrounding the handkerchief, or what Rymer calls "Linnen" become secondary to its role as a prop traveling through many hands. It signals the corroded path to the audience while hiding the corruption from Othello. He knows that the corruption exists, but cannot discern between its source (Iago and Emilia) and the source of the handkerchief (the Charmer or the father). Since the handkerchief's origins (Charmer and father) appear the same to him, he cannot understand the source of the handkerchief's aberration because it requires an alternate view of gender roles. Instead, his failed recognition results in projected suspicions onto his seemingly innocent wife. Strangling Desdemona is emblematic of his reclamation of power and restoration of order through violence (Sprengnether 194).

The path of the handkerchief not only parallels his perceptions of Desdemona, but reveals the true tragedy of Othello's ignorance. Thus, we might view Rymer's comments, "the Moral...of this Fable...may be a warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen" and "This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical," to be more grave than at first glance, especially when "Linnen" holds the key to the husband's perception of the wife, the plot, and the "proof."

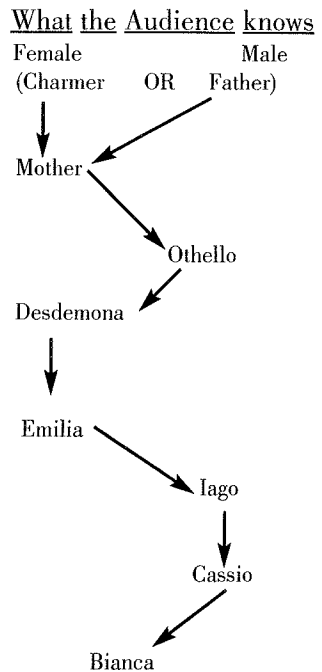
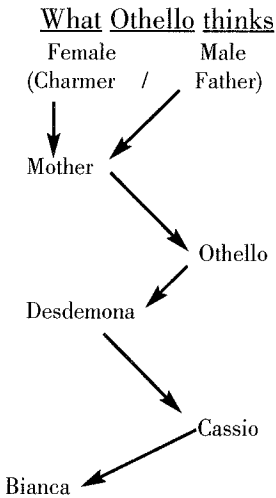
### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Empson discusses alternative definitions of the word "honest" and its unusual emphasis in *Othello*. He considers various historical contexts, as well as class and gender contexts. He finds that our modern understanding of Iago as "dishonest" arises from the misinterpretation of the word. Although he does not venture to pinpoint what Shakespeare had in mind regarding "honest" as a modifier, Empson does offer some alternative readings that make the perceived complexity of Iago's character more accessible.

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Appendix







**F I C T I O N**

## Chris Kursel

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### *Little Mona in Love*

Little Mona strolled through the arch of the boardwalk arcade, looking up at the blinking lights and clutching a five-dollar bill. It was hot that night, and the boardwalk was spotted pink with melted drops of ice cream. The garbage cans smelled sweet, and the air hung heavily.

Bodies stuffed the arcade, all pounding the games, pressing buttons, tossing various objects, shouting or discouraged. Mona made her way past the Tower of Terror and the vintage Pac Man, between the strength machine and the Ride-A-Dino, and around the giant claw that picked up prizes and dropped them in a chute. She did not stop though, and her glance did not waver as she approached the change counter.

"Hey, Mona," said Larry, the change man. He had a waxed handlebar mustache that twitched when he talked.

"Hello."

"Five bucks tonight, Mona?"

"Yes." She slid the five across the counter.

"What are you up to now?"

Without hesitation, Mona answered, "Four thousand seven hundred and sixty-three."

Larry dug in his pocket, grinning, and pulled out a single, yellow ticket. He handed it to Mona. "Sixty-four," said Mona. "Thank you."

"You're very welcome. You're getting pretty close now. How many more to go?"

"Two hundred thirty-six."

"Oh, you sure are getting close. What are you going to play tonight, Mona?"

"Skee-ball."

Larry punched the cash register. He took out a roll of quarters, five dollars worth, and handed them to Mona.

"Skee-ball again? I thought you might play something different tonight."

"Nope."

"You know, the newer lanes give out more tickets."

"Yes. I know."

"Well, all right then, good luck. See you at ten."

Mona snatched the roll and gleefully tore it open. There were two sets of Skee-ball lanes. One set was brown and yellow, built with the arcade back in the Sixties. The other was much newer and colored purple and electric blue, decorated with lightning bolts and keen, glowing skulls. As Mona bopped toward the brown lanes, Larry called out to her, "Mona!" She turned around, her straight brown ponytail flipping to one side.

