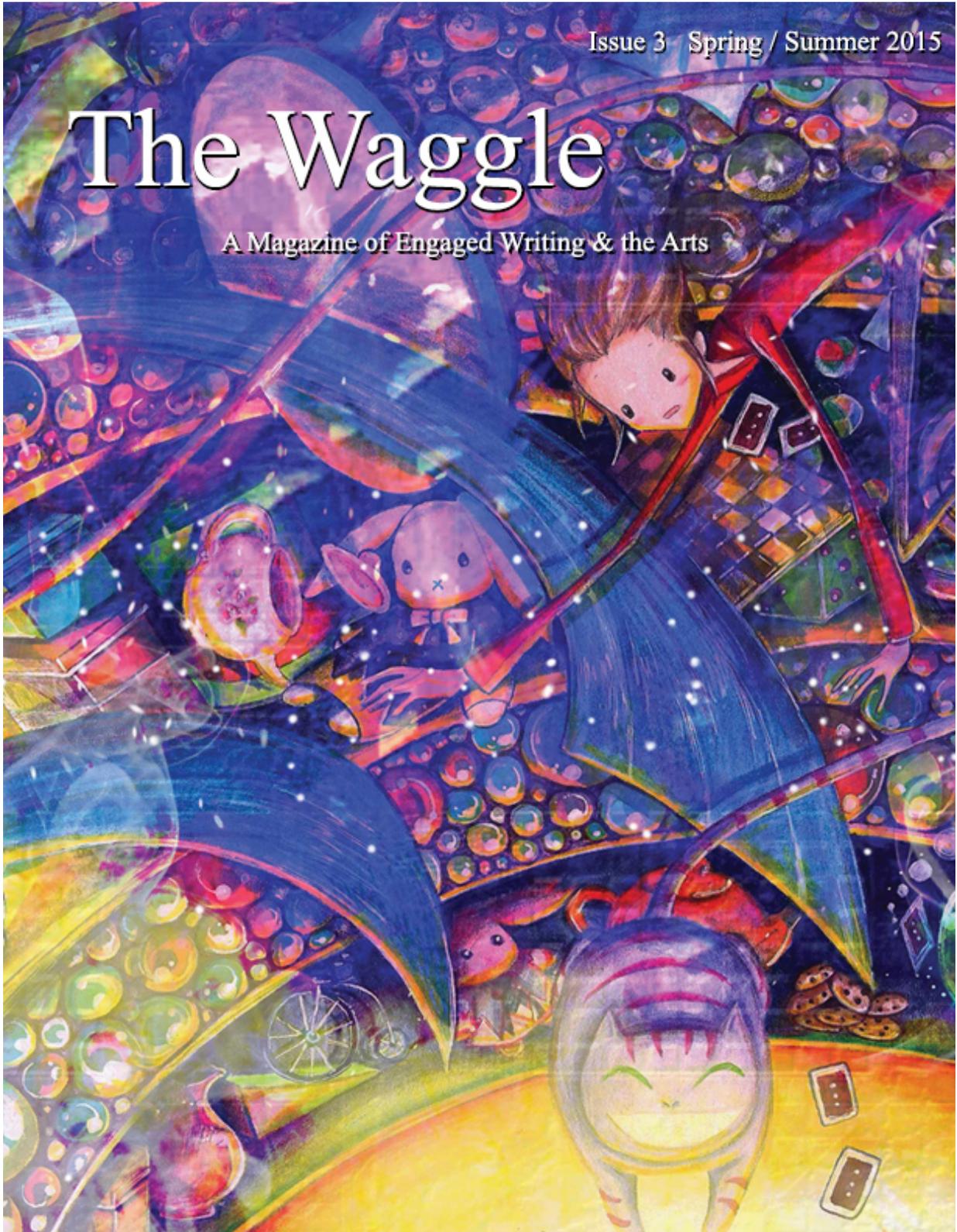


Issue 3 Spring / Summer 2015

The Waggle

A Magazine of Engaged Writing & the Arts



The Waggle Issue #3. Spring/Summer 2015

The Waggle is published by an editorial collective based at Grande Prairie Regional College in Alberta, Canada. The magazine is available at thewaggle.ca as a website and as a free digital download. Contact us at thewaggleeditor@gmail.com

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The Waggle was named by Jamie Simpson.

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The Waggle is a magazine of engaged writing and the arts based in Grande Prairie, Alberta, Canada. We are committed to publishing interesting writing, visual art, and multi-media art from northwestern Canada and the world beyond.

Our name, *The Waggle*, is taken from the dance performed by honey bees. The dance is central to their communication, culture, and survival. The waggle-dance is performed centrally, within the hive, but provides information about the world beyond, and sends the bees off in new directions, so that every member of the hive can contribute.

Honey bees are essential to our survival. They're also beautiful, intelligent, and productive. We publish work that reflects this spirit.

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Two Poems

Christopher Mulrooney

frequently

a slurp and a harrumph with a different mien
than the usual slaphappy highball in the mouth
wrap it around the straw and inhale
border patrol roadside examination quiz kid approbation
of the school system of thought self-satisfied rather

transmigration

*[Hofzinsler] loved his card work passionately
and called it the poetry of his magical art.
Houdini*

we have the burning bush for an example
of the magic conjuror's art Houdini would have
a woman sawn in half according to the custom
and in her wake two half-sized pints of girls
one to a customer per the divided box

Christopher Mulrooney is the author of *toy balloons* (Another New Calligraphy), *alarm* (Shirt Pocket Press), *Rimbaud* (Finishing Line Press), *supergrooviness* (Lost Angelene), and *Buson orders leggings* (Dink Press).

Willy Lomanistan
Samina Hadi-Tabassum

In the living room
My uncles and father stand in a huddled mass
Shaking their heads in unison to mean yes
To the egregious tales told from home
Of corrupt prime ministers and bribery scandals

In the kitchen
My aunts and mother sit around the table
Warming the aluminum foil covered dishes
Hands cusped around cups of chai
Admiring the gold jewelry around their necks

We adolescent girls listen surreptitiously to their banter
Straddling the hallway between gendered spaces
Heads cringed to hear words of arranged marriages and horoscopes
Of young men finishing medical school and engineering degrees
The cost of dowries, banquet halls, and the groom's horse
Of tents, lights and plane tickets back home

With worried looks and fearful faces
Talk turns to artificial jewelry, plastic garlands and less embroidery
To no-good relatives who should never be invited
And politicians causing inflation
Of middle class boys with their own shops and stores
Who would pay anything for an American bride

Samina Hadi-Tabassum is a professor at Dominican University outside of Chicago. She teaches courses in language development and linguistics. She has published poetry in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Eastlit*, *Soul Lit*, and *Indus Streams*.

memory language
melanie brannagan fredericksen

this before language

& before red was red & long was long & wide was wide & hard was hard

before questions were asked but not before they were born in the air from my baby-cunt

before speaking

not before i knew to be quiet

before i remember being told

this before language
before they say memory imprints

long before & long after most primal wailing

or without seeing i know he's there & here i see father
wonder-filled curiosity cinched with apprehension rough hand announces a familiarity not yet named
eyes open wide

sensation explodes & now here is mother
& every next moment ticked second accelerates dying still memory speaks
our private language
je ne peut rien voir (your mocking pleasure
mais j'entends votre voix like knives
maman
where are you
mur nu et la jeune silencieuse "if you'll give it to him
trop peut-être pour un bébé you'll damned well give it
maman to me")
elle ne vous suit pas ne vous suivra jamais

maman

(what's left?
only the aftershocks
the hollow aches ringing ears
tremors

this before language

silent scream
against staccato thrust & -

hush

touch

everyone wants something from this baby

melanie brannagan frederiksen is a writer and an editor currently living in Winnipeg. She has a PhD in English from the University of Manitoba. Her poems and book reviews have been published by *Prairie Fire* and *The Winnipeg Free Press*.

Small Fates for a Burnt Person

Caylah Lyons

1. She tried to keep me and make me fall in love with her again.
It's hard to fall when you're already on the floor.
Her knuckles were red, and so were my lips. It tasted like hot metal.
2. You asked why you were born.
I didn't say anything, but had a selfish thought.
You were sent here to make me happy, son. Shine.
3. Our wedding was well-attended, and a lot of people smiled.
We were married, and there were fireworks.
When I played at being her husband, I played to win.
4. Your bedroom was a carnival.
All shiny and bright with colours I don't know the name of.
Your room was loud and you were so quiet.
5. Let's try something different.
Tomorrow morning when we get ready for work,
I won't use her makeup to cover my colourful face.
6. I looked out the window, and you were stepping on all the cracks in the
sidewalk.
Didn't you know that would break your mother's back?
Maybe you did it on purpose.
7. I drew a picture of what I wanted in a wife.
She was ugly, but kind.
My pen was on fire when I drew her, so she couldn't be beautiful.
8. I'm a silhouette.
A white paper cutout hanging in the black sky.
You always coloured in the lines perfectly.

9. She said to stay, or never come back.
I don't understand.
I needed cigarettes, and you needed milk and a new pack of crayons.

10. I'd never felt so content.
It can't last forever.
Someone is bound to come along and tell me to get out of the fountain.

Caylah Lyons is an artist and author from Fairview, AB, who first liked to draw under the table so she wouldn't be in the way. She writes, "Gramma says I started drawing before I even knew what the word meant."

The cover art of this issue of *The Waggle* is drawn from Lyons' children's book *Alex in Wonderland*.

Dog DiarieZ

Kristina Stagg

As the sky filled with darkness and the shadows were no more, I knew the worst was yet to come. My puppy days are over now! I know I am ready for this; I know I am trained for this. Master walked frantically around the house cursing to the roof as I sat in my bed with a slight tilt of curiosity to my head. Why is Master so worried, I do not understand?

