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# The Molloy Student Literary Magazine Volume 8

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# The Molloy Student Literary Magazine

**Volume 8 (Spring/Fall 2012)**

**Managing Editor**

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## **Student Executive and Editorial Board**

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Given sufficient content, *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine* is published twice a year in Spring and Fall.

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## Letter from the Editor

*The Molloy Student Literary Magazine*, sponsored by Molloy College's Office of Student Affairs, is devoted to publishing the best previously unpublished works of prose, poetry, drama, literary review, criticism, and other literary genres, that the Molloy student community has to offer. The journal welcomes submissions, for possible publication, from currently enrolled Molloy students at all levels. In this issue, we are including the three winners of the annual Patricia Sullivan Common Reading Contest: Inspired Works - Building Community. All submitted work will undergo a review process initiated by the Managing Editor prior to a decision being made regarding publication of said work. Given sufficient content, *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine* is published twice annually in Spring and Fall.

Interested contributors from the currently enrolled Molloy student community should send work via e-mail attachment and brief cover letter (including a two-sentence biographical statement) to:

Dr. Damian Ward Hey, Managing Editor, *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine*: [dhey@molloy.edu](mailto:dhey@molloy.edu).

Enrolled students who are interested in becoming members of *The Molloy Student Literary Magazine* staff may e-mail letters of inquiry.

Excelsior!

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### Note on Content and Editorial Policy:

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Due to reasons of space, not all accepted pieces may appear together in the same issue of the magazine. If, for example, a contributor submits multiple pieces and more than one piece is accepted, the Managing Editor reserves the right to choose which piece is included in the current issue. Accepted items that do not appear in the current issue may appear in an upcoming issue.

All decisions made by the Managing Editor regarding publication or non-publication of any particular piece or pieces are final.

# The Molloy Student Literary Magazine

VOLUME 8 (Spring/Fall 2012)

INSPIRED WORKS CONTEST WINNERS:	6
1st place: Roger Smith Poem, <i>Reflections from Poverty's Balcony</i>	7
2nd place: Travis G. Williams, Poem, <i>As One</i>	8
3rd place: Carissa Sorrentino, Poem, <i>A difference; from root to leaves</i>	9
LITERARY CRITICISM	10
Dan Catalano <i>Wizards and Jedi: A Comparative Analysis between Merlin and Mentors in Star Wars</i>	11
Katheryn Grote <i>Leopold Bloom's Dystopic Consciousness of Dublin Society in Ulysses</i>	29
Theresa Roedig <i>There and Back Again: A Literary Tale</i>	37

FICTION	45
Kenneth Bornholdt	
<i>BLT</i>	46
<i>The Shoebox</i>	48
Kathleen Dauz	
<i>Nice Enough</i>	50
John Lynch	
<i>Mechanical Sin</i>	54
POETRY	57
Farisha Hosein	
<i>Beauty Is...</i>	58
<i>Inshallah</i>	64
Roger Smith	
<i>Laundromats and Lounges</i>	66
<i>Pyramids</i>	70
Alyssa Solazzo	
<i>Help Wanted</i>	72
<i>Hypnotized</i>	73
<i>A Loyal Viewer</i>	74
<i>Rise and Shine</i>	75
<i>The Story</i>	76
Lauren Spotkov	
<i>Endless Fear</i>	77
<i>A Fairy Tale Life</i>	78
PERSONAL ESSAY	80
Jillian DiBlasi	
<i>The Rain Storm</i>	81

## **Inspired Works Contest Winners:**

### **1st place:**

Roger Smith

Poem, *Reflections from Poverty's Balcony*

### **2nd place:**

Travis G. Williams,

Poem, *As One*

### **3rd place:**

Carissa Sorrentino,

Poem, *A difference; from root to leaves*



## **Reflections from Poverty's Balcony**

**Roger Smith**

No doors, no walls, no structure  
you call it home  
but it's our world in which I refer to  
and stomach growls and hunger pangs concur  
with words I construct  
while looking into the dam like eyelids  
of fresh outta womb pre-grave orphans  
offering themselves as entertainment  
for the scraps we've tossed away for the past three weeks  
while the weak and the meek intertwine,  
and though God promises they will inherit the Earth  
their worth withers  
like kitten's carcass whiskers  
while we,  
don't give, don't offer, don't notice  
their existence  
or the baseball bats swinging homerun like yells for help at us  
and tattooed S.O.S. on our foreheads  
while their community takes communion with cemeteries'  
residency...

we see them as refugees, as lost souls,  
but they build on experience's tragedy  
like the re-creation of Babylon from the rubble of recluse  
and in turn see US as outcasts,  
as black sheep, as the ones who in actuality—  
need help.

## **As One**

**Travis Williams**

It is not too late to become One.  
We are those little veins, beating in the heart.  
We support each other, those necessary bones.  
We learn from each other, those active neurons.  
If one should fail and collapse, we all work on the recovery;  
Therefore, we can be the scab over the wound.  
As one body, we must react collectively,  
    Respectively,  
    Cooperatively.  
Let us respond to the danger as one unit.  
One mechanism that stands together, not alone.  
Communally, we can survive.  
As a group, we can be happy.  
As One community, we can continue to live as people.

## **A difference; from root to leaves**

**Carissa Sorrentino**

The reality within a community is quite intriguing.  
From roots to leaves it all depends on the being.  
The growth and stability is the roots of this tree.  
Each individual living firm and boldly,  
new or old all the same.  
Varying widely from frame to frame.  
Community, a place where home is where you want to be,  
somewhere that you don't feel alone or empty.  
Where you were created and grew to learn right from wrong.  
From day one somewhere you always belong.  
Family, friends from every end,  
where you set your trend.  
A need for love and nurture,  
the area of living culture.  
These leaves that sprout with color and unity.  
The people that have open arms and show bounty.  
This strong rooted tree has a meaning for all,  
a place where you end feeling far from small.  
Community is the stem,  
from where you transcend.  
Your life will begin here,  
withstand no fear.  
Cultural diversity, individuality,  
a difference with all  
and here this tree stands tall.

## **LITERARY CRITICISM:**

Dan Catalano

*Wizards and Jedi: A Comparative Analysis between  
Merlin and Mentors in Star Wars*

Katheryn Grote

*Leopold Bloom's Dystopic Consciousness of Dublin  
Society in Ulysses*

Theresa Roedig

*There and Back Again: A Literary Tale*

# **Wizards and Jedi: A Comparative Analysis Between Merlin and Mentors in *Star Wars***

**Dan Catalano**

Merlin has fascinated audiences throughout the centuries due to his inscrutable nature and seemingly omniscient abilities. He is a figure outside of time who guides characters to their destinies and purposes. As the archetypal Wise Man, Merlin teaches magic, guides kings, and passes on wisdom to others. His presence continues to permeate much of modern pop culture, lending characteristics to characters in some of the most successful franchises. One such franchise, *Star Wars*, features numerous Merlin-like figures, Obi-wan Kenobi and Yoda chief among them. Modern audiences are still drawn to the image of the mysterious and alluring Wise Man because he represents the pinnacle of knowledge. By learning more about Merlin's role as a teacher and guide, we can better understand the necessity of mentors throughout all cultures, as well as gain a greater appreciation for those that have lessons to teach us.

By first examining texts of Arthurian literature in which Merlin's role as the advisor and mentor are most prevalent, and then comparing his character with similar individuals from various *Star Wars* films, this paper will provide a better understanding of the Wise Man archetype that has lasted throughout the centuries.

Merlin has always been portrayed as a Wise Man, yet few people realize that his talents were used for much more than simply helping Arthur attain a crown and sword. In Wace's *Roman De Brut*, Merlin helps numerous kings in their conflicts, lending each of them his wisdom. In this tale, Merlin first appears when summoned to help the king, Vortigern, build a castle which has continually fallen during construction. When

Vortigern informs Merlin that the wizard's blood is needed to keep the castle from falling, Merlin replies, "Under the foundation of your tower lies a pool that is broad and deep and that makes your tower crumble" (Wace 98). He further proves Vortigern's other prophets to be false when he informs the king that, "Down at the bottom are two sleeping dragons lying on two large stones. One of these dragons is white, while the other is crimson blood" as the prophets stand dumbfounded (98). Upon Vortigern's praise of the wizard, Merlin warns the king of future troubles, and predicts the succession of kings to come, stating,

Be very careful of the sons of Constantine...they'll do wrong to you to avenge your crime...Aurelius will be king first, but he will also die first, from poison. Uther Pendragon...will rule the realm after him, but he will...be poisoned by your heirs. Arthur, his son from Cornwall...will devour the traitors against him and will destroy your kinsmen. He will be valiant and fine and will wipe out all of his enemies. (99)

Of course, all that Merlin foretells Vortigern comes to pass, much to the traitorous king's dismay. This first encounter with a king reveals Merlin's unquestionable wisdom. All that he predicts occurs, and his status as the archetypal Wise Man is secured.