"The newer lanes are *that* way!"

"I know."

"Why do you always play the older ones, Mona?"

"More real."

"Ooooh!"

There was one stop Mona had to make before the Skee-ball lanes. She hung a right at the Mad Muskrat and arrived at the prize counter. She peered into the glowing shelf at the rack filled with baseball cards, sighing with delight at one particular card, and the card seemed to beam a little brighter than the rest: a 1986 Topps Paul Molitor, mid-swing, autographed by Paul Molitor. It was the card that had stolen Mona's affection. Aside from the signature, there was nothing particularly valuable about the card. It was not his Rookie Card or last year played, and the picture was not outstanding or beautiful. But Mona loved it anyway and had saved up tickets for the entire summer in order to obtain it.

"Which one?" said a young woman behind the counter with short black hair and tattoos across her arms.

"Paul."

"Point to it." Mona pointed. "Oh, that one? That takes 5,000 tickets, baby. You got 5,000 tickets?"

"Not yet. But I will."

"That's a lot of tickets. I just started working here, but I know one thing. Five thousand is a whole lot of fucking tickets. Oh, I'm sorry. I shouldn't say fuck to you. You're just a kid." Mona looked at her quizzically and the girl looked back. "You gotta play a whole lot of video games to get that many tickets," said the girl.

## Chris Kursel

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“Skee-ball.”

“Skee-ball?”

Mona nodded. “I like Skee-ball.” Mona continued to stare at the girl, fascinated by the pictures on her arm. There was a trio of mermaids, their tails flowing into one mighty tail, swimming in a bubbly sea surrounded by red fish. Out across the boardwalk and over the wide, white beach, those mermaids swam under frothy water, and Mona imagined them in the dark, shielded from the blinking lights of the arcade by a school of red fish.

“Who’s Paul...Mol...”

“I think it’s Molitor,” Mona said.

“Yeah, Molitor. Who’s Paul Molitor?”

“I’m not sure. I guess he plays baseball.”

“Obviously.”

“Yes.”

The girl slid a cigarette from her breast pocket and shoved it in her mouth. “You’re not allowed to smoke in here, but I don’t give a shit. Oh, sorry.”

“I don’t mind.”

“Are you, like, a tom-boy?” the girl asked. “You like sports, bugs, guns, shit like that?”

“I don’t think so,” replied Mona.

“How old are you?”

“Nine.”

“So, if you don’t know who he is, why do you want the card?”

Mona blinked like two feathered wings and searched the air. “I don’t know. But I adore it.”

The girl blew a tail of smoke out of the side of her mouth and nodded, as if Mona had said something extremely articulate and wise. But then simply said, “That’s a lot of fucking tickets, man.”

Mona nodded, smiled and left the counter, squeezing her quarters so tightly that they became hot, and her knuckles grew sore. Twenty-five cents bought nine balls, the color of cardboard and clunking like billiards on linoleum. They rolled into a neat little line, and Mona picked one up. After shifting the ball around in her hand to get the proper feel, she rolled. The ball flipped off the end of the ramp and landed directly in the ring

marked ten, the lowest possible roll. Mona needed a score of at least 250 to win 30 tickets. Nine games of 30 tickets would give her more than enough to win Paul. She would not get there with rolls of ten though, and Mona stepped back to figure things out.

She crumpled her tan cheeks and red mouth, still lingering on that roll of ten, sure that she would never roll a 50 again. She was alone at the old lanes. The rest of the skee-ball crowd gathered at the newer lanes, and she admired the spiraling lights and strings of tickets that flowed effortlessly from the machines. Dim laughter carried over the bells and sounds of shouting from the boardwalk. The tickets ran relentlessly, until the whole arcade was buried in yellow tickets, like twine, under orange blinking lights. Except for Mona, who stood in a clear little pocket, under a dusty spotlight looking enviously at every smiling face. One ought not wish that others be unhappy. But she could not help it. Mona was entirely sad and beautiful simultaneously. Her hair was dirty from days in the ocean. The strands had pulled themselves from the limp rubber band and illuminated around her head. She looked almost like she had been born in the ocean or the beach, uncovered by a high tide and brushed the wet sand away, sleeping in a receding pool of warm saltwater.