Every evening, Master and I would watch the talking box about how the slow, bloody creatures are making their way across world and soon, nowhere would be safe. Why couldn't anyone stop them? Why can't we be safe? Master would always talk about how our home was the safest place to be. Out in the country, far away from people surround by chatty trees and whispering creeks. Home was small, paw built, but perfect for Master and me. It has only ever been the two of us. Long walks, endless play time and ferocious meals that always lead to long nap in front of the talking box.

The first sign of the creatures happened today, when the sky turned dark and I couldn't see the annoying shadow that followed me around everywhere. It always copied me as if to mock my movements and it really made me angry that it always showed up when I was playing in the sun. The sun was not found for many days now, and each day Master would grow more and more anxious. No more bright time during the day. Master just sat in the chair in front of the talking box day after day. I would wag my tail and bring my ball to try to play, but always got pushed away or told to go lie down. One morning, both Master and I were awoken by awful noises. Bright screaming flames had filled the distant surrounding towns, sign number two...

No play time, no run time, and no fun time. Master doesn't want to do anything. I have a feeling that I might be on my own for this adventure. I wish Master would let me outside without being on a leash. I could save Master from these creatures, defeat them on my own. How many creatures can there be? Nothing that a four-legged demon like me couldn't handle! Master trained me well; go for the throat and stand your ground. These slow, bloody creatures didn't seem so. It had taken them years to reach Master and I, but now since all the people with big guns and booming things got killed it has only been a matter of a few days travel time for the creatures to become close to us.

I have never seen Master so motionless in all my dog years. Master was always in training and was always energetic. I don't think Master has gotten up from bed in days. The creatures are making their way here and Master isn't doing anything to prepare for them to arrive. Master is able to control the guns and can walk taller on two paws instead of four. I cannot control the guns, I cannot walk on two paws, I am doomed for failure, but I must protect my Master. Suddenly, sign three... the smell took over the home of Master and I... and the sounds of growling creatures crept closer and closer. The wood surrounding the house creaked and thumped. The creatures were coming, I tried to pull master out of bed but I just got pushed away.

All I can find myself doing is barking uncontrollably! Get away from my Master! I will attack! STAY AWAY!! Windows starting smashing and the door began to shake. Master just laid in bed... motionless. It was like Master was waiting for these creatures to come kill us. I was not going to let this happen. Blood dripped vigorously from the windows and the creatures as they moaned and groaned as if they were starving. I don't know what to do! Master needs to get up and help me defend! The creatures are getting closer and closer, blood dripping from their mouths and body covering the floor. I don't want to leave Master but I

have no choice! These creatures are trying to eat me, but I got away... leaving my Master, screaming and screeching behind me.

I ran as fast as I could to the trees and the trails I knew so well from my lovely adventures with Master. I found a den to stay in for the night, out of sight of the nasty creatures. All I can think about is how I betrayed my Master. I try not to whimper so I am not found, but it is hard to not too. Finally I got to sleep, but would wake up to any sound I heard. The morning was crisp, the chills covered my fur covered body as I lay weak with no motivation to move. Master must be eaten by now. I failed the only thing I was supposed to protect. Maybe Master did get away, maybe Master defeated the creatures and is sad that I am not home. I must go back, but I can hear creatures everywhere. I will have to wait until the darkness comes again. Master has taught me to walk quietly and sneak up on prey. I must use this to sneak home and see if Master is safe!

Creatures are creeping in every direction, slowly, like me after I have enjoyed a nice big meal that Master used to prepare for me. I crawl through the trees and bushes, trying not to make a sound. I didn't realize how far I ran away from Master to save myself, I couldn't even see home from where I was. Light screaming flames were leading back to my home. Creatures filled the area, and every step I took was a risk of being heard and attacked from these hungry things. Do they ever sleep? They look so much like Master does but they don't act like Master does. They don't speak, the moan and groan like I do when I am upset or angry. This does not make any sense. I don't like this adventure. I miss Master, I must get home quickly.

My journey seemed much longer than it should have been. Finally I have arrived home. I cannot see Master anywhere. Just blood and broken things cover the floor of my once peaceful home with Master. I call out a quiet whimper to see if Master can hear me. No answer... I slowly walk over to where Master once lay in bed, but Master is nowhere to be found. Where could Master have gone? *Crash!* I hear a noise down in the area

below my home. Could it be? Did Master get away and survive from these awful creatures? I run with excitement down the steps towards the noise I just heard, and there is my Master! Lying on the floor, full of blood panting as if just running for days. Masters hand slowly reaches out towards me, I cannot help but cry as I realized he is injured. I rush to Master's side and listen to the breathing slowly fade until I couldn't hear it any more. I lay here, sad that I left. I shouldn't have left.

Hours later, I still hadn't moved from Master's side. The breathing started again! Master is alive!! Master grabbed me so tight with excitement and kissed me with joy. Wait a minute, I don't remember kisses hurting like this. Am I blee... *Whimpering, barking, screeching...*

Kristina Stagg is an education student at Grande Prairie Regional College, majoring in Chemistry and minoring in Physical Education. She loves science fiction stories in general. She also loves to watch hockey and football.

The Archivist Columns

Katherine Lashley

The archivist retreats to her desk in the middle of the archival stacks. She sits, examines a folder, and then opens a box. A scream escapes. So the archivist tops the box with the lid once again, and seals the box with clear packing tape.

"No, you can't do this to me! I'm not special enough and I don't belong in a box." You scream at the woman in sea green. She touches your arm; you fling it away. "Take me back," you demand.

"It is too late, for you have been chosen."

You banter, "Why? What is this?"

"You're different. I want to preserve you. Preserve your memories."

You study the box. It has your name on it. Pearl Watson. Your years have been set. 1984-2011. You read your label: PW1911–Pearl Watson 1984-2011. This is you.

The rest of your body slips over the sides into the box—not as painful now. The shadow of the lid chills you, covers you, and encloses you. That's it. You are now an item in an archive. You be among memories but are they yours? Who are you? Your name and vital information are written on the outside of the box, not the inside. With willowy arms you hug a memory or two to your beatless chest. Hold on. Can't forget. Hold.



Strange thumps and squeaks reminded me that I was alone in the archives. After glancing over my shoulder at the closed door, I focused again on the box of items.

"Ah, Edward's collection," a smooth voice came from behind me.

I turned, my voice trembled, "Who are you?"

"I am the archivist," she said.

"No, you're not. You're not my boss and I've never seen you."

"Yes, I am—the true archivist." She held out her hand, "Come, let me show you my archives."

I will look at her and look away from the box. She will not prevail! She will not suck me in there! I will turn away from her and will run. The run that will be slow and hindered, as in dreams. My fingers will tingle, then my hand and arm will disintegrate. Gone. Running with one arm will be hard. A toe, then more, will feel fuzzy, and will disappear. It will be nearly impossible to run with missing limbs. Your pace will slow. She will catch you.

A young woman walked along rows of bookshelves until she came upon the archives department. She knocked lightly on the door then opened it. A woman with grey hair greeted her, "Oh, come on in. Here, sit down. Do you want anything to drink?"

She declined, for she always felt awkward drinking hot liquids in public.

The woman sat across from her, "Let me tell you what project you'll be working on.

Running among boxes, away from the archivist, she encounters a being. A ghost? The spectre of a man becomes visible.

"Who are you?" They ask simultaneously.

"I'm Brian."

Her voice floats, "Oh, you must be the Brian before I came to the archives. The one who disappeared."

"Yes, the one who disappeared." He assents.

"Let's escape," she grabs his arm which swirls into mist at her touch.

"We can't-ever." His voice echoes: "You get used to it."

We will run together through the stacks. We will grip boxes, pull boxes down, narrowly missing our heads and bodies—what is left of them. We will set free the others. We will crush the cell boxes and annihilate the shelving structures. We will run strong, growing in masses. Our bodies will warm the frozen air of this so special collection of the antiquated archivist. We will break down the door to the office and we will tumble the walls. We will be free!

We will shiver, huddled on the floor, back against steel shelves. We will miss our limbs—more will be sucked away, down the narrow passage, make the turn and slide into the box. We will struggle again, after a rest. Memories will drift out of our minds. Playing in our first piano recital.

Getting lost in a book. Writing our first poem. Giving our first presentation. That will have been pretty. We will chant the alphabet backwards. ZYX sounds like it will have been fun. We will go. We will chant. We will.

Katherine Lashley is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Morgan State University. Her dissertation analyzes gender and disability in young adult dystopias. She teaches first year writing at Towson University. She has published two books: a memoir entitled *My Younger Older Sister: Growing Up With An Autistic Older Sister*, and a fantasy novella titled *Lamia*. <http://www.katherinelashley.com/>

The Feeling

Daniel Gillett

For the longest fraction of a second, while both feet were off the icy road, Charles was excited. It was certainly the most expected emotion he could have felt at that moment, but he couldn't help it. He had always wanted to fly, even before he knew it was possible, and he had just achieved liftoff.

It had been a near thing, too: he had promised himself this would be his last try. He had been coming to this deserted stretch of frost covered cement for just over a week at this point, trying to recreate that impossible moment from before. The sense of anticipation had been replaced by frustration, tiredness, soreness, and an overwhelming urge to give up. Giving up would mean that he was crazy after all, but it seemed more plausible than the fact that he had actually levitated at that frat party. He was growing tired of leaving Charles-sized imprints in the snow banks that covered the small ice-covered road. All that his camera showed for his effort up to that point had been fit only to be laughed at on the Internet. And there was the fact that he had been pretty drunk at that party, and all sorts of tipsy had ensued. Imagining that he had briefly left terra firma and floated an inch off the ground could've been written off as being just that: imagined.

That feeling made all the difference, though. It had come upon him without any warning, standing in the host's backyard as the party sounded inside. The smell of the barbecue and the alcohol-filled sweat of the partygoers were intoxicating all by themselves. Charles had been standing very innocently in the corner, trying to work up his courage to ask that blond girl with the missing shirt if she would like to get to know

him a little better. The moment where he had convinced himself to start moving finally came, and he began to move toward her.