Merlin's help is sought once more when Aurelius takes the throne. Aurelius seeks to build a lasting monument so that his men who had fallen in battle and himself could be remembered forever. Merlin, who "had no equal when it came to creating and divining" suggests that Aurelius "bring over here the circle that the giants built in Ireland...so strong and heavy that no strength of men now alive can ever lift them" (99-

100). This ambitious task seems so impossible that it is all Aurelius can do not to laugh. Yet Merlin insists on the project stating, “Don’t you realize that brains are better than brawn? Strength is fine, but cunning is much better, since it often succeeds where muscles fail” (100). In these lines readers learn that, perhaps, Merlin’s magic is but another facet of knowledge – one that has yet to be comprehended and harnessed. Clearly, Merlin is a cunning character with knowledge beyond the average person’s ability to measure. In a time when force and brutality rules all, Merlin relies on the ability of the mind rather than the force of physical strength. As the Wise Man, he sees beyond the accepted norm that power is achieved through physicality and malice, understanding that intelligence can offer so much more.

Merlin’s help is needed once more when Uther succeeds his brother as king. Witnessing Uther suffer from his desire for Igrana, and knowing that the child conceived from this lust would be the “good, strong, and certain monarch you all know as King Arthur,” Merlin changes the king’s appearance to look like that of the Duke of Cornwall (104). Everything Merlin has done up to this point is for the benefit of the realm, and necessary for the coming of Arthur. As a Wise Man, Merlin sets forth events so that Arthur’s birth will come about and Britain will find its true king.

In the *Prose Merlin*, audiences attain more information about the life of the mysterious wizard of the same name. Merlin’s role as the Wise Man is revealed early on in the text, starting almost immediately after his birth. When a council of judges brings his mother to trial for the crime of fornication, Merlin stands before them, a mere child, and outwits their leader. He provokes the judge, stating, “I know my father better than you do yours. And your mother knows who fathered you better than mine knows who fathered me” (Robert 312). By

enraging the judge, Merlin takes the focus off of his mother and places blame elsewhere. Of course, when Merlin questions the judge's mother and reveals the truth of her adultery with a priest, she cries, "Dear son, in the name of God, forgive me! I cannot hide it from you: everything he said is true" (314). This scene establishes that the wisdom Merlin displays throughout Arthurian literature is thoroughly ingrained within him. His abilities do not come from practice or learning, but rather are within him from the start. Merlin says as much to the judge when he states, "a demon... gave me the ability to know all things said and done in the past... [but] our Lord... granted me the power to know the things that are to come" (314). This supernatural quality of Merlin's wisdom lends the wizard a heroic power, thus creating a more-than-human aspect to his character. Of Merlin's undoubtedly god-like powers and ability to shape the future, one critic states, "One would almost think him a demigod, or a god incarnated to influence the destiny of men...he is the demiurge, arranging a world he did not create but to whose equilibrium he contributes" (Markale 79). Merlin's powers as well as his ability to shape world events often give him this god-like stature, yet it is only another facet of the Wise Man archetype he fulfills.

In the *Suite Du Merlin* great emphasis is placed upon Merlin's role as the mentor. Throughout the text, he guides the young Lady of the Lake, Niviane, in the ways of magic until she ultimately surpasses Merlin's skills. Of this tale, Jean Markale writes, "Here we are in the presence of Merlin's professorial vocation. In this respect, he can be compared to a great druid deep in the forest, teaching the ancestral philosophy to those willing to follow his digressions" (90). Despite Merlin's lust for Niviane, and her hatred towards the wizard, the two otherwise play the parts of mentor and student as one should expect. While both remain at court, Merlin starts "to teach her



sorcery and enchantment, and she learned rapidly” (*Suite* 349). This statement appears early on in the text, establishing the teacher-student relationship between the two characters. And while the relationship is anything but healthy or stable, it fulfills its purpose as Niviane continues to learn the mysteries of the world with Merlin’s guidance.

Throughout the text, readers learn that Niviane is under Merlin’s tutelage, and even witness his power to foresee the future when the two visit the newborn Lancelot. Yet, upon their arrival at the Lake of Diana, Merlin exhibits the earliest signs of being ready to sacrifice his own power in order to pass on his tradition to another. Merlin tells Niviane of a treacherous woman named Diana, who through means of trickery killed her devoted lover Faunus. Taking a great liking to this story, Niviane decides to build herself a home upon the Lake of Diana (an unconscious decision that may reveal to Merlin her contempt for him). Yet, the wizard does nothing to prevent her rise to power from overtaking him. Instead he helps her along the way to becoming a more powerful sorceress.

Merlin’s cultivation of Niviane’s desire to betray him marks a conscious decision to pass on his role as the Wise Man in the Arthurian legend to another. Markale supports this argument, writing, “Merlin intentionally tells this story that so prefigures his own demise...Merlin cannot be the dupe of a game played by one he loves so madly. He is the master of magic, master of illusions created at will...but no longer master of his destiny” (103). In his own way, Merlin accepts that his time within the realm has almost ended. A new Wise Man (or woman) will be needed to help King Arthur in the years to come, and that is why “he had already taught the girl so many spells and so much magic that she knew more than anyone alive” (*Suite* 354).

Niviane displays her acceptance into this role as the

caretaker for Arthur and Camelot upon hearing Merlin's account of a perilous encounter involving the king. She voices her concern stating, "It is wrong of you to let him fall into such danger! You should always be at his court to protect him, not far away as you are" (355). Niviane's concern is important for two reasons: First, that her interest in the well-being of Arthur and his kingdom reveals her dedication to their cause and willingness to help them, and second, that Niviane acknowledges a fault in her own mentor. By noticing the imperfect nature of her mentor, Niviane exhibits her readiness to surpass the teacher.

Niviane goes on to bind Merlin within a tomb through the very same enchantments and spells that the wizard once taught her. While her method appears cruel and deceitful, it is actually a natural act within the mentor-apprentice relationship. Once Niviane exhibits her primacy in magic over Merlin, it becomes clear that he no longer has a useful purpose. While Niviane reaches the culmination of her power, Merlin recedes from the outside world, allowing the sorceress to fulfill her destiny as the Lady of the Lake. Markale writes,

Merlin's role is finished. He began his career very early, prophesying to King Vortigern...leading Uther Pendragon to victory; arranging the conception of the future King Arthur, having him crowned, and giving him useful counsel to stabilize the ideal society...Perhaps it is time now for the wise man to retire and ponder the dark times to come. (103-104)

Much like King Arthur, the wizard is destined to wait for a time when his help will be needed once more. Yet, Merlin has not totally abandoned Camelot and its heroes. Through his successor, Niviane, Merlin continues helping King Arthur and

his knights. In the end, the reader is left with the knowledge that “Niviane arrives [at a battlefield] in time to save Arthur from his foe by magically restoring him his sword Excalibur and its enchanted scabbard,” therefore witnessing the sorceress fulfill Merlin’s role as Arthur’s protector (363). She also fulfills Merlin’s role as the mentor “after having become the Lady of the Lake....by undertaking the education of young Lancelot, as well as that of Bohort, future hero of the quest for the Grail” (Markale 91). With Merlin out of the picture, Niviane is able to reach the height of her potential as both sorceress and mentor to the heroes of Camelot.

The Arthurian legend has evolved countless times throughout the centuries. Whether the tale involves a warrior king defending his people from invaders, or overly Christianized themes in a chivalrous kingdom, the characters and events have remained as favorites among large audiences. Nowhere is this more true than in modern pop culture; although names, settings, and forms of storytelling have changed, the characters and conflicts have remained largely the same. This holds more truth for Merlin than for any other character in Arthurian legend. Merlin’s transition into modern pop culture has brought forth many successful mentor characters across numerous forms of entertainment including novels, comics, television, video games, and movies. Perhaps one of the best examples of a modern Merlin character would be Obi-wan Kenobi in the successful *Star Wars* films.