She took a deep breath and returned to her lane, weighing a second ball in her hands. She peered over the ball's equator at the 50-point ring, poised her arm, and rolled again. Once again, she watched the ball tumble helplessly into the ten-point ring. Her eyes widened with disbelief. She had never rolled two tens in a row. Where had she gone wrong? Was it something she ate? Was it the full moon outside? Mona knew that she could not continue or risk wasting her five dollars. She stretched out her lime green shirt, making a little basket, into which she placed the remaining seven balls. "Mona? What are you doing?" said Larry as he unloaded the balls on his counter. Larry corralled them between his arms, for they rolled this way and that like kittens.

"I have to stop," she said.

"I don't understand," said Larry. "You're so close."

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"I am. But there's something wrong. I'm rolling tens!"

"Tens?"

"Tens." Once Mona had unloaded all seven balls, she turned and stalked away.

"Wait, Mona. Where are you going? You can't just leave these here."

"I've got to."

"Will you be back?"

"Of course! I'm in love!" And Mona marched away, her ponytail waving, leaving Larry dumbfounded with an armful of balls. The late evening did not bring any shelter from the heat. The air had grown more stagnant. She weaved in and out of people. Some walked with a purpose, with their heads forward, bobbing excitedly toward the rides or a particular hot dog stand. Others waddled, fat and jolly or morose, wearing tank tops and shorts that clung unmercifully to their thighs while they ate candy or caramel apples, shoveling handfuls of popcorn into their mouths. One man bumped into Mona and nearly knocked her over, sending her staggering into the butt of a woman holding a screaming baby. "Sorry," the man mumbled as he ran onto the beach. "Sorry," said Mona to the woman, but she did not respond. She just eyed Mona with disinterest and spanked her baby to shut him up. *These people have no desire!*, Mona thought. *They do not realize what is at stake.* She rolled tens and they continued eating. The very thought of a hamburger or a hot dog or a tub of frozen custard made Mona ill. She felt displaced, foreign, from her feelings. No one seemed to be wishing for anything, or imagining, or in love the way Mona was in love.

Mona passed a series of game stands, all claiming a guaranteed prize. Young men and women, speaking almost exclusively with Eastern European accents, barked into microphones about balloons or baseballs or water pistols and leered at Mona, tantalizing her with a hood of stuffed animals, all the same, all staring dumbly in one direction. She felt the dozens of plastic eyes on her. The barkers looked right through her petite denim shorts to her pockets and flared their nostrils at her roll of quarters. They were all attractive, with blond hair and fair skin, but desperate and wanting. They looked away, seeking the next lonesome face and becoming lonesome themselves. Or they simply growled, slouched a bit more and

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gave up.

She walked for quite a while, and the lights grew sparse. Soon, everything was gone. Only distant voices could be heard and the mossy pilings stood before her. It seemed as if a place like that, the end of the boardwalk, was even lonelier than a place far more remote, like the desert or a glacier, because it was, at once, close to human beings and entirely detached from them. One small, dim, yellow stand remained in this, the shadowy end of a brilliant mile and a half. A man wearing a tattered, brown suit and a derby, chewing his gums for lack of teeth, stood next to a large scale and a sign that read, "The Guesser...Never Fooled In 100 Years!" He rocked back and forth, as if the sticks within his baggy trousers would snap if he stood on them for too long. He did not look in any particular direction but rolled his ancient face around, glancing up at the sky and down at his worn, leather shoes. He looked quite comfortable waiting at the dark end of the boardwalk, away from all the action.

A scratched fishbowl stuffed with tickets sat at The Guesser's feet. Considering the size of the bowl, and the dense packing of the yellow stubs, Mona estimated that it contained over 500 tickets. She paused only feet away from The Guesser, but he still did not look at her. He stared at the purple sky and chewed his idle gums, humming.

"How many tickets are in there?" Mona asked.

"Mmmm," mumbled The Guesser. "Don't know for sure."

"Where did they come from?"

"Folks dropped 'em in."

Mona looked around her desolate surroundings, like the far corner of a bedroom, and wondered who else had stopped but her.

"Payment," said The Guesser. "They're all gone now. But they couldn't fool me."

"They couldn't fool you?"

"Nope. No siree, not in 100 years. That's how old I am. Bet you wouldn't have guessed," said The Guesser, laughing a bit and exposing his dark, wrinkled mouth.

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Mona eyed the bowl of tickets and was overcome with greed.