It happened so suddenly that thinking back he could not tell if any time had passed or if it had frozen still.

That feeling of absolute calm and wonder had filled his core, seeming to drive the alcohol out of his system. A second of disconnection and weightlessness that made him feel fit to just zoom upward toward the sky at that moment, to just float away from all the rip-roaring class clowns and gyrating girls to take his place in the heavens. For the briefest part of that long second, he had a vision of his feet never touching the ground again. A world where he had become Birdman and the world on the ground would never again know his awesome presence. He did not need to look at his feet to know that he was floating, but he looked down anyway simply out of pure stupefying shock. That was when the feeling left him.

Just as suddenly as it came, it left, though his realization that it was gone did not come to him like the feeling had. When he brought his eyes down to see his feet, the vertigo seemed to rush him from all sides. His legs fell out from under him, and he sunk to his knees in the yard clutching at his desperately rolling stomach. This was as far as he could have gone from that feeling. Nobody gave him a second glance except one, and he finally overcame his nausea enough to finally look up and see the shirtless girl standing over him with concern in her eyes.

She had asked him if he was ok. He had not replied. She made to lift him up. He made no move to help himself. He mumbled thanks in a thunderstruck tone. She asked him if he had looked shorter than a moment ago, and the world stopped again. The certainty had only escaped him for a moment as he lay there groaning, but she had brought it back. He could fly.

The rest of that night had been a blur; all thoughts of hook-ups and parties had tumbled out of his mind. He had no idea how he had fallen asleep that night instead of going outside to try it again. But try he would, when he was not so hung over.

It had been a trying week for him, wrestling with his doubts and even laughing at himself for being an idiot, thinking it wasn't real. He had tried to do it by leaping into the air and thinking too hard about it. It had become the most important thing in his world, and it had consumed his life accordingly. So for that last time, before he let common sense take over and make him go home in defeat, he tried something new. He shouldn't force it; he had not forced it before. Why should it be any different now?

This time he looked down and the feeling never left him.

Strike

Chris Moylan

The dreamers went on strike, all of them, beginning in the middle of the three o'clock work prime time. It was a synchronized suspension of service without warning, without explanation.

The possibility of a strike had never been raised publicly. The action struck many people as absurd and possibly illegal. Dreamers hardly knew where they were most of the time, or that they were—alive or dead, awake or asleep. How could they organize something so complicated and devious as this? How dare they?

What job could be easier than lying on one's back for sixteen hours a day, sleeping? Even door men and late night security guards were required to keep at least one eye open through most of their shifts, and maybe do checks from time to time. Dreamers moved only to shift in their beds, or yawn or scratch themselves from time to time. Actually, no one knew what dreamers did, except dream. But now that one contribution to society that they made out of their idleness, their inert passivity, was gone.

The talking clocks and tropical falls, the long passionate kisses with grammar school teachers in the depth of the forest, all the good dreams and bad dreams stopped, replaced by a brief notice of a breakdown in negotiations. There was no dreaming on the radio, on the internet, on cable. Nothing on any screen. It was gone.

Without dreams to upload, what was there? Merely sales figures and internal emails, ads, spam, sports, and news. Facts and more facts and more useless, unprocessed facts shaken into the air like dust from a mop

and coating everything with a thin layer of world-as-it-is... The dream service was always playing in the background or minimized at the bottom of the screen, brought up with a click of the mouse like the click of a lighter to a cigarette. Now it was gone. All that remained was data.

The unrelieved nakedness of all this information was disgusting. Some clicked their screens on and off, on and off, over and over, trying to make the strike disappear. Others pushed out of their chairs and stomped to the rest room to splash water on their faces or sit in one of the stalls and wait for calm to descend. A lot of cigarettes were smoked on the sidewalks outside those office buildings.

The evening rush hour was impossible. Traffic flowed along viscous currents of noise generated by honking horns, shouting drivers, engines revving to no purpose. The air thickened with toxins and oily ripples of heat from tail pipes and radiator grills. Pedestrians and drivers stopped in crosswalks, staring each other down with rage at the tedious, unfiltered randomness of their faces.

The radio carried repetitive stories on the absence of dream service, interrupted by weather reports and pop music little different from traffic reports and news stories, so as is, so brutally linear and colourless. The cramped space of the driver's seat imposed itself like a wheelchair. The limited options for movement— steering wheel, gas pedal and brake—revealed themselves in all their simple, naked finality. This was all one could do in a car. Turn, go, stop. Go, turn, brake, go, turn, brake, go...

It was no better on the sidewalks. How was one to escape? Window shop? Store windows had fallen into neglect in recent years. No one really looked at them anymore. And even those businesses that still made the effort were limited to a desert of illustration and tableaux: mannequins in variations of summer wear, photographs and film clips of mannequin like models wearing summer clothes on the beach or at barbecue...That was it. That was all there was going to be: relentlessly

simple depictions of clothes-wearing behaviour in relentlessly obvious examples of environments appropriate to the given outfits.

In desperation many people scrolled through old shows and film clips on their handheld devices while they walked. But a show is not a dream. Nothing they could pull up on their devices was a dream. The closest approximations were used up, so worn through repeated viewing as to be almost invisible.

Some decided to get the trip home over with, walk as quickly as possible. Approach the crosswalk en masse and wait for the light to turn. Cross to the other side of the street while talking on cell phones to people who were doing pretty much the same thing. Try not to panic at the here-ness of the sidewalk and the street, the only-ness of this place and that place. Try not to think.

Why go here or there if it was only going to be just what it was? Why talk to anyone if only to be confronted by yet another market report or health update, yet another reiteration of the complete emptiness of time spent at work or lunch... Nice weather we are having. Not as nice as yesterday but maybe better tomorrow but better than at lunchtime. You should have seen the weather at lunch. Did you see it too? Very nice weather we're having...

It was unbearable. Everything was unbearable.

Blind people found themselves swarmed by hecklers and bullies pointing them in the wrong direction, pushing off the curb into oncoming traffic just to see what would happen. Children fended off pats, shoves, and leering looks from people they didn't know, parents dragging them by the arm through the crowd. A cop, lost in thought, pressed the barrel of his revolver against the window of a parked car and pulled back the safety. A few adventurous women played grab-ass with men and the men tried playing along, whirling around indignantly, hand on hip, to scold.

The cop swung his gun and aimed at the men and women pawing at each other. Another cop saw him and took out his revolver. Down the avenue cops took out their weapons while small crowds gathered around them to watch.

News trucks pulled up and crews began filming the crowds which, naturally, grew larger with the arrival of the film crews. Families at home found their mourning for dreamwork interrupted by breaking news of disturbances in urban centres around the country. Sky view shots revealed tens of thousands of rush hour pedestrians knotted in groups of a hundred or more around cops, patrol cars, paddy wagons, sound trucks and circling helicopters. Traffic stopped. Drivers stepped out of the cars to see what would happen next. They watched and waited.

The police with guns drawn waited for what happen next, as did the news crews and the curious onlookers and the tv audience back home. Everyone waited, and waited, and waited. They continued to wait for hours, then days, then years, until no one could quite remember what they were waiting for, except for an official declaration that the strike had failed.

But that could never be, for not long after the strike was declared, and both sides abandoned negotiations, the dreamers ascended from the basements where they worked. Pale, so pale as to be nearly transparent, they filled the abandoned lobbies of the office buildings that housed the dream works. They pushed their emaciated bodies against the glass doors and rotating doors, stumbled into the sunlight, and burst into flames.

Chris Moylan has published poetry, fiction, literary criticism, and art criticism in the U.S. and Europe. He is an associate professor of English at NYIT.

Letters of Condolence

Jane Arsenault

Dear Little Girl Jane,

I've never given you any attention. I've barely acknowledged your existence. I never thought that I owed you an apology or an explanation. But I think I was wrong to let you fade away so quietly.

Let me think about you now—how you were, how you were treated, how you closed doors on yourself, how you built up a wall, layer by layer until you were almost gone from sight. I only remember pieces—things my mother told me, fragments of memories that flash into my consciousness, roused feelings from photos or objects.

When you were born, your parents were overjoyed. A little girl after two boys, aged three and five. You were delicate and pretty, with wisps of strawberry blonde hair and soft blue eyes. You were named after a stranger, another little blonde girl they once saw, a flower girl at a wedding. Already expectations were placed on you. But you threw off your diaper and painted the walls with poop. You had stitches in your head before you were two. And remember what you always heard: "There was a little girl who had a little curl right in the middle of her forehead. When she was good, she was very, very good, and when she was bad, she was very, very bad."

You became a worry and a problem for your mother. With no car and a husband often away, your mother would hold your near lifeless body in the taxi on the way to the hospital. Pussy willows, animal dander, feather, fir trees, even grass. They all stifled your breath. The "terrible twos" were

indeed terrible. Your mother held you while the doctor made deep scratches up and down your back dropping samples of allergens and waiting for a response. Once, when you were in an oxygen tent, your father, out of the country, was sent for. You were not to live through the night.

Somehow, you did survive that night. You lived a day, and then a week, and then a month. But you were always a worry. Your mother wanted more children but had to look after you. She blamed you for limiting her family. Your brothers blamed you too—you were why they could not have a dog and why they had a fake Christmas tree. You weren't really the cause—you were the scapegoat, an excuse the parents could use to avoid battling with the boys.

You were a stubborn, independent, precocious child. You would not let your mother comb or braid your hair, or do anything with it. The one time she tried to curl it, she accidentally touched your head with the iron. It was the last time she was allowed. Word on the street is that you wore some wild outfits to school in the early years. Your mother was mortified and tried to explain to the teacher that you would not let her choose your clothes. You didn't do the girl things simply because they were girl things. You would never wear pink; blue became the flag of your non-gendered childhood. When your mother was a little girl, her sister always got pink. She always got blue "to match her eyes." She really wanted you to wear pink. She felt shut out. You shut her out. You wouldn't be the daughter she wanted.