The first time audiences hear of Kenobi in the original film, a young Luke Skywalker refers to him as “a strange old hermit” and Uncle Owen warns Luke, “That wizard’s just a crazy old man” (Lucas). And at the audience’s first glimpse of Obi-wan, he appears as a mysterious cloaked figure (along with eerie intro-music), scurrying frightened Sand People away. Director George Lucas’ decision to have Obi-wan appear as a

suspicious and eerie outsider fits well with Merlin's status in Arthurian legend. Merlin has always been a character outside of the time and society in which he interacts. He appears in times of peril (throughout the reign of four kings) to help restore order before returning to the mysterious place from whence he came. In correlation with this, Markale writes, "The image of the hermit is impressed upon us because it corresponds to the attitude of withdrawal attributed to Merlin, withdrawal from a society no longer capable of understanding his counsels or his warnings" (80). Kenobi and Merlin stand outside of their societies because those cultures no longer accept or trust in their beliefs and powers. The outsider view many hold of Merlin causes numerous characters to mistrust him, much like Uncle Owen in *Star Wars*. In the *Prose Merlin*, one of King Uther's barons attempts to prove that Merlin's prophecies are false by asking the wizard how he shall die three times, each time under a different disguise. Of course, every time the baron asks, Merlin tells him he shall die a different way, and in the end the would-be trickster dies of all three causes. Even when Merlin was a child, his gift of speech and prophecy were initially taken as works of the Devil. At one point his mother's servants claim, "This is no child, but a devil! He knows what we have said and done" (Robert 310). Both Merlin and Kenobi hold the position of the "strange old hermit" in each of their tales, lending both characters a sense of mystery that adds to the allure of the overall story (Lucas).

Obi-wan Kenobi establishes himself as the mentor archetype upon taking Luke Skywalker to his humble abode. The wizened, old Jedi explains to Luke the ways of the Force, and the fate of the destined youth's father, Anakin. He states, "The Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us, and penetrates us; it binds the galaxy together" (Episode IV). Later, during Luke's

training aboard the Millennium Falcon, Obi-wan informs him, "You've taken your first step into a larger world" (Lucas). Luke's training in the ways of the Force bears similarity to Niviane's training in enchantments. Both characters start out as youths, unaware of how to harness the secret powers of the universe until a Wise Man archetype arrives to teach them the way. While Obi-wan teaches Luke to use the Force, Merlin "began to teach her [Niviane] sorcery and enchantment, and she learned rapidly" (*Suite* 349). Also, it's worth noting that Merlin and Obi-wan play a role in the retrieval of a sword of power in both of their stories. While Obi-wan simply handing Luke his father's lightsaber is not as dramatic as King Arthur pulling the sword from the stone, the correlation between the Hollywood film and Arthurian legend is certainly no accident.

Even Kenobi's use of the Force is similar to Merlin's mastery of magic in Arthurian legend. Just as the Jedi Master uses the Force to bend the weak-minded to his will in the famous scene in which he tells a group of stormtroopers, "These aren't the droids you're looking for," Merlin often uses his cunning to convince others to do as he says (Lucas). Appearing more as an advisor than a wizard at times, Merlin uses his gifts give to counsel kings in certain situations. For example, after informing both King Aurelius and Uther of an impending Saxon invasion, he guides them stating, "Summon all your men, all your knights, rich and poor...and keep them with you at court. Then ask them to...spend the last week of June with you at the entrance to Salisbury Plain. There you must assemble your forces...in order to fight the enemy" (Robert 323). Of course, the brothers do exactly as Merlin commands, and the natives achieve victory at the cost of Aurelius' life, just as the wizard predicted.

Merlin may appear to use his abilities in benefit of the kings he serves, but in reality he uses them to fulfill his larger

purpose: to help the Kingdom of Britain reach its full potential under the leadership of King Arthur. This purpose reveals itself when Merlin strikes a deal with Uther. He states, "If the king were willing to swear on holy relics that he would grant me what... I would ask of him, I would help him obtain the love of Ygerne" (337). And once Uther receives his night with Ygerne, Merlin proclaims, "I can tell you that you have fathered an heir. He will be the gift you have promised me, for you are not to keep him yourself, and you will grant me all your authority over him" (338). These lines reveal not only that Merlin is working towards creating a united country, but also that, in the way he speaks, the wizard commands the king. Using words such as "He will" and "you will grant me" suggests a status of authority (338). Therefore, Merlin's ability to bend others to his will greatly resembles Obi-wan's use of Jedi mind-tricks.

Once Kenobi and the other would be heroes arrive on the Imperial Death Star, the mysterious wizard battles his old pupil, Darth Vader. As we learn in later films of the Star Wars Saga, Darth Vader is actually Anakin Skywalker, Luke's father, who once was the greatest of all Jedi. At first, Kenobi sneaks around the Death Star purposely seeking out his old apprentice, but when the two finally engage in a fight, Kenobi states, "If you strike me down, I shall become more powerful than you could possibly imagine," before submitting to Darth Vader's blows (Lucas). Yet, instead of falling to the floor, dead, Obi-wan disappears, leaving nothing but his empty robes behind.

This scene bears striking similarities to the entrapment of Merlin in the *Suite de Merlin*. While Darth Vader battles with Obi-wan, Niviane binds spells to Merlin. But, instead of engaging in an actual fight, Niviane enchants her old master and leaves him inescapably trapped within a tomb. Merlin remains there, but never seems to die. Rather, the magician waits for a time when he will be needed again (much like King Arthur) so

that he may return. Similarly, Obi-wan only returns only when he is needed most, such as in the climax of *Episode IV: A New Hope*, when from beyond the grave he advises Luke to “use the Force” in order to destroy the Death Star (Lucas). He even returns in spirit numerous times throughout the next two films in order to help Luke understand his destiny.

The next time we see Obi-wan (in *Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back*), he appears to Luke in spirit form, and tells him, “You will go to the Dagobah system. There you will learn from Yoda, the Jedi Master who instructed me” (Lucas). Thus, Kenobi guides both the audience and Luke towards the next Wise Man archetype, Yoda.

Yoda also fits quite nicely in the shoes of the Merlin character, despite his height and green complexion. In fact, even his strange appearance correlates with the mysterious nature of Merlin. Just as the Arthurian wizard is oddly different from others in society (having been born the son of the Devil), so too is Yoda, if only in size and appearance. Also, the Dagobah system is reminiscent of the habitat in which Merlin is so comfortable: wild nature. Merlin is a physical manifestation of the old ways of the Celts; he performs ancient magical feats in a world ruled by Christianity. The book *Merlin: Priest of Nature* deals with this woodland image of Merlin extensively, stating,

The myth of Merlin and the legends that bring him to life clearly refer...to a naturistic type of religion like the religion of the Celts, or druidism. Unquestionably, Merlin is the man of the forest. If he has occasion to move in established society...he does not make his home there. He is seen arriving at Arthur’s court unexpectedly coming from somewhere else....He is...a marginal figure who deigns to enter the social world

only to give counsel, make prophecies, or perform a magic feat. As soon as he has accomplished his design he returns to his own domain. (Markale 113)

Merlin practices an outdated form of magic in a world dominated by Christianity, similar to Yoda, who practices the outdated ways of the Force in a world dominated by Imperial law and technology. Truthfully, Merlin rarely stays in one place for very long. Rather, he comes to accomplish some goal, before returning to the mysterious forest from whence he came. Therefore, Dagobah appears as a likely home for any Wise Man archetype in the *Star Wars* films. In a world filled with wondrous scientific creations such as lightsabers, droids, and even the ability to cruise from solar system to solar system at the simple flip of a switch, Yoda prefers to make his home in a place that has no, “cities or technology” according to Luke. And once audiences see Dagobah, the planet presents itself as an eerie location filled with strange wildlife and shrouded in as much mystery as fog. Such scenery is excellent for teaching Luke the ways of the Force, because it requires that he let go of the technology that rules the world, and trust in his feelings instead.