"I want to try."

"Huh?" grunted the old Guesser, and turned to look at Mona. His face was long and sad.

"I want to try and fool you."

The Guesser chuckled like a goat. "You want to try and fool me? Didn't you hear what I said? 100 years!"

Mona nodded.

"You got five tickets on you?"

Mona's eyes widened as she looked, sadly, at her pockets. "I only have one." She reached into her shorts and held up the single yellow ticket Larry had given her.

"That'll do. Stick her in the bowl."

Mona pressed the ticket into the bowl with her thumb and stood ready.

"That's not it," said The Guesser. "And all the money you got in your pockets as well!"

At this request, Mona paused. If she gambled the rest of her money and lost, there was no hope of winning Paul on that particular night. Nearly five dollars was a lot of money to little Mona. Then again, the fishbowl of tickets was so perfectly tangible. Suddenly, to the surprise of The Guesser, Mona spoke up. "I'll do it," she said with pride. She stepped gallantly to the side of The Guesser.

"OK, then, little woman." He removed his hat, revealing a jagged mess of white hair, and Mona dropped her quarters in. With every little clink of metal she grew less timid, and The Guesser snickered. He put his hat, five dollars fatter, down next to the fishbowl. "What'll it be?"

"Hmm?" responded Mona.

"Age, birthday, weight, height? What'll it be, I says? I can guess any of 'em."

"Oh," said Mona and looked down. She held up one tiny finger to The Guesser. "One second," she said. The Guesser resumed the strange rolling of his face, staring at the sky for quite a while, smiling and grimacing, and smacking his toothless mouth. Mona considered the possibilities. Was her age particularly apparent? Was her weight? She liked to think of



herself as mysterious, but when it came to physical appearance and The Guesser, who had not been fooled in a century, she felt vulnerable.

“I’m ready now,” Mona said. His eyes were gray and distant, and Mona was not entirely sure if he could see at all; however, he did meet her gaze and looked at her with a certain complacency and arrogance.

This, Mona imagined, came from his century of winning. “I would like you to guess my birthday, please.”

“Birthday?” he asked, cocking his head.

“Yes.”

“I gotta get within one month on either side. Deal?”

“Deal.”

The Guesser rocked back and forth, as if gathering momentum, and took a few clumsy steps toward Mona. He walked around her, eying her up and down, his glistening eyes bulging from the wrinkled sockets, and Mona felt quite embarrassed. She stood still, cautious not to meet his wandering eyes and only glanced, furtively, at his silent, raw leather shoes. She crossed her hands in front of her and scraped the swollen gray boards with her toes.

“Let’s see here,” said The Guesser. “You don’t look much like winter. Too brown, too fat with sunshine...”

“Fat?”

“With sunshine, mind you. And that’s a good thing. It comes from the heart. All right, winter is out. There’s no blue, after all. And I would reckon you aren’t fall either. I don’t imagine you enjoy the sound of leaves or the smell of smoke too much, do you?”

“Well,” Mona said, not entirely sure if she was in danger of giving herself away.

“Or the colors orange, brown and red?” asked The Guesser, counting out the colors on his skeletal fingers.

“No, not really.”

“Didn’t think so. In that case, we are left with summer and spring as possibilities. We’re in the dead of summer now and,

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oh, smell the air. It's thick. I don't see you liking this too much. You like the ocean, don't you?"

Mona could not help but feel protest at The Guesser's questions, but was too nervous to speak up, and simply answered, "Yes. I do."

"I knew it. Spring remains. The process of elimination," said The Guesser, "is a wonderful thing. Spring, spring, spring. What are the months of spring? I reckon April is a month of spring. And then comes May, which is definitely a month of spring. April showers bring May flowers. Isn't that what they say?"

"Yes."

"You're right. And I would say one more. June perhaps? Or is it more of March that makes up Spring?" Mona sealed her lips tightly, wrinkling her smooth cheek, determined not to say any more. "In the place we live, I would have to say March. March is a month of Spring, whereas June is a month of summer." The old Guesser was growing excited now, confident that he was stalking the correct answer and would win once again. Mona, for the first time, looked up. She did not look at The Guesser though, but toward the distant light of the Boardwalk. The people had receded, and the noise was almost gone. She wondered how long she had been there, and how late she would go to sleep. Beyond that, she wondered whether she would go to sleep rich or disappointed.