I can't explain why you shut your mother out of your life—some animal instinct perhaps that made you distant and contrary. I can't explain why you were so independent, so ready to prove that you didn't need anyone else. I can't explain why you always put yourself on the outside, trying not to look in, but looking in anyway. Yes, I can explain that. You were so scared that you wouldn't fit in (like you didn't fit into your family), that you would be rejected, that you did it to yourself first before anyone could do

it to you. Just to be safe, you would not conform or give in. You made your own life lonely. You have no one to blame but yourself.

I have never felt sorry for you. I have never allowed your pain and longing to surface until today. What made you so scared of people, of life, of yourself? You were damaged before you even got started. And no one is to blame. I'm sorry I blamed you. Maybe this is where the self-loathing develops. I hate that I am not like everyone else. I hate that I want to be like everyone else. I hated you for learning so well the self-abuses you still make me practice. I hate that it happened to you. I hate that you felt you had to do it.

And, at some point, the deep hatred of others started to grow. You hated pretty girls, girls with ribbons in their hair, and, yes, girls wearing pink. You hated the other kids' mothers because you knew they looked at you with suspicious eyes because you were the bad one, the one that was not going to be controlled. You hated the fathers who worked nine to five, Mondays to Fridays, at home when your father was on deployment. You hated sisters because you had brothers. You hated people who told you that you had a bright future ahead—you hated their empty promises, prophecies they could not foresee. I don't hate them now.

I remember you used to think your soul was like a communion wafer, whole and round and white. With each sin, it got a little ashy, tarnished with your errors, until eventually you realized that the whole wafer was blackened. Now, it is completely crumbled. I don't know what to do with that.

You were the first girl in your grade to start puberty—early, not on schedule—can't be like everyone else. You got your first period when you were riding your bike home from Susan's house. You were horrified. No one had told you that this would happen. Somehow, you knew that it was, ironically, "normal" and part of the transition into adulthood. You cried

and cried for the loss of the childhood you were so desperately trying to avoid.

I remember your father (your father!) coming into your room to explain this single defining moment of womanhood. Your mother couldn't (or wouldn't) muster the strength to share this with you. Maybe she thought you would reject her again. But you held on to this moment because this was the make-or-break moment in your relationship with your mother. It broke. You never wanted to be like your mother or be with your mother ever again. The relationship remained broken for a very long time. Now, with my own children, I am starting to understand some things. I forgive her for what she did or didn't do, whether it was intentional or not. (Recently, my mother told me that, in fact, she did not tell me about the "girl things" because I wouldn't let her. See? Everything is my fault. It's probably true. I have, notoriously, been independent. What's that, you say? Stubborn? Yes, perhaps that is more accurate.)

The other consequence of the onset of puberty was your sudden weight gain when you were eleven. Your mother, taller than you, weighed less than 90 pounds. No wonder she thought you were obese. But just as quickly as it came, the chubbiness went away and you were forgiven. Do you know when you stopped eating? You were always a disordered eater—a few weeks of nothing but hot dogs, a stint of something else, meals at odd hours, never breakfast or breakfast food—you would always vomit that (not on purpose; your stomach just couldn't take it—even your stomach was not a "morning person"). You avoided liquids so you wouldn't have to use the school washroom. Because of that little habit, I had a very painful kidney stone in my thirties—thanks a lot. In high school, lunch started to dwindle away. I don't know why. Why did you let yourself get below 90 pounds? To make your mother love you? To love yourself? So others would love you? Or was it a fear of going back to that pubescent chubby girl (who wasn't really even chubby at 105 pounds)? Or was it a slow form of suicide?

You started me on a dangerous path—a roller coaster of dieting and stomach upsets, irritable bowels, muscle pain, fatigue, and foul moods. Now I am chubby (really, I am). I still starve myself for days. But now I binge afterward. I know it doesn't make sense and it is ruining my body, but you started me on this course more than 20 years ago and you still whisper in my ear, "You're too fat." I don't really blame you for this—not when I know from where you've gotten it.

But I still hate you for being a bitch. You learned those lessons well too. Everything bothered you (maybe because of low blood sugar). You made your father's mornings miserable. When you were in college, it was just the two of you getting ready so early. And you made his mornings hell when he was already suffering what I suffer now. He didn't deserve your rage. I will never forgive you for that.

I'm sorry that you saw life in such a skewed way. I'm sorry that you turned from that much-anticipated beautiful baby into that stubborn, independent little girl, into that miserable teenager full of hate and rage, into that young woman who was selfish and mean. I'm sorry that you had to grow up all alone, isolated. I'm sorry that you tortured yourself and dreamed of visiting the dead. I'm trying to make things better for me, but for you it is too late and I'm sorry for that.

My Dearest Sons,

I love you more than I can ever express. You have done more for me than I can ever explain. You have changed me more than I ever believed I could change. Thank you for making me a better person, a better woman, a better spirit. Calmer, nicer, more forgiving.

It's true that I never planned to have children. I saw motherhood as one of those woman things that would hold me down, prevent me from

accomplishing something important. I saw motherhood as a liability. Being female was a weakness.

Despite my years of denial, Mother Nature tricked me into wanting children. I was worried about growing old all alone—a pretty selfish reason for having children. But there were also pressures from my parents, the church, and society. So, between biology and sociology, I started having children.

Nevertheless, I was delighted when the first of you arrived, and also when the second came. But I knew the third would be my last, and I wished for a girl—a chance to have a real mother/daughter relationship. Instead, I had another boy. And as much as I loved my baby boy, I did feel some kind of loss that I would remain without females—no sisters, no girlfriends, no daughters.

Now I'm glad you were all boys—it made many things simpler in the house. There were always playmates and hand-me-downs and partnerships among the three of you. I know that sometimes you fought with each other, but I hope you all enjoyed each other and stay close as adult brothers.

And know that I did my best, even when my best wasn't good enough.

Dear Oldest Son,

You made me a mom. We spent the first 15 months of your life as a tight pair. You trained me—I knew nothing about babies or toddlers. Thank you for being so easy. You slept through the night at six weeks. You always had a bright smiling face. You always knew your job as the oldest brother—you babysat, you drove your brothers and their friends, you set an example for them at school and in life. You should be proud.

I'm sorry for the burdens you had to bear for me. I'm sorry that I was too weak to hide my illness from you and too weak to be the mother you deserved. I'm sorry you had to mother me. I'm sorry you had to be the head of the household when your dad was at work and I was crying, or sick, or asleep. And I'm sorry that your heart and mind had to know, from an early age, what depression was. But I really believe that you were the one who got me through it all (except when you were in Grade 8 and went through the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" phase—don't feel too bad—both of your brothers went through it too). Thank you.

Don't let your feeling of duty to and care of your mother get in the way of your living your life. I couldn't bear that. You always say you'll stay home for college and then always live near me. As much as I would love that, don't make your decisions based on me. You do what is right for you. Now is your time.

Dear Little Mom,

I forgive you. I love you. I'm sorry. That's all there is to say.

A Letter to My Grandmother, long gone from me:

Dear Mamie,

You died when I was only 15 years old. I grieved for many years. My life was changed the day you died—I will miss you forever. Even now, more than 30 years later, I can't look at your picture. As I write this letter, I am on the verge of tears.

You, in your gentle, quiet way, held us all in harmony. Everyone I ever knew that knew you—relatives, neighbours, friends—everyone loved you. In my family, you were almost a god. Each of us would do anything you asked—but you didn't ask for much.

I've heard many stories about you since you left. I knew you were a charitable woman, giving your time to the church, knitting socks and mittens for children who had none. I didn't know that when you owned the little grocery store that you caught people stealing from you and you gave them twice what they took. I didn't know that many people bought things on credit and you never called in the payment. You saved many people from starving to death in the post-depression era.

For me, you were the church, holier than the pope. It was an honour to be allowed to sit at the front of the church with you and your friends rather than with my parents. I wanted to be with you. I wanted to be good like you. I wanted your approval, and you freely gave it. You were always proud to have me or my brothers sit with you.

I always admired your spunk. For such a mild mannered person, you were quite adventurous. As a 70-something-year-old woman, you got in my brother's little sports car to go for a drive with him. At 80, you took your first plane trip. I've heard the story of how you "forced" my dad to marry your daughter. And with a Grade 3 education, you could read and write in French and English, and run a business. I like to think I have some of your spirit in me.

You died the week before Christmas, which would have been your 86th birthday. The presents you bought us were under the tree. Ours to you were also there. I had bought a nativity scene and given everyone a piece. Yours was the angel. The unfinished afghan was still by your chair. No one used your teacup. I wasn't allowed to see you at the hospital—probably a wise move on my parents' part. It was hard enough to have the image of you being taken out of our house on a stretcher in my mind. I couldn't go to your funeral. It was in PEI and it was winter. I never got the chance to say good-bye. But I took solace in my belief that you knew how much I loved you. And I know you loved me.

A few months later, your spirit came to me. You told me that you were okay and not to worry. Thank you for that.

With your death and assumable ascension into heaven (if you couldn't get in, who could?), began my phase of religious zealotry. I believed you, like God, could see everything that I did. I didn't want to let you down. When I was about to cross a line, I would ask myself if you would turn away from me. I didn't cross any lines for at least another five years. My parents couldn't stand me—I started reading the Bible and saying the Rosary every night. I strictly adhered to the old-fashioned sanctions placed on Catholics—no meat on Fridays, no carnal thoughts, tough Lenten promises. And with my new holiness came my new "holier than Thou" attitude. I looked down on everyone who "sinned"—people who had premarital sex, people who abandoned the church, people who were just living their lives without being charitable. I was self-righteous. I missed the entire essence of your goodness.