Yet, when audiences first meet Yoda, he appears as a simpleton that annoys Luke. This ploy is part of Yoda’s wisdom in that it tests the boy’s patience to see if he is worthy of training. Yoda’s appearance and speech contradict all preconceived notions Luke might have about powerful Jedi. After Luke takes one look at Yoda and proclaims that he is “looking for a great warrior,” Yoda responds, “Wars not make one great” (Lucas). This wise statement goes unnoticed by an ignorant and young Luke Skywalker, but it holds truth. Yoda appears feeble and dimwitted, but in reality he is far wiser and stronger than Luke. This first lesson is possibly the most important one that the



strange, old hermit teaches him. When Luke's training begins, Yoda constantly fills the young hero's mind with wise advice, teaching the boy truths such as, "A Jedi must have the deepest commitment; the most serious mind," and "Adventure; excitement; a Jedi craves not these things." These statements are critical to Luke's mental learning as he performs physical training all over Dagobah because they teach him the doctrine of the way of life he has chosen.

After the physical aspect of training is completed for the day, Luke enters a dream-like state and faces a darkness within himself. Although this aspect of guidance is not featured in Merlin's teaching of Niviane, it is nevertheless important to the overall learning of Yoda's apprentice. When Luke asks Yoda what resides in the cave where he feels an evil presence, the wise old alien simply states, "Only what you take with you," meaning that Skywalker will face himself both literally and metaphorically (Lucas). Within the reptile filled cave, Skywalker fights a phantom of Vader that actually turns out to be Luke, forcing the young Jedi to acknowledge that his father's blood flows through his veins for the first time, even if he does not yet understand the meaning of the confrontation. This encounter holds some similarities to Merlin in that the wizard is forced to acknowledge that he is the "the son of a demon who seduced [his] mother" (Robert 314). While Luke ultimately chooses to use the light side of the Force, similarly, Merlin decides to use his powers for the glory of God, rather than to serve the Enemy.

Yoda displays his vast understanding of the Force while teaching Luke how to move objects. When Luke seems unable to lift his X Wing fighter jet out of the swamp, Yoda states, "Do or do not, there is no try" (Lucas). In a state of frustration Luke storms off, bitterly claiming that Yoda asks "the impossible" (Lucas). Yet at this moment, Yoda closes his eyes and uses the

Force to lift the massive X Wing from the deeps of the swamp, and place it down before an astonished Luke. As the young apprentice proclaims, “I don’t believe it,” the wise Yoda answers, “That is why you fail” (Lucas). This memorable scene in which Jedi Master Yoda proves to Luke the power of the Force correlates with the power Merlin displays in Arthurian Legend. In Robert de Boron’s version of the tale of Stonehenge, Merlin decides to honor the fallen Aurelius Ambrosius by creating the massive monument with stones brought from Ireland. When Uther’s men saw the massive stones, “they thought this was sheer madness and said that even all of them together could not roll one of those stones over and that, please God, they were not about to load them onto their ships” (Robert 326). Yet, while Uther’s men call such a feat “madness,” Merlin simply states, “I shall keep my promise even without their help,” and “brought the great stones from Ireland by magic” (327). The importance of these Wise Men moving massive objects is that it reinforces the power each mentor has over the world. Clearly, both Merlin and Yoda have mastered mysteries of the universe that others have yet to comprehend.

When Yoda trains Luke further in the ways of the Force, he reveals a special power to the young Jedi. Much like Merlin, Yoda is able to use his power to see both past and future, stating, “Through the Force, things you will see, other places; the future, past; old friends long gone.” It is through this power that Luke is able to foresee the trap that the Empire has placed upon his friends in the cloud city of Bespin. Yoda’s mastery of this power mirrors Merlin’s own powers given at birth by both the devils of hell, and God. Merlin states, “He [Merlin’s Incubus father] gave me the ability to know all things said and done in the past...Our Lord...granted me the power to know the things that are to come” (Robert 314). The fact that both the wizard and Jedi Master have such power emphasizes the

knowledge they have gained that others can't comprehend. Both Merlin and Yoda appear are aware of things that have happened, and things that have yet to come.

When Luke faces Vader alone and learns that the Sith lord is his father, he is crushed. Yet the fact that Skywalker is able to survive the ordeal is owed in great part to the guidance he received from both Obi-wan and Yoda. Similarly, the greatness achieved by both King Arthur and Niviane is due in great part to the guidance of Merlin.

When next we see Luke, in *Episode VI: Return of the Jedi*, the apprentice already exhibits some of the Wise Man characteristics of his predecessors. Skywalker walks into Jabba's Palace wrapped in a dark cloak, much like the first appearance of Kenobi in the original film. He performs a mind-trick on Jabba's advisor, stating, "You will take me to Jabba now," and exhibits a confidence previously non-existent in the infamously whiney apprentice (Lucas). In this scene audiences are meant to realize that Skywalker has truly grown up, and is well on his way to surpassing his masters. Much like Merlin's apprentice, Niviane, Luke has reached the culmination of his powers. While Niviane goes on to protect and guide the heroes of Camelot, Luke must go on to end the tyranny of the Sith and the Empire in order to restore balance to the Force.

When Luke returns to Yoda to complete his training, the dying mentor states, "No more training do you require. Already know you that which you need" (Lucas). Struggling to accept his fate, Luke receives final words of encouragement from both Yoda and the spirit of Obi-wan. Yoda reminds Luke to be wary of the dark side of the Force, and Obi-wan tells him that "You cannot escape your destiny" (Lucas). These final words serve as closure to Luke's training. Once he confronts his father, and destroys the Emperor, Luke will have become a true Jedi. This fate is a challenge which he must face alone, yet as Obi-wan has

always reminds Luke, “The Force will be with you, always” (Lucas). Luke’s final departure from Dagobah marks the completion of his training, and the beginning of his final trial against evil. This is a crucial moment for the apprentice of the Wise Man because it means that the pupil is ready to surpass the master.

Whether reading of Merlin’s counsel with great kings and sorceresses, or watching Kenobi and Yoda train a young Jedi, audiences always enjoy stories that feature a Wise Man archetype. This is due to the fact that the Wise Man represents the culmination of human knowledge and understanding. Merlin is among the greatest and wisest of all Arthurian characters, using his abilities to help great people achieve wondrous things. Obi-wan and Yoda are the wisest of the characters in *Star Wars*, holding greater knowledge of the Force than any others in the original trilogy. Each of these characters adds a sense of mystery and wonder to the worlds in which they populate. Arthurian legend could never be so captivating if it were not for the mysterious nature of Merlin, for that is why so many works have been written on him. *Star Wars* would never have been so addictive had Kenobi and Yoda not been there to captivate both Luke and audiences with secrets of the Force.

The ability to know everything has always been a dream of mankind. That is why we study history so thoroughly, and work to understand the world through science and religion. The Wise Man fulfills this dream giving us hope that mankind can comprehend and control the mysteries of the universe. The Wise Man also reminds us that we do not know everything, but that there are those within our own lives that can teach us a great deal. These wise men can be teachers, grandparents or, according to Joseph Campbell, even doctors. He writes,

The doctor is the modern master of the mythological realm, the knower of all the secret ways and words of potency. His role is precisely that of the Wise Old Man of the myths and fairy tales whose words assist the hero through the trials and terrors of the weird adventure. (9)

While the modern Wise Man does not use magic to achieve his goal, his function remains the same. These people guide and mentor us through a scary world of uncertainties to help us become the adults we're destined to be.

Whether the Wise Man uses ancient magic, the Force, or even modern medicine, his purpose is fulfilled by helping confused youths on their way to greatness. We may not be destined to rule a united Britain, or master the ways of the Force, but that does not mean there is not a Wise Man in our own lives. Merlin resides in television shows, books, comics, movies, theater productions, videogames, and even in our families. He is the man or woman of higher learning that guides characters to safe passage through a hazardous world. He is the mother or father that helps us leave home and start our own adult lives. He is the teacher that opens our eyes to education that will enlighten us. He is the Wise Man, and he is here to stay.