"March, April, May," said The Guesser. "And since I got a one month cushion on the subject, I would have to pick April. Your birthday is in April. April..." The Guesser paused, bent over Mona so that his face was only inches from hers. She could almost feel his whiskers and smell his ancient breath. "I would say April ninth. Yes, April ninth. That's when your birthday is, I says. April ninth. Now, tell me if I'm wrong."

Mona took a deep breath, attempting desperately to mask every feeling she had. The boardwalk was very quiet now, and the people seemed to have disappeared entirely. Even the dark end where The Guesser stood seemed darker and more isolated. The beach shrank beneath them, as the foamy tide rushed through the barnacled posts supporting the pier. The bowl of yellow tickets shook a little bit as the waves ran among the boardwalk legs, and The Guesser rocked back and forth, looking, gray-eyed, at the little girl.

"You are wrong," said Mona.

"Ahh, but it is within a month on either side, right? Either March ninth or May ninth? One of the two? It's gotta be."

"I'm sorry, but no. My birthday is in January. January twenty-third."

The old Guesser's eyes bulged from his face. He looked like a still rooster, with sunken cheeks and a sagging jowl, and his pointed nose was the beak. Mona could not contain her happiness and released her hands from one another, opening them to the air. She smoothed the salty fragments of hair that poked from her rubber band, and thought it was a dream. In that moment, she wondered how it felt for The Guesser to be fooled after so many years. But her thoughts about The Guesser were quickly swallowed by the notion that her love had been realized. Paul was hers. She marched over to the bowl of tickets, and The Guesser stayed put, a statue, bent over and looking poised to collapse.

"The dead of winter," he said, "I would have never thought."

Mona cradled the fishbowl and watched The Guesser as he slowly stood upright. She did not know how to leave him. It seemed cruel to walk silently away, carrying his prize. But, of course, it was a game, and Mona had won. She could not help but feel sympathy for the old man though, and looked at him with pity. He dumped the quarters into a baggy pocket and shoved the hat back on his head, matting down his white hair that had been ruffled by the wind. Mona thought, for a moment, about giving the tickets back to him, for they seemed more important to The Guesser than they were to her. She even took the first step toward him, with her head down, fighting the exhilaration that still beat within her little heart.

"What are you doing?" growled the old man, his aimless eyes searching the ground and sky. "Why are you standing there?"

Mona was suddenly afraid. "I thought-"

"You won!" shouted The Guesser. His face was terrible now, twisted with heartbreak. "Get out of here!" His rage was real. But his feeble body betrayed such an outburst, and Mona's fear

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gave in to sadness. He turned away and put his hands, nonchalantly, behind his back, looking at the dark end, the purple beach. The wind tore at his pant legs. Mona slowly backed away, guarding the tickets. But there was no one, and the boardwalk had grown quiet. Mona started running and looked back only once. The Guesser remained alone, his back turned, looking out, and Mona knew that she had taken his love.

Larry was asleep on the counter, his mustache twitching with dreams. The arcade was empty. The blinking bulbs seemed less brilliant, and the space had shrunk. Even the sounds that ordinarily mingled, the beeps, the sirens, the buzzers, the voices, were gone, and the machines repeated themselves idly, waiting to come alive. Mona squinted in the harsh yellow light and tapped Larry on the arm. He awoke suddenly and moaned with fear.

“Oh! Mona. They’re right here where you left them.”

“No, Larry. I’m not gonna play.”

“Where have you been? I was worried.”

“The Guesser.”

“The Guesser? Down at the end of the boardwalk?” Mona nodded. “You know, he never loses.”

“One hundred years.”

“Yes. One hundred and twenty, I heard. Some say two hundred. How much money did you give him?”

“Nearly five dollars. All the money in my pockets.”

Larry’s face went sullen, “Oh, Mona. I’m sorry.”

“That’s OK.”

“I’ve got another ticket for you.” Larry pulled a single yellow ticket from his breast pocket. “How much are you up to now, Mona?”

Mona grinned and pulled the fishbowl from her feet, setting it, with a thud, upon the counter. Larry gasped. “Where did you get all those?” Mona said nothing, but continued to smile, and Larry knew. “I don’t believe it. The Guesser?” asked Larry, and Mona nodded. “You can get your card now. Paul is yours.” And Mona nodded again, sliding the fishbowl off the counter and walking toward the prizes. Larry spoke behind her, “It’s nice to get something you want, isn’t it?” Mona disappeared around the Mad Muskrat.