My head is ringing, my sinuses are plugged, my skin is eaten up. I feel nauseated; I want to eat everything in sight—but I'm terrified of being fat so I will just eat nothing. Because now I'm old and ugly and a bit fat, but if I eat I'll be a lot fat and I can hear my mother say nice things to me but really she is thinking how fat and slovenly and pathetic I am. And I hear other people saying, "Look at that fat old lady—she's pretty funny" as they think how totally physically unattractive I am. And they are thinking I should just get a bunch of cats and be a crazy old cat lady because no one, no man, could actually love someone like me. And now you, dear reader, are reading this and thinking how pathetic and self-centred and shallow I am. And that you're glad you don't actually know me and that maybe I really should be locked up or I might as well die because I'm useless and a drain on society—a waste of oxygen. But I shouldn't put words in your mouth or thoughts in your head.

Dear Jane,

Stop being so hard on yourself. Stop blaming yourself for everything. Stop blaming yourself for being inadequate.

Your therapist told you to make a list entitled "Things I Like about Myself." That was a difficult task. Eventually, a list of about ten entries developed. Your therapist was not impressed—every entry was qualified by a deprecating joke (ironic for a person who takes herself too seriously). And what about the list of your children's memories? Do you remember how the boys helped you with the list and ...

Dear Mother,

That's not all there is to say. I am angry with you. I really am. Even now, you get to me. You still comment on my weight, my hair, my laziness, my disorganization, my uselessness. You are still hurtful, but not, as I once believed, hateful.

I used to think we had a typical mother/daughter relationship. I thought all mothers treated their daughters with malice and spite. I thought all daughters regarded their mothers with hate and anger and fear. But it's not true. Sure, lots of mothers and daughters have problems, especially in the teen years, but we have a dysfunctional, toxic relationship and it makes me angry. I don't know what I did to make you dislike me, or what I did to be such a disappointment to you. I don't know why you are the way you are. I dare say you would never explore your mind and past the way I need to, but something must have happened to you to make you so negative, so controlling, so bitter, so unmotherly (didn't I call myself that?). I know you were always the one to have the responsibility at home—your brothers and sisters were long gone by the time you were a teenager and you had to look after your aging mother and the house. Maybe you were deprived of her attention because she was so into her

charitable societies. I know you were deprived of the romance and even the wedding you planned, wanted, deserved. I know you felt like the ugly duckling (like mother, like daughter, eh?) because you were skinny and wore glasses. And I know you didn't have the opportunities that I have had. But how did you end up so afraid of life? And why did you have to drag me down with you?

So there it is. I don't understand you. I don't want to be like you. I don't want to be hurt by you anymore. I am angry. I am hurt. I am sad. But I do love you and, actually, I feel sorry for you. I'm sorry your life was a disappointment, a disillusionment, perhaps a bad deal. But I have to stop reliving those things in my life because I am not as strong as you are. I have cracked many times already, and soon the Band-Aid fixes won't be enough and I will completely come apart and nothing will be able to put me back together again. Humpty Dumpty is *not* my idea of a good role model. Neither are you.

Jane:

Stop being such a miserable bitch. That's it—just stop being miserable and stop being a bitch. You are so completely wrapped up in self-pity and self-loathing that no one can stand you. And anyway, no one cares. Everyone has their own problems, most of them way worse than yours. They don't have time to feel sorry for you or try to fix you. Get over yourself.

A Letter to My Former Husband:

You may want to take a stiff drink before you read this because it is going to hurt. I'm sorry about that, but I've been lying to you and to myself and keeping my feelings and emotions in a dark container in a back room in my mind and the lid is about to blow off. So, before I explode into a

spewing mess, I have to write this down. You don't even have to read it, really. That isn't that vital to my project and if you want to avoid the pain, you should just stop reading. Some of this will be venomous. But it is how I feel and how I think and I really believe you have no clue about that. So read on at your own peril.

On second thought, I don't want to do this. It would not be helpful, just mean and spiteful. What I need to say is that even though you say you love me (and you may even think you love me), you don't. You couldn't. If you loved me, you wouldn't treat me like your inferior, your servant, your child, your charity case. You would try to understand—come to the doctor or therapist, like I've repeatedly asked, or talk to a pharmacist, or go on-line at least. And you wouldn't have threatened me, abandoned me, or abused me.

When we got married, I was mentally ill. Stated that way is both a little funny and mean! But that is the truth. I was hurting and it got worse and worse. Now I am better and I am not the person I used to be. Neither are you—people, "normal" people, change with time, why shouldn't we? But we haven't changed together; we have changed apart. We haven't been emotionally or spiritually married for years.

You don't deserve to be with a woman who can't, and doesn't, love you, and I don't deserve to be unhappily married for the rest of my life because you don't believe in divorce (because you're Catholic, yet you don't even go to church). Let's just part without any more arguing, fighting, game playing. I guess that's good-bye.

P. S. It didn't go smoothly, did it? Divorce and arrests and lawsuits and battles and spite. I can't believe how bad it has been.

A Letter to My Lover:

Mr. Sweet (Can you believe I ever called you that?),

I am writing this five months after you left me. Five months since the day that you told me, at least three times, that you love me. Five months of my trying to get over you.

When we met, we were both very wounded, physically and emotionally. We brought ourselves out of desperation and depression together, as lovers, friends, and confidantes. We laughed and were silly, and acted like love-struck teenagers.

But my kids gave you a very hard time—harassing emails, crank calls, and idle threats. And you were scared because I fell in love with not only you, but your whole family. And maybe we choked ourselves, practically living together for the last four months of our relationship.

I don't know if you really stopped loving me, or whether you never loved me, or whether you loved me only as a friend. Maybe you just couldn't stand my circumstances any more. Maybe you thought you were doing me a favour by no longer providing a target for my sons. But you left.

And as much as that hurt, what hurts even more is that you obliterated me from your mind so quickly—started a new relationships only two weeks later, as if I never existed.

Despite my disappointment and bitterness, I have to thank you. You saved me from my self-destruction and you saved my life. If I hadn't met you, I would still be in an abusive marriage. And, you taught me that I *can* love, and be loved, that I am a good person and I can make my own happiness. You taught me to be a freer spirit, to live less planned, to relax. Thank you for starting me on a better path.

I loved you the moment I met you. I love you now. Perhaps I will always love you even though I will never see you again.

I know that you did love me, at least for a little while. When we played house babysitting your nephew for a week, you loved me then. And in Ecuador, one night when you turned to me and said, "Good night, Sweet Heart," kissed me, and we fell asleep cuddled up, you loved me then. And when in a fit of revenge my son lied and had me arrested because he was "scared" of me... remember, I tried to break up with you that day, and you held me and said we were together, you loved me then.

So you loved me for a little while truly, honestly, without conditions—but just for a little while.

Was that enough?

No. But I'll carry on.

Jane Arsenault, from Prince Edward Island, writes creative non-fiction as part of her journey through severe and chronic depression. Her Work has appeared in *Island Parent*, *Canadian Stories*, and *Mothering Canada: Interdisciplinary Voices*. She has mothered three sons.

The Food Seduction

Kata Alvidrez

It was the early Sixties and I was about seven years old. My parents had bought a brand new house in the 'burbs that was way beyond their means. Threadbare sheets hung limply from nails that hid the drapery hardware that would not hold real drapes for another ten years. The adults could be heard laughing at the dining table where red wine sparkled in clear glass goblets purchased from FEDCO for a pricey dollar a-piece. I normally sat with my two younger sisters at the open dishwasher door repurposed as the "kids' table," but they had finished and were off to their own devices.

I stared at the cold food on my plate. We were not allowed to ask to be excused until our plates were cleared and mine was still covered with the telltale signs of a finicky eater: cold green beans shimmering with the slime of margarine over canned vegetables, lumpy mashed potatoes dotted with flecks of pepper and parsley direct from the Betty Crocker box, and a pool of cold brown gravy glistening in all of its congealed glory right before my eyes. The white ribbons and veins of fat in the slice of meat had lost their once-transparent shine and instead reminded me of the thick greyish grease that stays in the pan after cooking bacon. I hated the food before me when it was warm but even more then because it was cold.

I scowled at the sound of the adults talking and slurping and clacking their forks and knives on their plates. There they were, sitting at The Big Table, enjoying conversation across a white lace tablecloth under a faux chandelier of red glass and brass trim. As I imagined their softly lighted space in the dining room, the table decorated with short white candles

amid fresh pink camellias in hobnail milk glass bowls, I surveyed the contrasting avocado green appliances, the green tiled counter with its darker green grout, and the green–Blue Spruce!–stained cabinetry that made my kitchen prison an incongruously dark place for perfect happy moms in white aprons and smiling curly-haired kids in the TV ads. Those were surely not the same kids who were expected to be seen and not heard in my house.

The hard telephone books ground against the bones in my butt as I sat there, staring at the white rolling racks of the dishwasher which was walled in pale aqua-coloured plastic. My makeshift dining table was guaranteed to be sterilized before the next meal, so anything spilled was still edible. No excuses. Nowhere to stash tiny bits and pieces of rejected cuisine.

Time passed and the smell of that cold fat became overpowering. Its odour was turning rancid in my nostrils, making a tickle in my throat and turning my tongue sour. The mere thought of putting that square-cut bit of animal carcass into my mouth made my belly wrench and my intestines gurgle. I felt the last bit of barely swallowed gristly meat threaten to travel back up my throat and I gulped hard to hold it down. I cringed at the memory of vomiting on other similar nights: strong hands wrenching me out of my seat, my feet barely keeping up with my shoulders, as I found myself directed into the bathroom with the threat of a spanking shouted behind me. I would have to eat everything on that plate or I would spend the night sitting there in that marvellously modern kitchen, as it was the *tour de force* of the modern home for the modern family. Everything around me was shiny and I hated it every inch of it.

What in the world inspires a parent to force a child to eat what she does not want to eat? Is it really because we want to make sure the child is well fed, not starving, and not lacking for necessary nutrition? Is it because we want children to understand the great variety of available foods beyond the comfort of a predictable hot dog or a fried chicken TV dinner? Or is it

because, as parents, we feel driven to be in charge, to set the standards, to enforce the rules? Is parenting about domination or can we accomplish these same things in other ways?