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# **Bloom's Dystopic Consciousness of Dublin Society**

**Kathryn Grote**

Leopold Bloom's heightened awareness of the social corruption and inequalities present in modern Dublin society is an essential and defining feature of his character. His awareness leads to an acceptance and openness to others. According to H. Frew Waidner, Bloom applies the concept of parallax to his perspective on life, which allows him to observe various situations from different viewpoints. His own isolation and rejection have afforded him a deeper insight and expanded awareness on issues regarding justice, equality, and reform. Bloom is able to recognize the collapsed values and deteriorating political, familial, and religious institutions and fantasizes about being in a position that would allow him to rectify the social conditions of his time. Although he is not literally in a position of leadership, Bloom leads by example. His actions are in alignment with his beliefs, as evidenced by his acceptance, tolerance, and forgiveness of others. He remains loyal to his values despite the challenges he faces. He is able to adapt to various situations without sacrificing his morals. As Michael Spiegel, Patrick McCarthy, and Robert Kuehn note, Bloom's open-mindedness and flexibility highlight the rigid, uncompromising, and filtered views of his fellow countrymen. These men are metaphorically blind to reality and are intolerant of those whom they view "as a threat to their cultural integrity" (Spiegel 76). Several scholars, including Terrence Doody and Wesley Morris, argue that Bloom is in fact more adapted to a changing society and better prepared for obstacles that may confront him. His own alienation and isolation have provided him with the tools he needs to succeed

in the dystopia represented by Dublin society. Michael Mason maintains that through Joyce's characterization of Bloom, the author was dedicated to portraying contemporary Dublin family life as accurately as possible. Bloom's ability to recognize the immorality surrounding him allows him to function in society and form a belief system based on a set of personal morals and values to which he adheres. Leopold Bloom's dystopic consciousness of Dublin society and his reaction to these circumstances are what define him as unique and separate from Joyce's other characters.

Although Bloom is identified as an outsider and a foreigner, neither completely accepted nor rejected by his fellow countrymen, he is able to exist in a society of fallen people and broken values. Bloom explicitly states his views in opposition to the beliefs of others in the 'Cyclops' chapter, claiming that "force, hatred, history, all that" only breed further animosity and injustice (Kuehn 213). The Citizen in this chapter embodies the unyielding beliefs and fixed vision held by Irish nationalists (Spiegel 75). He uses Bloom as a scapegoat. Bloom's persecution serves to unify the remainder of the community through mutual exclusion. However, this alienation also emphasizes the narrow-minded and inflexible views upheld by the men in the pub and questions the presence of true companionship among them (Fagnoli and Gillespie 193). This event also serves to highlight these Dubliners' insular attitudes and ignorance of the larger community (Kuehn 212). Bloom's universal, altruistic views are met with violent patriotism and xenophobia, especially when Bloom makes it clear that he considers himself Irish and draws parallels between himself and Christ. At the end of the chapter, Joyce emphasizes the parody and humor in this scene when the Citizen fails to unite the members of the pub. In a final attempt to attack Bloom, the Citizen throws a biscuit tin at Bloom, who is then



transformed into the prophet Elijah and ascends into heaven, figuratively representing the new Messiah of Ireland (Spiegel 91). Bloom's victimization by the Citizen, symbolizing the one-eyed Cyclops, actually emphasizes his inability to unify these men against Bloom (Spiegel 90). Here, one can see how Bloom's thoughts on equality and justice and his acute awareness of the dystopic society in which he lives allow him to view life from a different perspective. These beliefs in turn provide a platform on which he bases his values and morals, and consequently drives his desire for social reform.

Bloom's ability to view the world with a broader consciousness and a different perspective carries into the 'Circe' chapter, where he experiences several hallucinations that underscore his thoughts on public reform. He imagines himself as the new Lord Mayor of Dublin. He states that he stands for "the reform of municipal morals and the plain ten commandments. New worlds for old. Union of all jew, moslem and gentile" (Joyce 399). This issue is clearly troublesome to Bloom, as he then takes on a sacrificial Christ-like role, carrying the sins of Ireland. This mimics the persecution that he previously endured by the Citizen and accentuates his role as a scapegoat (Fagnoli and Gillespie 200). Wolfgang Wicht describes the episode "in terms of the convergence of socialist utopianism and Christian apocalypse in the 'new Bloomusalem'" (242). Here, Bloom embodies both the political and religious reform he wishes to see.

Whether conscious or unconscious, this emphasizes that Bloom has a larger, more continental view of the world than his Dublin counterparts. Additionally, rather than rebelling against these unfavorable conditions as Stephen Dedalus does, Bloom accepts them with bravery and remains true to his own values (Kuehn 213). His dystopic consciousness allows him to remain aware of the surrounding struggles, which ironically opens him

to new possibilities and experiences. One can argue that this acceptance in turn gives Bloom a relative sense of freedom.

By recognizing the disunity and questioning the world he lives in, Bloom is able to confront immorality and share with others the ability to do good (Doody and Morris 233).

Although it is obvious that Bloom is emotionally wounded by his wife's infidelity, and he even allows himself to consider various forms of retaliation against Blazes Boylan and abandoning Molly, he decides to remain neutral and do nothing for the time being. Thus far, Bloom has been alienated by his own people and betrayed by his wife. However, he remains steadfast in his beliefs and refuses to sacrifice his own values. Bloom makes his position clear when, considering retribution against Boylan, he states, "two wrongs did not make one right" (Joyce 603). Bloom's own metamorphosis of identity from Jew to Irishman to Lord Mayor allows the reader to observe variations in the same person (McCarthy 57). Additionally, Joyce's use of several narrative styles slightly changes one's perception of Bloom in each chapter, shedding greater insight on his nature (Doody and Morris 233). As he wanders throughout Dublin on the day of June sixteenth, Bloom encounters various situations, which begin to reveal his identity. Since he does not specifically belong to any group or community, his multidimensional character allows him to embrace a greater realm of human consciousness and experience (McCarthy 77). He is able to adapt to different situations and, as Doody and Morris note, he is "capable of all of life's experiences" (232). Consequently, Joyce makes it apparent to the reader that Bloom employs the concept of parallax in his perspective of the world. Bloom does not attempt to censor reality. His open-minded and flexible views are at odds with the simple, confined ways of thinking of those around him (Waidner 183). Bloom's thought processes

transcend those of the ordinary Dubliners he interacts with. This allows him to be more receptive to the complexities of life and deal with the disconnected society in which he lives. Bloom's own alienation and rejection from society have increased the scope of his consciousness. These circumstances have also served to increase his accommodation and tolerance of differences as well as attain a "broad recognition of human variability" (Waidner 194). The difficult experiences he has faced throughout his life have provided him with a heightened awareness and moral conscience. Bloom's isolation, exile, and oppression by foreigners not only exemplify the dystopia evident in Dublin society, but also parallel the struggles of Ireland itself (Kain 62). Further evidence of Bloom's dystopic consciousness and desire for change is seen in the 'Ithaca' chapter. Bloom again envisions a utopian society based on the principles of order and justice. He recognizes that many social challenges are "the product of inequality and avarice and international animosity" (Joyce 571). Bloom's fantasies of an ideal world allow him to openly express his ideas on social reform without the opposition he usually faces. His imagination offers him a place to construct a society in which his own morals and values are based on. Bloom, unlike his fellow citizens, goes above and beyond the standard ethical expectations by not only recognizing the need for change, but also by actively living this way, as evidenced by his acceptance of others and non-violent opposition to those who challenge him. This can be seen in his interactions with the Citizen, his decision not to seek retribution against Boylan, and his acceptance of his wife Molly despite her affair.

Despite Bloom's active imagination, he remains firmly grounded in reality. He carefully weighs the risks and benefits of any behavior prior to acting on it and appears to be keenly aware of his surroundings. He considers his own beliefs to be

self-evident truths. He meditates on observations, events, and tasks that have occurred throughout his day, using these truths as an ethical framework as part of his regular bedtime routine. Fagnoli and Gillespie note that this routine serves an important psychological function (206). This act of recollection, utilizing his dystopic awareness of Dublin life, relaxes Bloom, appears to provide an outlet for his frustrations, and gives him a sense of renewed vitality. It also allows him to readjust to his usual daily routine (Fagnoli and Gillespie 206). Since ethical concerns and social reform seem to weigh heavily on Bloom's mind, this reflection allows Bloom to wake up prepared and revitalized. Joyce's exploration of issues regarding truth, immorality, and consciousness brings attention to modern society's "escape from the bonds of morality" (Mason 181). Michael Mason notes Joyce's efforts to expose the truth about contemporary family life in Europe (187).