The fluorescent lights buzzed and Mona peered along the rack of  
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baseball cards. Paul remained, in mid-swing, and autographed in black magic marker. Mona looked at the card that had wooed her so many months ago, and rested for a moment, knowing it was hers. She looked into the bowl, and thought of pouring the tickets onto the glass counter, and counting every one, and then handing them over. Suddenly, and to Mona's surprise, it all seemed like a sad prospect. She had imagined how perfect this moment would be, when she earned the right to take Paul home with her, squeezing him as tightly as she wanted in her small tan hand. But it was not what she imagined. It was lonely, and something seemed to have ended.

"Now that is a lot of fucking tickets," said the tattooed girl, yawning.

"Yes. It is."

"It was Paul, right?" said the girl, jingling in her pocket for the cabinet key.

"Yes," said Mona, "Paul."

The girl unlocked the glass cupboard and reached for Paul.

"Wait!" shouted Mona, startling even herself.

"What? Isn't that the one?"

"Yes. It was," said Mona and scanned the rack of cards. "But not anymore." She shuffled to the end and pressed one finger against the glass case. "I'm in love with Barry now."

The girl peered into the case. "Barry Bonds?" said the girl. Mona nodded and blinked. "Ten thousand is a whole helluva lot of fucking tickets," said the girl.

"I know. But I adore it."

## Justin Rivers

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### *I Bought a Pipe on the Way to the Time Machine*

Snazzy. Put another LP on and make sure it swings. Stuff the air with second-hand heaven and pretend to be nihilists or something – we’re all caught in this saucy mousetrap of life and sometimes there is style and sometimes there is crap. “I bought it for the obvious purpose,” I crack, “To pick up girls.” What I really mean is to sit in little corners at parties and smoke with sultry intentions. I bought a curved-stem briar at Peretti’s, a little place with wooden floors and old countertops just off the Common, which smells like a sweet and earthy perfume. It’s a poor man’s Diagon Alley. As soon as you walk in, you are greeted by a handful of men in their fifties, all smoking pipes and peering at you with leathery faces. They look damn well-preserved, like those crisp Post-War photos, when the Greatest Generation came home to mature and watch their parents die. Those tobacco shop guys are salesmen, distantly friendly, like mall Santas. They wanted my money. I was looking for romance.

That’s what I’m concerned with. The romance. A dated notion, now that the Ponies have rescued Flutter Valley and the great eras of genteel icons are gone. The fedora-wearing men and the girls with bright lipstick are around the corner in nursing homes in their 80s and 90s, while we grew up in the 80s and 90s to watch bubbles burst and towers fall. We bought pieces of cement when the Berlin wall fell. We’ll buy the *Punky Brewster* cartoon now out on DVD, in which precocious children assert themselves as mildly amusing. And cartoon kids with flying magic cats named Glomer. Gold, pure gold. And fuel. We stoke ourselves with these cultural references. Spock, Willy Wonka, Bing Crosby and a sack of oranges; our vocab is like that episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* where Picard is stranded on a planet with an alien captain who looks like the “I don’t like you either” chap from Mos Eisley. The alien speaks in riddles too dense for the *Enterprise* computers to decode. Only after trying to survive in a hostile wilderness for a night does Picard realize that the other Captain is speaking in *analogies*. Drawing on their mythology, this race speaks to each other through constant cultural references, using past stories and legends, relating them to their present circumstances, to the

point where the original language of the story is lost and nonfunctional. Only the ideas and analogies remain.

Late at night, my neighbors watch TV. The muffled voices of *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* resonate through the plaster walls of my room. A time traveler stumbling on our little world would be lost and feel just as shipwrecked as Picard on that lonely planet, with the alien captain muttering beside a campfire, telling stories that no one understands. And Picard's solution? To tell a story of his own.

We are a searching generation. Seeking direction in life, true love, or the perfect couch. Boldly finding refuge against the encroaching complications of modern life through the mediating factors of college. I can't figure all this shit *out*. With bills and taxes and rent, not to mention debt, pressing in at us from all directions, the bizarre spirals of modern life defy gut-rhythm and simple reason. Buying a car is easier than keeping it. Trainwatchers have their own clubs. Boxcars are locked up on the Conrail freighters; so much for traveling.

Yet it's still on our minds.