I do understand that frustration of dealing with a finicky eater, the kid who turns his or her nose up at every offering, especially when you are a dinner guest or in a restaurant where the only affirmative on the menu is the most costly item available. "No grilled cheese? No pancakes? No fried chicken? No pork chop? Lobster, you say? LOBSTER?"

As a parent, I have probably committed the power sin my fair share of times. "Eat your cereal or you can't have McDonald's for lunch." "Eat your dinner or you can't have dessert." However, aren't these reasonable compromises? In contrast, the face-off between a stubborn child and a cold unappetizing meal for even an hour past dinner must be far more scarring than leaving the child hungry for one night.

Adults in my generation - the now aging Baby Boomers whose families loved those avocado refrigerators and beyond-their-means housing tracts with two-car garages and brand new washing machines and dryers but no curtains - now face a number of debilitating health issues not manifested in previous generations: extreme obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, alcoholism, drug abuse, and diabetes. Why? Is it because we were trained to think of the starving children in China (and India and Africa and Mexico) if we "wasted" food already on the table? Is it because we were taught to ignore our body's natural responses to certain foods or feelings of fullness in order to simply consume for consumption's sake? Or is it because "modern" families were so busy working and paying for what the advertisers told us were the Necessities of Life that parents didn't have time to eat with their children and know them, know their likes and dislikes, talk about food and vitamins, or converse about general health and happiness?

I am now 60, dangerously obese, and my happiness almost always includes food and alcohol. I celebrate with food and comfort myself with food. If I don't like something, I may not eat all of it... especially if I am otherwise occupied with stimulating conversation or something interesting on television. But my deepest, earliest training informs my unconscious habits and, when alone, I will often clean the plate without even realizing it.

And I will rarely even think to myself, "That didn't even taste good! Why did I eat it at all?"

Kata Alvidrez earned her MA in Creative Writing from Iowa State University but spends her days and nights teaching Freshman Composition at a community college in Bullhead City, Arizona. She has argued for years that there is never enough time in the week to write for herself, opting instead to spend her creative energy on students. One day it occurred to her that she could demonstrate what she was teaching by writing essays along with them; this is one.

Road Warriors in Hue, Vietnam

George Hanna

George and Belinda, are you interested in participating in the city tour by motorbike once we get settled in Hue?" inquired JP Kolvstad, our G Adventure CEO.

"Not bloody likely," I growled. That might render our travel insurance null and void. "Besides, those two-wheelers scare the hell out of me, the way they swarm through the streets, darting in and out of traffic."

"No, JP," echoed Belinda. That activity is too dangerous. Too many things can go wrong, and what happens if the bike tips over? There's little or no protection."

"That's fine. Let me know if you change your mind."

A few hours later, the two nervous, highly cautious Canadian travellers (the oldest "adventurers" on this tour) were having second thoughts. Riding behind an experienced driver must surely be a lot safer than driving the motorbike, yes? Think how much fun we might have. And we'll get to see monuments, historic sites, rice paddies and water buffalo from a biker's eye perspective. Heck, let's do it!

Well, that's how one mad impulse—a moment of wild, reckless abandon—turned two of the most risk-adverse vacationers, G and B, into road warriors racing throughout Hue and far off into the city 's outskirts. Yes, I exaggerate the danger. In theory, nothing could be safer. Our Vietnam contingent consisted of 17 participants, with 17 drivers operating 17 different motorbikes. Each of us, then, were supposed to don a helmet,

perch on the seat immediately behind our drivers, then sit back and enjoy the ride.



The travellers pretend they were driving. The author is the bearded fellow in the middle.

My driver was a short Vietnamese man in his mid-fifties. Though he spoke scarcely ten words of English, he was polite, good-natured and often quite funny. Before mounting the bike, he glanced at my fat knee projecting outwards from the seat. "You must start family," he suggested. Zen and the Art of motorcycle maintenance?

I agonized over proper motorbike etiquette for the infrequent passenger. For instance, how was I supposed to hold on? There was no passenger handlebar between me and the driver. I knew that, in such cases, it was permissible to place both hands around the operator's chest or waist, yet I was squeamish about doing so with a male driver. While I was musing about the non-existent alternative of slipping my arms around the slim waist of a young, attractive Vietnamese female driver, I came to my senses

when the Honda engine coughed and the machine lurched ahead. That was it. We were well on our way. . . .

As I tightly gripped the edges and back of the motorbike seat, we eased out of the motorbike parking lot and into traffic. It was really great to be riding a bike, quickly becoming part of the traffic flow near the market area of Hue. All 17 bikes kept in tight formation, dodging around cars, other motorbikes and aggressive pedestrians darting quickly across the street. As the market was in full swing, I could not resist glancing at the many shops gaudily displaying their wares: brightly coloured hand-sewn purses; good-quality leather goods; and touristy t-shirts. As well, there were a bizarre number of tailor shops; the store-front offices of tour guide operators; and, of course, the ubiquitous massage parlours trading in body rubs or . . . sex.

Well, the euphoria of flying through the streets of Hue under a bright, tropical sun swept aside all my dark misgivings about what might go wrong in the event of a collision with a lumbering cement truck. I reflected, merrily, how effortless this method of transportation was compared to all the huffing and puffing we did while cycling up and down the streets and outskirts of Chiang Mai, Thailand on sports bicycles." What a glad-happy day THIS is turning out to be," I reflected. Adventures in Indochina!

No sooner had I luxuriated in great expectations of a wonderful, carefree day's outing than I reflected that I might, perhaps, tighten my tenuous grip on the edge of the (shared) motorcycle seat. By this time we had left behind the old downtown area and were on a highway, whereupon my intrepid driver accelerated. With the abrupt increase in speed, we sped past rice paddies with farmers toiling away planting rice in the fields; the agricultural workers, along with the water buffalo, were not much more than a blur.

With a fright, I threw my left arm and, before long, my right arm, around the chest of my driver. At last I felt secure. Perhaps I might even survive! We hurtled down the highway, my Vietnamese driver tenaciously holding his own in the swirling, chaotic traffic. Gone was my earlier reticence about grabbing the driver by his middle. Heck, this isn't so bad! Once again, I was living in the moment, casting aside my inner doubts and insecurities.

Ah, what pleasure to snake along the back roads fronting the green countryside. We noticed one male farmer, clad in short pants, laboriously pulling his own plough to cut a deep furrow in the black soil. Was he too poor to afford a water buffalo? In contrast, the females wore loose-fitting pants and wore the traditional cone-shaped Vietnamese peasant hats. There was much to enjoy on this motorcycle tour

Abruptly, my driver turned his back sideways and made a few brief utterances that I failed to catch. When I did not respond, he began squirming in his seat, gesticulating wildly with one free hand. Awakening from my pleasant reverie, I finally grasped what he was trying to say. Oh yes, now I understood. In my terror of falling off the motorbike and cracking open my head—a cracked egg!—I had inadvertently been hugging the poor fellow as tightly as a boa constrictor. Rigor mortis must have set in as I clawed desperately and hung on for dear life to my all-too-accommodating driver, who, by this time, could barely breathe.

With a series of delicate maneuvers, I gradually managed to unhinge myself from my gallant driver, who soon breathed more easily. One arm at a time, I shifted each hand behind my back to grip the rear handlebar, from which I began pulling forwards lest we hit a bump in the road and I somersault head over heels.

Our motorcycle tour consisted of about six or seven rides interspersed with short strolls or longer walks around the central historic palaces, temples and other buildings of Hue. Faded or well preserved, they

provided remarkable evidence of the grandeur of the ancient capital city of Hue. However, it is the motorbike convoy that concerns us here. . .

Like my plucky driver, I was beginning to breathe more easily. We were now far from Hue and well into the countryside when the drivers made a beeline for a wooded area overlooking the Perfume River, with the hills of Laos in the distance. I assumed that we were going to stop, park the bikes and leg it the rest of the way. To my horror, the crew zoomed up and down a bush trail, treating us to a prolonged stretch of off-road dirt-bike motorcycling! I bounced up and down on the seat as the bike zigzagged over rough, bumpy terrain. At one point, my driver's control of his machine became quite erratic: the bike started to tip and I was starting to fall off, when I yelled at him to stop. While that indignity was soon over, I wondered what the return journey—downhill—would be like. Sure enough, by the time we reached the gravel road my driver wobbled his bike, which careened wildly towards a ditch on the opposite side. Alerted by my frantic shouts (no, screams!), the driver managed to regain control of his motorcycle just short of ramming us into a medium-sized tree.

With my nerves shot, I crawled off the bike with cramped feet and trembling hands during the next pit stop. To varying degrees, All the others, including Belinda, were enjoying themselves. "Of course it's scary. That's the point" suggested my wife, who advised me to close my eyes during the scary parts. Neglecting her advice once we were back on more solid pavement, I kept fixing my eyes on the road ahead, praying for . . . deliverance from my inglorious career as a road warrior in Vietnam.

Ella, one of our Vietnam tour members, had been following at some distance behind me. She later commented that she caught a glimpse of me, with head bent and motorcycle helmet askew, and, astonished, wondered if I had fainted from sheer fright. In fact, my ill-fitting helmet had been slipping around for quite some time. As the damned thing turned sideways, I kept swatting at it, to no avail. Through some devilish trick of fate it eventually flipped over, and lo and behold! I was wearing

my helmet backwards. . . . First indignities, then what? Mutilation or death?

Well, I survived that bizarre experience. You cannot imagine how relieved I was when our convoy of motorbikes pulled up in front of our hotel. It was almost enough for me to get down on my knees and kiss the pavement in rapture. In the end, I high-fived my long-suffering driver, handed him a lavish tip, and blessed him as my Vietnamese motorcycle brother.