Leopold Bloom emerges as a figure of stability and clarity amidst the chaos of distrust, deteriorating values, and prejudice in Dublin during this time period. Although he is subject to inevitable human experiences such as desire, jealousy, and escapism, he is able to overcome these feelings and face life as it is, embracing all of the trials and tribulations that arise along the way. Bloom's awareness of the harsh nature of reality and his willingness to face it without compromising his own beliefs distinguish him as a modern-day hero (Kuehn 213). Bloom's desire for equality, justice, and tolerance is carried out in his actions and communications. His dystopic consciousness and passion for reform ground Bloom and motivate him to remain accepting of others and stand by his principles in the face of opposition. As Bloom himself states in the 'Ithaca' chapter, his daily contemplation on ethical concerns and social reform reinvigorate him and provide him with a sense of meaning and motivation (Joyce 591). His own

standards give him direction and guide his decisions. This allows Bloom to forgive others, and in turn, provides him with an inner sense of freedom despite his suffering. His ability to identify the interconnectedness and unity among all people allows Bloom to co-exist among members of a society who have rejected him.

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# **There and Back Again: A Literary Tale**

**Theresa Roedig**

If you think literature has no value in your life, you are wrong. Literature gives insight to a society's culture, and the literature of your time is reflecting upon what you do. When a society's culture changes, its literature changes along with it. These changes in literary movements could be described as a swinging pendulum. A current literary movement or ideology is usually the opposite of the preceding literary movement and any future movement would be opposite from its former and so on. This idea of the swinging pendulum can help predict the next literary ideology that is to come. However, the pendulum is not the only predictor. A society's own culture could also predict the "next big thing" in literature. It has been seen throughout history that literary works of a specific time period criticize the culture of that time. Therefore, if we are able to foresee what our society's culture will be in the future we can predict what the next literary ideology will be. I predict that our society is moving towards a more non-realistic, technological/virtual world. This means that the literature of the future will criticize the virtual world that we will be living in and promote a breaking away from technology and finding reality in simple and ordinary natural things. By predicting the next literary movement, we can be prepared for what the future may hold.

As mentioned previously, the idea of a swinging pendulum can be used to describe the literary ideologies of the past. Each consecutive movement opposes the former. The pendulum swings from one side to the next, and the next literary movement rebels against its "parent ideology" and acts more like its "grandparent" and the pendulum returns. The literary movements in which we can see this pendulum motion are: the



Medieval Period, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, and Realism. For an example of this swing from one ideology to the next and back again, we can look at the transition from the Enlightenment to the Romantic to the Realism Periods. The Enlightenment was a period of reason, rationalism and belief in God which produced literature such as Voltaire's novella *Candide*.

The next literary movement, Romanticism, followed and opposed its predecessor. Its works were more non-realistic and supernatural as seen in literature such as Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* and Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." After the Romantic Period came Realism; this opposed the supernatural and moved back towards the rational ideology of the Enlightenment. Each Period's culture also played a part in the swing of literary ideologies as can be shown by works critical of each society's culture of that time. The Enlightenment was a time of reason and rationalism in which many philosophers came up with many and different philosophies about why things are the way they are. Voltaire, via the novella *Candide*, criticizes all of the philosophies of that time, such as Leibniz who believed that everything was for the best. Even the last sentence of the novella states, "we must cultivate our garden," meaning that we should become our own thinker, think by ourselves and not just adopt the philosophies of others (Voltaire 75). We can find similar criticism in the Romantic Period.

The industrial revolution was happening around 1750-1850, the same time as the Romantic writers. It was a time of new machinery and technology, yet what literature was popular in that society? The supernatural, non-realistic and creative. Not only was this era counteracting the Enlightenment, but it was counteracting the industrial revolution and the lessening of human value. Coleridge criticizes this dehumanizing of people

by machines and shows us how we were just soulless machines that “raised [our] limbs like lifeless tools,” while working on assembly lines, just as the crew did in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (Coleridge).

So what is the current ideology of our society today? The literary movement that preceded us was Realism, which brought about literary rationality and non-supernatural answers to questions. Therefore, if we follow the idea of the swinging pendulum, our present society should be back to the ideology of the Romantics; we are the age of Neo-romanticism (however, we are technically called the Post-Modern Era). Although we have those literary works that parallel the Romantics with the supernatural and fantasy, we still have popular literature that has more realistic answers, for example Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. Therefore, the pendulum might be “twirling a little bit” in this current time. Just as the two generations before us were going through the industrial revolution, we are now going through a time of advanced technology and we are seeing a turn into literary fantasy and supernatural.

Many literary works still have the same supernatural and fantasy aspect of the Romantic Period such as, J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, C. S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*, and J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter*. This is a response to Realism but is also a response to the zeitgeist of our time. We have had two world wars and are now at war with the Middle East. We are living in fear of a nuclear war and there is death, destruction, and darkness all around us. This is a recurrent theme in the books of our day. Darkness is always at our doorstep, evil is always pursuing us and our current literary works also show the “violence which underlies our society” (Newman 140). In *Harry Potter*, Harry is always being pursued by Voldemort and the Death Eaters. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is being chased by the Black Riders and in *The*

*Chronicles of Narnia* the Pevensies are being sought after by the White Witch. However, in all these stories, good always prevails. We like to read stories in which the good always triumphs over evil but opposes what actually happens in society because in reality the “good” does not always triumph. We use the literature to escape reality and all the destruction and darkness around us; “fiction is the act of forgetting,” we try to forget about our everyday lives and live through a fictional character (Newman 139). But what if we escape reality completely? Are we “caring about an imaginary world more than any other?” (Newman 140). Where will this fantasy world take us? In today’s society, with all the advances in technology, it is hard to distinguish what is real and what is not.

What will the future hold? Going back to the idea of the pendulum, we could predict that the next literary ideology should be parallel to realism. A more realistic literary movement would be the opposition to the fantasy/ supernatural/ neo-romantic ideology of today. Predicting the future culture can also help predict the next literary ideology. I see us headed towards an even more technologically advanced society than we are in today. We may be using so much technology that we won’t even know what is real anymore. It will be like we are living in a virtual world. Therefore, since we know that literary works criticize and oppose the culture of the time, we can assume that the literary ideology will turn towards realism in response to the virtual technological world of the future and we will see writings of what is truly real in life, hearkening back to times with no technology, with real relationships, and real communication.

The following is part of a chapter of the “next big thing” in literature that we might see in the future:

*As I'm tumbling down this steep hill, or at least that's what I think it is, the only thing that is running through my head is how in the world did I trip and fall? I don't think I've ever fallen due to tripping on something since I was able to walk. Gotta love those Nike Sensors (Nikesens). If they sense something in front of you they automatically change your walking course or stops you dead in your tracks, hence you should never trip over anything. So why the heck did I trip and why in the world am I tumbling down this hill? The Nikesens never malfunctioned before...Thud. I'm at the bottom. I look up at the hill and still hear the sound of the cars zooming by on the Turnpike. I can see people still walking on the walkway where I was, but no one seemed to notice that I had just fallen almost to my death because they were all looking into their i-eyes. Okay, maybe I'm exaggerating about almost dying...Ha, kind of reminds me of that time when Bobby...oh wait, Bobby! I was i-eyeing with Bobby when I tripped and fell. Great. He's probably wondering where I am now. If only my i-eye didn't fly off my head while I was tumbling I could get in contact with him right now. So where is it? It could have flown any which way. Time to go find it I guess.*

*Wait a minute, where am I? I'm sitting in a little patch of grass. I don't think I've ever sat in grass before...or have I even seen it? Of course I've seen grass before...or was that just on my i-eye? I run my fingers through the grass. It's cool and soft. I don't think I've ever felt anything like this before. As I get up I realize I'm in pain. My back and legs must have gotten a beating while I was falling. I look around. There are trees and I hear birds chirping. It's familiar to me, but not familiar at all. I'm sure I've seen trees like these and heard birds chirping before...but I guess I've never really been aware of it like this without my i-eye on. It's so peaceful here. What am I*

*doing? My face feels so naked without my i-eye, but Bobby can wait, I need to see this new world.*

This text could be part of the literature of the future. It opposes the supernatural ideology of today by going back to reality, which in this case is found in nature, not technology. It is also criticizing the advanced technology of the future. It is important for us to understand the trends of society so we won't be surprised when our culture changes and a new literary movement forms. It gives us a better understanding of what is happening in our society and how people feel about it. It is important to know who we are as a people and where we are going to be going in the future because it may be coming sooner than we think.