The landscape captures our imaginations. This year, the unspooled yellow manuscript of Kerouac's *On the Road* goes on tour, following the rough low road taken by Kerouac and Cassidy. He sells well all over college campuses, as if he were still out there with kerosene smoke and beat-up old cars, restless typewriters and we just want to get to somewhere, too - to find the closure of the 1950s and all their Bakelite toasters and mantle clocks. Has the rapidity of society displaced our love for growth and expansion? Not at a corporate level. But in a couple of years we too will be a post-war generation, or maybe a full-blown war generation, depending on how things go. The visions of easier times are seductive.

The children of the 80s have become nostalgic for the first time. *My Little Pony* returns to stores. There is a call toward the innocence of our childhood, a hunger for film noir and

## Justin Rivers

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Technicolor. The past is less confusing and easier to segment. We can break it down into genres like melodrama and screwball, into ideologies like capitalist and communist. We conclude who won those old battles, all the while haunted by the lingering possibility that the past is suspect. A sand trap.

We search the past and find uncertainty. We look forward and see either disaster or *Star Trek*. I chased an illusion into that smokeshop near the Common, expecting to find comfort. To find the present is to let go of satisfaction and orgasmic answers. Instead we find shops with wooden floors, stories by campfires – all the girders and girdles and bras and brass that holds us together, the invisible social boundaries that make things stick.

In the meantime I'll cling to my illusions, because it's easy. I won't let go of those wavering, dead decades; I won't let go of my pipe. But all I'll get is fragrant smoke and a bitter aftertaste.



*A Family Chat*

“Yeah, so I’m with some friends in the South Island for break,” I told my dad.

“Uh-huh,” he grunted into the phone.

“It’s really beautiful here—so much to see.”

“Mmm.”

“We went kayaking yesterday in a fiord that’s been left practically untouched by people.”

“Uh-huh, wow.”

“Then we took an overnight cruise where they served us a four-course meal—which was a nice change from PB and J—and there were dolphins swimming right next to the boat!”

“A four-course meal, huh?”

“Yeah. So the dol—”

“What’d you have?”

“Huh? Oh ... well, first soup and then a—”

“Soup? What kind?” Then, muffled, since he was probably covering the mouthpiece, he called into the other room, “Honey, they served a four-course meal on this cruise of hers!”

I heard the shifting and clicking of another receiver being picked up.

“Nina?”

“Mom.”

“Hiiii, sweetie. So what’s this?”

“Four-course meal. First course was soup,” Dad answered. “What kind, Nina?”

“Creamy broccoli and blue cheese.”

“Ooh, cream of broccoli! That’s my *favorite!*” Mom cooed.

“With blue cheese? Interesting. Very sharp?”

“Uh, I don’t think so. You couldn’t really taste the cheese. Anyway, so—”

“Didn’t get the recipe did you? Wonder how they season

## Natalie Acrey

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that.”

“No, Dad, sorry. Anyway, so there were all these dol

phins—”

“The next course?”

“Huh?”

“Four-course meal: what was next?”

“Oh. Well, there was a small salad—just lettuce and sprouts and some tomatoes and stuff.”

“Now that sounds like a pretty dull salad, sweetie. No handsome little garnishes or anything?”

Mom.

“Well, they’re not big on salads here like they are in LA.”

“Main course?”

“Uh, the main course was roasted lamb. With kumara and parsnips, and . . . I think potatoes, and some weird green things like zucchini. Courgeon, I think.”

“Courgette, darling, courgette.”

“Yeah, okay. So the dolphins were jumping—”

“Roasted lamb, huh?” Dad again. “How was it? Lamb can be tough.”

“Good, I guess. It wasn’t too...lamb-y---. But—”

“Uh-huh, uh-huh. Gravy?”

“Well, yeah—”

“How were the potatoes cooked?”

“What? The . . . just roasted, with the lamb. Nothing special. But guys, so there were at least seven or eight dolphins following the boat and leaping way high out of the water for us! It was spectacular!”

More rustling and clicking from the other end. “Hello?” My twin sister, Anna, had picked up another receiver.

“Anna, sweetie, we’re on the phone with Nina in New Zealand!” Mom squealed. “She took a cruise somewhere and they served her a four-course meal!”

“Not just *somewhere*—in Fiordland! It’s one of the most beautiful places on Earth!”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yeah, and there were all these dolphins—”

“They had roasted lamb, and potatoes with a lovely side of courgette, parsnips, and kumara—that’s a New Zealand dish, right sweetie?”