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Two Poems celebrate Life through Dying

Prakash Kona

Nazim Hikmet's poem "My Funeral" and Pier Paolo Pasolini's "The Day of My Death" celebrate the idea of life by looking at it through the eyes of the dying. The point is not merely about aestheticizing death, but finding life beautiful because we have an insight into how the world looks in our absence. It is a world at ease with itself, as though we were a detail in a picture frame rendered inconspicuous by the blank canvas.

Having suffered persecution for more than a decade in prison, Hikmet found that the "sad" cannot exist unless intertwined with the "beautiful." Some of the passionate melancholy in his poetry is inherent in how a sense of mourning dominates Middle Eastern and Turkish writing. The weight of this mourning is built into the impermanence of human longing. Life can only be made meaningful against a backdrop of pain.

This is not a romantic or sentimental view of dying with a "forever" attached to it. What death will destroy is the body, and one's consciousness of the body as a body. Death is not the "other" of existence, but death *is* existence. There is no notion of an existence outside of dying. The tremendous sense of being that life will bring is owing to the continuity it shares with death. Ideally, a communist society is one that recognizes this continuity and in doing so rejects what is fundamental to the bourgeoisie, which is the ownership of property. It is property that perpetuates the illusion of life as an end in itself.

The idealizing of life in the bourgeois world is about excluding the materiality of death or about making death the polar opposite of life. Death becomes an enemy that constantly needs to be suppressed or

combated. In emphasizing the materiality of living, Hikmet concentrates on the practical details surrounding his death:

Will my funeral start in our courtyard below?
How will you bring my coffin down three floors?
The lift will not take it
and the stairs are too narrow.

For Pasolini, the "ardent" Mediterranean sun stands witness to the drama of his death. It is a poignantly bright day in contrast to the poet-narrator falling into "death's darkness." The "self" in a work of art is an invented one. The "I" cannot exist as if it were a "real" person. The reality of "I" can be found through reference to the perception of a self. Therefore "I," in theory, can be anyone or anything. At the end of the movie *The Decameron* (1971), the figure of Pasolini appears with the final line, "Why create a work of art when dreaming about it is so much sweeter?" The "I" is an element in a fantasy, and death does not make it any less fantastical than what it is. The struggle with one's own sanity is part of the process of creating a work of art, and it is this struggle that makes life real as opposed to the fantasy of a dying self.

It is so much sweeter to dream of one's death, than creating a work of art commemorating it. Yet the poem will make claims over reality more than the self that dies in the process of conceiving it. Saint Augustine says that God exists in the eternal present. In Hikmet and Pasolini, death can only happen in the eternal present. The vision of life in its wholeness is viewed in that dying present, which is at once time and eternity. Only in childhood can one catch a glimmer of such a present inhabited by both God and death.

"The Day of My Death"

I'll close my eyes,
leaving the sky to its splendor.

Under a warm green linden
I'll fall into my death's darkness,
scattering linden and sun.

The beautiful boys
will run in that light
which I've just lost,
flying from school
with curls on their brows.

"My Funeral"

Perhaps the courtyard will be knee-deep in sunlight and pigeons
perhaps there will be snow and children's cries mingling in the air
or the asphalt glistening with rain
and the dustbins littering the place as usual.

[...]

Whether a band turns up or no, children will come near me,
children like funerals.

A feeling of ecstasy dominates the poems because of how they approach death. It is through ecstasy that time is obliterated, an ecstasy at once death-like and greater than death. Children unconsciously participate in ecstasy, like the "beautiful boys" who "will run in that light" and the ones that "like funerals," because it is an occasion to rejoice at the sight of people caught in a moment of play-acting when they weep at the thought of their own deaths to come.

"I eat existence with an insatiable appetite," Pasolini once said. He loved life with the appetite of a dying man, which is why he could make his last film, *Salo, or the One Twenty Days of Sodom* (1975), with relentless daring. The film is a scathing attack on fascism, but also an invitation to death given the severity of his criticism of the role of the Catholic Church

and the State in perpetuating a system based on consumption and commodification of the human person.

Death symbolizes a resurrection for the believer because life is an idea journeying from the here to the hereafter. For Pasolini, the resurrection is about revolution, which is a spiritual act because ultimately it is spiritual equality that will transform into social and political equality. The spirit however is not the abstract soul but the body struggling to defy its own limits. The body needs to believe that it is more than just a body.

What cannot be avoided is the literary understatement of discussing one's own death. To write about one's death as if it were an ordinary event, one among countless others, is to invoke tragedy in a way that seeks forgiveness from the world. More than love, what it seeks is remembrance. Thus Hikmet ends his poem:

Our kitchen window will stare after me as I go,
the washing on the balcony will wave to see me off.
I have been happier here than you can ever imagine,
friends, I wish you all a long and happy life.

Is it sweeter to create life rather than dream of it? Is it easier to die without thinking of death or to pass away at the moment when life is the sweetest? Saime Goksu and Edward Timms named their biography of Hikmet, perhaps the greatest Turkish poet of the twentieth century, *Romantic Communist: The Life and Work of Nazim Hikmet*. If "Romantic" is meant in a metaphysical sense to mean a combination of a mystic and an outlaw, then perhaps it makes sense. But certainly Hikmet doesn't qualify as romantic in the conventional sense of the term; of someone distant from day-to-day life. Life is about creating meaning because inherently it is a meaningless universe. Beauty is what gives it meaning. Hence the sweet state of sadness in Hikmet's penultimate line: "I have been happier here than you can ever imagine." For Pasolini, death is what endows the struggle to be creative with a meaning that transcends life.

Boys will continue to run in the light, though "I" have just lost it.

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Social Justice and the Sorcerer's Stone: Using *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* as an Avenue for Social Justice

Katelyn Clift-Fabrie

In a society that boasts consumerism, outward appearances, and social status as the Holy Trinity of contemporary culture, peddling heroic characters that are unpopular outsiders at the bottom of the classist chain may seem outlandish or even impossible. Although American adolescents live in a democratic culture, hierarchical-laced motivations concerning popularity tend to reign supreme. Keeping up appearances drives teenagers who eagerly add a filter to an “ugly” Instagram photo and “friend” popular acquaintances on Facebook in hopes of climbing up the social ladder. In perhaps one of the most well-known Young Adult series of modern culture, the Harry Potter books challenge readers to not only delve into a world completely different from their own, but they also glorify those at the bottom of the social pecking order. Specifically, J.K. Rowling’s first book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*, provides both a meaningful message concerning social justice for the underprivileged and unpopular and an appropriate text for critical literacy exercises. Social justice studies provide an avenue for introspective examination of challenging issues like race, ethnicity, class, and gender (Glasgow 54). In an article discussing the importance of social justice in the classroom, Jacqueline Glasgow writes: “We must create for students democratic and critical spaces that foster meaningful and transformative learning. If we expect students to take social responsibility, they must explore ideas, topics, and viewpoints that not only reinforce but challenge their own” (54). *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* provides this “democratic and critical space” through its positive depictions and successes of the characters Harry, Ron, and

Hermione. An examination of the three main characters' unorthodox heroics prompts impressionable adolescents to overlook an individual's appearance and social status in favour of a more deeply nuanced examination of humanity.

Before delving into the specific qualities that provide an avenue for social justice instruction, an overarching connection between social justice and critical literacy must first occur. Critical literacy education starts "by problematizing the culture and knowledges in the text—putting them up for grabs, critical debate, for weighing, judging, and critiquing" (qtd. in Bean and Moni 638). Young adults place a high value on social status; therefore, the unorthodox successes of Harry, Ron, and Hermione—essentially outcasts by definition—most definitely "problematiz[es]" the status quo. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, Harry Potter, a young orphan boy, receives an invitation on his eleventh birthday to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry that changes his life forever. What ensues after he arrives is no short of incredible as he befriends two students named Ron and Hermione and ends up face to face with most powerful and evil wizard on the planet. Although lively and fun for readers, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* pushes teenagers to dream outside of their social status. Contemporary society doles out gold stars for those voted "Most Popular" and those whose parents can foot the bill, while in many cases unpopular and financially underprivileged students experience shame and alienation. At the beginning of the book, a classist system very similar to modern society frames Harry's world; however, the emphasis on the *success* and *significance* of outcasts like Harry provides both inspiration and an avenue for fruitful discussion. In an article detailing Harry Potter's application in the classroom, Meredith Cherland discusses type of teacher who adeptly implements social justice driven critical literacy.

I speak to literacy teachers who work with teenagers about unsettling their students' collective views of the world and their sense of life's inevitability, about teaching their students to better understand how they come to be the people they are and where their power to act on

the world resides, about equipping their students with concepts and strategies for a liberated life, and about challenging the status quo and teaching critical literacies for social justice. (273)

Harry's lowly social status provides readers with an "unsettling" and unorthodox hero. From the beginning of the story, readers understand Harry's inferior status in his family. Hated by his aunt, uncle, and cousin, he is forced to live under the staircase and endure physical and emotional abuse. Despite the obvious fact he is an outsider, readers side with Harry not only because of the senseless abuse he's forced to endure but also because of his likeable nature. Harry most definitely lives on the fringe of his society—he is an orphan, he is totally different from his living relatives, and he has no friends. His fortune turns when he receives his letter from Hogwarts via Hagrid, the loveable school gamekeeper; however, his happiness quickly fades after he experiences the wizard hierarchal system. In his first interaction with wizard boy his own age, Harry receives a lecture on the way things function in the wizarding society. While getting sized for school robes, Draco Malfoy voices his opinion about those who are not pure bloods or those whose parents come from a long line of wizards and witches. "They're just not the same, they've never been brought up to know our ways. Some of them have never even heard of Hogwarts until they get the letter, imagine. I think they should keep it in the old wizarding families" (Rowling 78). Clearly Malfoy values status—he initially accepts Harry before he finds out about Harry's upbringing, and eventually becomes one of Harry's most venomous enemies. Early in the book, Rowling emphasizes the dichotomy between those who concern themselves with status and appearances—Penelope, Uncle Vernon, and Malfoy—and those who do not—Harry and Hagrid. Harry eventually makes friends and squashes Voldemort's attempt at returning to power. Despite his lowly status, Harry provides readers with a positive influence. This critical connection impacts a young adult's identity formation since it challenges them to look past an individual's upbringing and material possessions and instead place value on a person's internal qualities.