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## **FICTION:**

Kenneth Bornholdt

*BLT*

*The Shoebox*

Kathleen Daut

*Nice Enough*

John Lynch

*Mechanical Sin*

## **BLT**

**Kenneth Bornholdt**

It was a typical Saturday morning. The three of us, Dave, Tom, and myself were inseparable. We sat around listening to folk music. We all loved to sing and play guitar and as usual we were listening to the sounds of the Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, and others. Dave had just picked up an album by a new folksinger named Bob Dylan which we immediately loved and tried to copy. He had a way of saying things so differently and poetically, we were hooked. Our parents hated him which only enhanced the attraction.

After about an hour, we went into Dave's den to watch some TV. A western was on and that held our attention for about 5 minutes. We were bored and so we decided to tie Tom in his chair. Dave got some rope and we began to wrap it round and round the chair with Tom seated in it. For some reason, Tom had decided to go along with our stupid prank and made no effort to get loose. He would soon regret his decision. Dave left to get more rope and soon returned. We secured Tom even more securely now in the rather large padded chair that Dave's father usually fell asleep in.

Dave asked us if we were hungry and we both said yes. We asked him what he had to eat and he said "bacon." He said he would make BLT's for everyone. Little did we know that the next few minutes would live in our memories forever? A constant reminder of how funny life can be. It became a hallmark day in our friendship and over countless telling and re-tellings; it still brings a smile if not outright hysteria at the thought of what happened next.

To get back to the story, Dave went into the kitchen and turned on the burner and put the frying pan over it and added a whole pound of bacon. He turned the flame all the way up and



told us it would be a few minutes. You must remember this was before the advent of ADD or ADHD and so Dave in his usual manner left the bacon to cook by itself and returned to the den to hang out with us.

It wasn't long before we heard a strange sound coming from the kitchen and the scent of bacon smoke filling the air. "Holy crap!" Dave said as he rushed into the kitchen. The bacon grease had caught on fire and now the whole top of the stove was in flames. The kitchen curtains were next and we knew that the walls were next. Dave was screaming for us to get out of the house while he fought the fire by throwing water on top of the grease. The result was instantaneous, the fire grew exponentially.

We had another problem, though. Tom was screaming for us to get him out of the chair. He couldn't undo himself and he was frantic. He was in abject fear and screaming for us to cut him loose while trying to force the rather large chair through the doorway. Well, the sight of Tom with this large chair in essence strapped to his back was just too funny. In fact, it was so funny that Dave and I almost forgot about fighting the fire and rolled hysterically on the floor at the sight of Tom trying to break through the doorway with his chair. To this day, 45 years later, I still smile when I think of Tom and that chair.

Dave was able to find some baking soda and some large towels and we put the fire out. Tom wasn't able to get loose until after the fire was out and wasn't in a very good mood. After cleaning up the mess in the kitchen, we left a note for Mrs. Sliwowski and walked to town. We ended up eating our BLT's at Krisch's.

## **The Shoebox**

**Kenneth Bornholdt**

I kneel at the casket and gaze upon my Aunt. So beautiful even in death. Eighty eight years ago she was born prematurely in Astoria, Queens. In those days most preemies were not expected to live, but my Aunt had an inner strength that would carry her from birth to the grave. My Grandfather would put baby Edythe in a baby blanket and place her in a shoebox on top of the coal stove during those first few weeks of life during the cold New York winter evenings.

Edythe was always fragile – physically, at least. She made up for her physical fragility with a steel determination and an unbounded zest for life. As her life pressed on, she suffered from lung cancer, losing part of one lung. She also suffered from Thyroid disease and this in turn affected her eyesight. In 1995 she suffered a stroke the lingering effects of which eventually caused her death.

As I gaze upon my Aunt, I think of all the love and gentleness that she gave to those around her. She was the devoted wife of Bill for fifty years and the mother of two wonderful daughters who have been blessed with my Aunt's determination, compassion, and intelligence. Their devotion to their mother was instrumental, probably, in keeping her alive for so long after the stroke.

Aunt Edie's contribution to my family – and to me in particular – is almost beyond words. The memories that I carry in my heart represent the happiest and most pleasant from my childhood. The Christmases and Thanksgivings, and Easters as well as Birthday parties and summer barbecues were always filled with good food, song, and laughter. Always, much laughter.

With the death of my mother in 1999, Aunt Edie became the family matriarch and the last of an era. I gaze on her now not in grief nor in sorrow but in thanks and in happiness. She is where she wanted to be at the end, with Uncle Bill, and my mother, and all the rest of her departed friends and family. Her life was full, rich with friends and family and love and laughter and travel. When she died earlier this week, she had come a long way from the little shoebox on the stove.

## **Nice Enough**

**Kathleen Daut**

Darkness.

A bang.

A flash.

The pain.

Mother always said, “Don’t talk to strangers.”

I should have listened.

It was a pleasant afternoon, not too hot or cold. The sun and some clouds were out but a breeze lingered throughout the day. I don’t like breezes when the sun is out; they give me the chills. I was just taking a stroll through town, minding my own business, when a man came out of nowhere, blocking my path. He was wearing a long black overcoat and his hands were stuffed in his pockets. Even though he was slightly hunched over, I could tell that he was a tall fellow. Well, he was taller than I am. Then again, I’m pretty short for my age standing at a measly 5’ 3” so nearly everyone’s taller than I am. I couldn’t see what color his hair was because of a black fedora perched on his head but he had nice enough eyes. That much I could see.

“Pardon me, miss.” He said with a slight smile.

“Don’t worry about it. It was my fault; I wasn’t looking where I was going.”

The man tilted his head to the side, like he was studying me. I wasn’t really much to look at: brown hair, brown eyes, wearing a white sundress and sandals. His staring was making me

uncomfortable. “You look like a nice young lady.”

I took two steps back. “T-Thank you...?” Before I could get away from this creepy guy, he took out a business card from his pocket and with a leather gloved hand offered it to me. There was a name and address printed on it in black ink.

“Meet me here at 6:00 pm.”

And without waiting for an answer, he brushed past me, walking on like nothing happened.

The few hours I had before the designated meeting time were filled with mental arguments. A voice which sounded a lot like Mother’s screamed at me, begged me not to go, that I would regret it if I went. But an even louder voice that reminded me of my devil-may-care friend Casey said, “Go for it! What’s the worst that could happen?”

She’s right. I mean, what could possibly happen?

At about a quarter to six, I found myself walking down an alley leading to the address. It was in a not so much traveled part of town. In fact, I didn’t know anybody lived down here. It had rained a while ago so I could hear each footfall loud and clear. That’s weird. Each time I take a step, I can hear a second splash somewhere behind me a split second later. Maybe I’m just hearing things. I mean, I didn’t eat dinner after all. There it goes again! I don’t see anyone though.... If I can just find this damn house I can get out of this creepy alleyway.

Oh, here it is.

A few choice words come to mind to describe this place: old, uninhabited, and dirty. It wasn’t much to look at. From what I

could see, everything had a thin coat of dust. A living room that had a chair and side table, a kitchen with a rickety table and chair and an old iron stove in the corner, and a long hallway. The building was barely lit, just a few meager low wattage bulbs suspended from the ceiling. I called out the name printed on the card. No response. As I began to walk down the hall, I felt a chill, like someone had opened the door. But I locked it, I'm positive. I heard Mother yelling at me to get out and run and never look back but still, Casey's voice was just a tiny bit louder.

Nothing on these walls. Absolutely nothing. I had to keep a hand on the wall to make sure I wouldn't bump into anything. I could feel the dust collecting onto my hand. Yuck. Eventually I touched a doorknob. It was cold. When I opened the door, the musty smell only added to my suspicions. No one has been in here for quite some time. This particular room didn't even have a light bulb, only a window to let the light in. I padded my way towards it, wiping my grimy hand on my dress. There was a table illuminated by the light and on it was a candle and some matches. Using a several matches before finding one that would keep its flame for a bit and almost burning myself doing it, I managed to light the candle.

I looked out the window. It was dark outside; I wonder how long I've been out for. You know, the funny thing is, I haven't heard a sound since I got here. No cars, no barking dogs, or people talking, only the ones in my head. Oh God, I think I saw something move. Maybe it's just my reflection or just the candle. I can't tell. If there is someone out there, I should probably put this thing out before something or someone notices. I turn away from the window and almost screamed.