“Parsnips? What are those, dude?” Anna asked.

“Like white carrots,” Dad said. “Probably steamed—steamed, Nina?”

“Yeah, I guess so. Anna, you should’ve seen—”

“Do they, like, taste like carrots? Or what?”

“No, no, honey, they have more of a—”

“How were the kumaras prepared? Roasted? Wonder why they served kumara with potatoes. Odd, huh, Bonnie?”

“Yes, two starches—that is odd . . . You didn’t eat them both, did you, dear? All that starch can make you bloated, you know.”

“Are you kidding, dude? Nina eats like a frickin’ bird.”

“No, Mom, I—I didn’t really like the potatoes.”

“Didn’t like ’em? Too salty?”

“No, Dad. I just don’t really like potatoes without ketchup.”

“Oh, they didn’t have any ketchup for you, dear? You should’ve asked! I’m sure they would have—”

“Yo, dude. What was for dessert?”

“Oh, uh, a Bailey’s and chocolate cheesecake—”

Three simultaneous gasps from the other end.

“It was okay. So then the dolphins—”

“Oh my God, no way! Was it just, like, amazing?”

“There wasn’t too much alcohol in it for you, was there, sweetie?”

“Cheesecake, huh? Very rich?”

“Well, no. Kind of tasted more like mousse actually—”

“Mousse? Well, sweetheart, *that’s* not right, them serving you mousse and saying it’s *cheesecake*. You should have complained.”

“No, really, Mom, it was still good.”

## Natalie Acrey

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“Chocolate and Bailey’s, it better have been good, dude! I’m so frickin’ jealous—you know I love cheesecake!”

“I know, I—”

“Could you taste the Bailey’s? Had it before—couldn’t taste it. Most cooks can’t get it right.”

“No, it was fine. You could taste it. But anyway, that was it. So this one dolphin was—”

Well, it sounds like you’re having a *marvellous* time, honey-bunch!”

“Uh-huh. Sounds good.”

“Yeah, it was, but I didn’t get to tell you about the—”

“Ooh, there goes the oven timer! Gotta run, sweetie! Kisses!”

*Click.*

“Ah. Dinner time.”

*Click.*

Sigh. “Doesn’t anyone want to hear about the dolphins?”

“Not unless they’re in the tuna, dude.”

*Click.*

## Contributors

**Natalie Acrey** is an undergraduate in the College of Arts and Sciences. **Jon Busch** is a New Jersey native who is currently studying playwriting at Boston University. **Kimberly Christensen** was born and raised in the mountains of Colorado, and will graduate from the College of Arts and Sciences in 2005 with degrees in Physics and French Language and Literature. **Zack DeLuca**, Class of 2006, is an English Major who enjoys collecting records and wandering rather aimlessly around Boston. **Lindsay Dolan-Templeton** is an undergraduate in the College of General Studies. **Sophia Dookh** is a sophomore in the University Professors Program concentrating in Comparative Literature. **Ilya Gutner** began writing poetry four years ago, six years after he learned English, and has been writing steadily in this language ever since. **Emma Hawes** is a senior studying English in the College of Arts and Sciences and has been recently accepted into the Graduate Program in Creative Writing, for poetry. **Soren Michael Hessler** is a freshman from rural Ohio studying political science and theology in the University Professors Program. **Dan Joseph**, a sophomore studying English, is Poetry Editor of the Back Bay Review. **Justin Rivers** is a Film Major in the College of Communications. **Matthew Kelsey** is a sophomore English Major who resides in Glens Falls, New York during the summer. **Chris Kursel**, from Milwaukee, WI, is a senior in the College of Communication, majoring in film and minoring in English. **Jane Losaw** is a sophomore in the College of Arts and Sciences. **Melissa de Jesus** is a native of Madison, Wisconsin, studying English, whose work is vitalized by the intellect and energy of her friends, the support of her family and the inestimable influence of wonderful teachers. **Emily Nagle**, a sophomore in the University Professors Program, devotes her time to English Renaissance literature, Latin poetry, and contemporary American fiction. **Jamie Teot** is a senior in the College of Fine Arts. **Emma Tosch** is boring. **Christine Whitlock** is a College of Arts and Sciences graduate living at home in NJ. **Jonathan Wooding** is a junior in the College of Arts and Sciences who appreciates superb writing, fine Irish whiskey, and exceptional cartoons.

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