Character analysis of the other two main characters provides more substance for social justice driven conversation in the classroom. "Adolescent readers view characters in young adult novels as living and wrestling with real problems close to their own life experiences as teens" (Bean and Moni 638). Ron Weasley, Harry's hilarious red-headed best friend, displays "unpopular" characteristics yet still exhibits bravery, loyalty, and understanding. Although Ron belongs to a wizarding family filled with "old magic," he is one of seven children; therefore, his family lacks money to buy new robes, books, and animals for him. For example, rather than an owl, Ron must use Scabbers, a hand-me-down rat that had once belonged to his older brother, as his animal for classes. Scabbers embarrasses Ron; however, Harry understands and empathizes with Ron's insecurity. "Harry didn't think there was anything wrong with not being able to afford an owl. After all, he'd never had any money in his life until a month ago and he told Ron so, all about having to wear Dudley's old clothes and never getting proper birthday presents. This seemed to cheer Ron up" (Rowling 100). In aligning material items with triviality, Rowling once more places emphasis on a character's internal assets rather than their outward possessions. When compared to rich, high-brow wizards like Draco Malfoy, Ron falls short, yet through Harry's perspective, readers see the importance of Ron's positive qualities like his sense of humor, his loyalty, and his kindness. Malfoy fails to notice such qualities, and even urges Harry to befriend wizards from the "right" families. "You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort" (Rowling 108). Thankfully, Harry pays no mind to Malfoy's threats. Ron and Harry become fast friends, and eventually Ron assists Harry in his journey to find the Sorcerer's Stone. In an intricate journey to find the Stone, the friends come across a giant game of Wizarding Chess. Ron uses both cunning strategy and selflessness—eventually, Ron takes a painful blow from a chess piece—and enables Harry to move to the next room. Despite his humble upbringing, Ron succeeds in helping his best friend. He gives readers confidence in their unique skills while iterating the inconsequential nature of social status.

Hermione Granger bursts on the scene as a bushy-haired brainiac who seems to want nothing more than make good marks and follow the rules. She comes from a non-wizarding family, but does not seem to find it an issue, despite the negative implications in being “muggle born” (Rowling 98). “Nobody in my family’s magic at all, it was ever such a surprise when I got my letter, but I was ever so pleased, of course” (Rowling 105). Hermione’s over-the-top penchant for studying and following rules situates her toward the bottom of the social ladder. In fact, from the beginning, Hermione’s classmates view Hermione as an outcast, and even Harry and Ron avoid her until she takes the blame for them after a run-in with a troll. Hermione shows her loyalty not only to Harry and Ron, but also to another outcast named Neville Longbottom. In the dog-eat-dog world of adolescence, hanging out with unpopular outsiders does not bode well for those concerned with popularity. However, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* challenges the norm by placing outcast characters in heroic roles. Glasgow writes: “Good books unsettle us, make us ask questions about what we thought was certain; they don’t just reaffirm everything we already know” (54). Hermione’s unapologetic authenticity dissuades students from fearing their own individuality, while her spunk and tenacity act as an inspiration to those who value education and curiosity. Because Hermione lacks popularity, her success and friendship with Harry challenge what readers expect. In fact, her cleverness helps Harry defeat Voldemort after she figures out a puzzling potion problem, and at a school-wide ceremony, Albus Dumbledore, the head master of Hogwarts, compliments Hermione “for the use of cool logic in the face of fire” (Rowling 305). Despite Hermione’s unorthodox personality and her non-wizard family, Rowling emphasizes the importance of her authenticity, tenacity, and intelligence and presents readers with a positive role model off which to base their identity formation.

To conclude, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* provides students with positive characters as role models for their identity formation, and it shows young adults what resides inside them holds much more value and

influence than the superficiality, so ingrained in society. Teachers can use the book to develop critical literacy in the classroom, especially under the umbrella of social justice. A discussion concerning how the social background of both major and minor characters impact—or fail to impact—their situations provides an outlet for fruitful classroom discussion. Rowling gives readers an honest portrayal of humanity through the three best friends because Harry, Ron, and Hermione are not without their faults. Harry acts impulsively, Ron loses control of his temper, and Hermione comes across as a know-it-all, yet their good hearts repeatedly redeem them. Adolescents need flawed, unpopular success stories to mirror their own stories, to show them they do not need to be perfect in order to succeed. Teachers who choose to showcase awkward, redheaded Ron Weasley, for example, provide their students with an unorthodox, yet highly necessary, example of what society should value in an individual. “How . . . teachers approach literature sends messages to their students not only about what kinds of literature are valued but also who is valued” (qtd. in Bean and Moni 640). Situated in the insecurity breeding ground otherwise known as adolescence, choosing to value a student for their internal worth, instead of their outward status, provides a powerful example that lasts. Moreover, YA books that glorify internal qualities like bravery and selflessness over money and popularity breaks the cycle of helplessness that normally accompanies shame, insecurity, and poverty.

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Beauty Beyond Filth in Makoko at Osh Gallery¹

Lekan Balogun

The Osh gallery, Lagos, on the 11th Sep, 2014 (sure you remember 9/11, and how fitting!), certainly makes the setting for the exhibition what it ought to be---realistic--- considering the "subject" that confronted the audience from the pictures that Aderemi's collection seemed to emphasize. George Lukacs remind us that artists who create, choose and organize material not out of pure subjectivity, but for certain obvious facts, which Remi's pictures do underline in the selection and arrangement of his materials—a fact manifested in the work as objectivity; a fact manifested in the work as objective anarchy.

Objective anarchy, certainly, is the word that best describes Remi's juxtaposition, or "cameraposition," and/or even "photoposition" of Makoko and the filth in the environment, the dirt and gutters, under the watchful eyes of the huge and imposing electricity power-line in the sky above, and the global icon--football--clutched romantically by the young lads, whose infectious laughter say so many things than words could possibly have, including the "reverend father" in white cassock as well as the "baby-mummy" with a child strapped to her back---all of the poor, yet, hope enveloped environs of the setting, together with its criss-cross of images of the young lads.

These pictures capture hope, resilience, faith and cheerful embrace of the kind of life providence has deemed for the occupants of Makoko—consider the fresh fish from the waters for example, never has a people

¹ Makoko is a heavily-populated, but tiny suburb around the coastal area of mainland, in Lagos, Nigeria. It has faced serious neglect from successive governments in the state, despite its strategic location around the lagoon.

been blessed not with canned food, but the gift of nature—nothing ever works better for a humanity than the virtues of hope and laughter in the midst of deficiency. The history of the world attests to human beings rising from the bottom to the highest zenith of their potential and greatness, but not when they are neglected, or under the threat of callous plans of demolition by mischievous, powerful, and conscienceless cabals. Consider China and Japan after the senseless and callous bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and marvel at how humanity can rise beyond death and poverty if leaders do their best rather than condemn their citizens to the dustbin of hopelessness as the government want us to believe of Makoko.

The pictures are not just of filth and dirt, though conspicuous at the background; but more importantly is the expression of the emotions of beauty and aesthetics---they are functional, organic, immediate to the psychological, emotional and intellectual needs of the human cognition, especially of those who appreciate the beauty in humanity, and, not of those who want to demolish and “colonize,” render homeless people who actually, and indeed, deserve to be cared for, that their own rank of ill-gotten wealth and praise-singers can have *records to wax*, as always.

Makoko may be full of gutters, filth and decay coupled with its raffia structures, delicately constructed atop the waters of the Lagos lagoon, nor can one forget the mosquitoes and the potholes on its streets lined by dirt; yet it is like anywhere else where mansions and tarred roads are a spectacle---there is life abundant; there is hope always and forever renewed; there is talent, raw and blossoming; and, all these, must be respected!

Will Nigerian politicians and successive “vampiric” governments, who cite ill-health, spread of diseases and crime in order to demolish so that Makoko can be “annexed” through “colonial penetration” to become part of their ill-gotten territories and financial colony, be reminded that these joy, laughter and hope can never be snuffed out? Maroko has remained a

ghost, alive and well, in our memory. Wait a minute – Maroko/Makoko, perhaps there's something so enticing about the "Ma," the "roko" and the "koko" of the territories, who knows!

But it is hardly demolition that Makoko needs. Its revamp is located in helping the society to survive, to help the people confront the trials, which equally confront the society in its own quest to be a part of the larger Lagos and, of course, Nigerian society. Let no one bring up any blueprint of another Mr Bigg's, Sweet Sensation or Shoprite, for we all know how such stories always ends, what the government's idea of demolition and development means in the dictionary of the select few, who hold us all at the jugular; illegal acquisition by a cabal in the name of development is NOT what Makoko needs, but true intervention that will translate into better community for the inhabitants. It is high time we stopped making life miserable for others just to acquire wealth, supported by a manipulated constitution that serves only the rich at the expense of the poor and needy.

The subject of Remi's photos – and theme that runs though them – is that of laughter and hope these young lads exude, which certainly surpass the filth and dirt; they show that in spite of anything else, they are a part of one humanity, one global humanity. How well, also, the way the gallery is transformed to give a sense of the ambience – the plank "5th Mainland bridge" and the improvised gutter, underneath the rails which held the pictures together, including, most certainly, the *kokoro*² snack and *adoyo*³ drink; where else does one get treated to such unusual delicacy in the whole world than Makoko!

Those who live in filth and dirt, like the people of Makoko, are not actually the threat to society, but, those who lie, harass, and unscrupulously take advantage of the weak.

² A kind of tiny, sweet-tasting chip made from ground maize.

³ A local distilled juice drink made from millet.

It is NEVER demolition, but COMPASSION, says the laughter, the hope and the innocence of these Makoko stars of tomorrow – what Remi also says with the photos!