It was the man from before with the nice enough eyes.

He still had that slight smile on his face but it looked dangerous and downright scary in the candlelight. Even more dangerous was the gun in his hand. “Didn’t Mommy ever tell you not to talk to strangers?” He chuckled. It sent shivers down my spine; I was breathing heavily now. “Especially if they seem nice enough. They might want to hurt you.” Another bone chilling chuckle. I could feel hot tears trailing down my face. “And for no good reason too.” His voice petered out to a whisper.

He blew out the candle.

Darkness.

A bang.

A flash.

The pain.

The end.

## **Mechanical Sin**

**John Lynch**

“Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned,” said Barry. “I plagiarized an essay.”

“Why have you done so?” asked Father Markus.

“At three o’clock in the morning before it was due with only one paragraph written, my options were scarce,” said Barry.

“How did you obtain a complete assignment?” asked Father Markus.

“I bought a copy of an essay from the ‘go-to’ guy in my school,” said Barry. “He offers help to many other students as well.”

“Offers help?” asked Father Markus.

“Well, he sells copies of essays to other students,” said Barry.

“He helps other students cheat,” said Father Markus.

“Yes, a tempting, rampant, and successful underground market as bad as a drug cartel,” said Barry. “Completely run by one person and participated in by more than half of the school.”

The confessional becomes silent as the rest of the church as Father Markus develops an act of penance. Although Barry assumes the penance will include several prayers, he feels as though that may not satisfy his guilty conscience and must express his true sorrow and redemption.

“What is the name of your contact?” asked Father Markus.

“I only know him by his username ‘Red,’” said Barry.

“Then you are the one who must bring an end to his ring,” said Father Markus.

Barry agrees to the request as he exits the confessional and church to deliver a copy of the essay to his contact named



Red. Red's home and hideout, which rests at the edge of town, mimics a haunted house. No sane person would in such a frightening and archaic place decorated by gargoyles. The windows are darker than the surrounding night, but bright lights emerge from the small windows outlining the basement. Loud waves of heavy metal, thrash metal, and death metal music burst from beneath the house as though the songs are recordings of an exorcism.

Red will certainly not hear the doorbell ring, so Barry's only option is to enter through the back door which leads directly to the basement. He shouts down the staircase several times, but the intense music clouds Red's senses. Barry descends into the basement and discovers Red tending to his cheating ring on his computer without notice of Barry's sudden arrival.

This is Red? A simple-looking high school student? Convenient. His favorite color is red. His shirts are red. The room is completely occupied by posters of his favorite bands, a plastic skeleton on one side, and a statue of the three-headed dog Cerberus on the other side. His e-mail box is flooded with hundreds of requests not just from students in his own high school, but from all across the country who betray the academic code of honor by submitting to an easier, satisfying, exciting, and rewarding route like members of a cult. In several simple clicks and keystrokes, Red uploads several copies of his own assignments and sends them to his buyers in return for a money transaction.

Red earns green.

A thick power cord slithers across the basement floor like a serpent. Barry pulls the plugs apart as the music and computer completely shut down like an EMP effect of a nuclear holocaust.

“What the...?”

A tap on his shoulder startles Red.

“What just happened?” asked Red. “What did you just do to my computer?”

“I’m Barry. I bought a plagiarized essay several nights ago.”

“Ah, yes, what was the final grade?” asked Red.

“Obviously, the teacher did not notice, right?”

“You can say it was written by Red,” said Barry. “And it was marked in red.”

Barry places the essay on the table before Red who notices the front page marked with a large red “F” and a capitalized lettered comment: “PLAGIARIZED.”

“How? Hundreds of students throughout the country use this exact essay,” said Red. “The plagiarism is nearly unnoticeable.”

“It’s very noticeable,” said Barry. “So is your operation.”

The ring of the doorbell echoes through the house. As waves of blue and red lights flash from the street through the small windows, Red bursts from the basement in an attempt to flee his private underworld.

## **Poetry:**

Farisha Hosein

*Beauty Is...*  
*Inshallah*

Roger Smith

*Laundromats and Lounges*  
*Pyramids*

Alyssa Solazzo

*A Loyal Viewer*  
*Help Wanted*  
*Hypnotized*  
*Rise and Shine*  
*The Story*

Lauren Spotkov

*A Fairy Tale Life*  
*Endless Fear*

## **Beauty Is...**

**Farisha Hosein**

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder  
At least, that's what he had told her.  
Everyone sees things in different ways  
For example, look at the sun's shining rays.  
What do you see? What does it bring?  
Doesn't it make small birds want to sing?  
Isn't it glimmering and dazzling, casting a warm glow over the  
land,  
lighting up the world, giving brightness to even the most bland?  
It's warming the earth, helping lovely flowers grow,  
giving hope that things could be better, even by tomorrow!  
And then when it begins to disperse, tell me now, what do you  
see?  
All those wondrous colors, such a sight as pretty as can be!  
Those rays begin to touch the horizon, sinking lower and lower  
into the sky,  
And that you see is beauty, it's always passing by.

Ah, but there's more to it than that, isn't there?  
Well let's take a look around, hmm, look at that chair.  
"What, this old thing? It was a present for my nanny"  
Well good ol' granny must be thrilled to receive a gift for her  
fanny  
For the gift was filled with love and thought and I'll bet even  
some care  
And do not think oh prideful one, to even disagree, 'cuz I know  
that it was there  
The consideration for another, that my friend is beauty  
Still not what you're looking for? Well no need to be snooty!  
Beauty is many things and in time you shall see

But for now let's go on with example number three!  
Hmm well onto something a bit different for this next example  
Perhaps we should look at a flower sample!

Now I'm quite sure that everyone thinks or has heard that  
flowers are sweet

They're pretty and cute and say things that words can't beat  
Now fascinated, what are some of these things you ask me  
And now glad to have your attention a bit more, I shall tell thee:  
Gaze upon that bush and tell me what grows upon it, that one  
right over there.

"Why, roses of course, that is indeed quite clear!"

Ah yes, roses, nonetheless you are right,  
but my dear, look closer with all of your might.  
Isn't there anything else you see, anything at all?

No? That's alright, I shall tell you, no need to bawl!

A rose can be of many things, didn't you know?

Whether it's shown there in the sun or hidden beneath the snow

It could be an apology after making a dreadful mistake,

it could be a band aid to cure the heartache,

it could be the beginning of a brand new start,

or it could simply be a marvelous work of fine art.

It could be the question: 'Can I have this dance?'

Or it could even be the plea: 'Please give me another chance!'

Whether the rose is open and shinning in the gorgeous sun,

or if it's dripping with rain, pretty enough to stun,

the flowers and messages that they bring will continue on and  
on

because we are the seeds that keep them from being forever  
gone.

Hey speaking of rain, that reminds me,  
Lots of people dislike rain from as far as they can see.  
And I know you're one of them, don't try to deny that.

You hate the fact that you have to wear a hood or a hat  
to shield your luscious striking locks from getting in a mess

I'm right aren't I? Let me take another guess!

You'd hate to have your clothes ruined so early in the day  
and you'd hate how they'd comment, and what the people  
would say.

'Cuz then it would be just terrible, as we all know,  
to have to get all prepared again because of the rain or snow.

To have your clothes all pressed and steamed  
so you'd have that image just as you dreamed,  
to change those awful soaked socks

and let's not forget about those gorgeous locks!

You'd have to pull and tug to get things straight,  
and tie and clip stuff, as if you were going on a date.

And then for those of you that can't redo all that stuff,  
well you just sit and mope and think, *'hey, life's rough,*

*'I'm cold and wet, and I'll be like this for hours*  
*this really stinks a lot... I'd hate to be a flower,*

*the way they're exposed to rain, and snow, and even sleet,*  
*the way they can't get up and walk off with their very own feet'*

But no, you're getting it all wrong, don't you see?

The rain and snow, it's not all bad, not even for a tree.

The rain is beautiful the way it falls to the ground  
it makes a gentle pitter-patter sound.

And when it drips into a puddle, how magnificent those ripples  
look!

As if time were standing still and it was the only thing that  
shook

The rain refreshes the earth and leads to brand new events,  
'cuz let's face it, without those rainy days would you have  
known about those tents,

or about half the other things hidden away under your bed?

Or even that your little cousin's favorite color is red?

Yeah, that's right, those rainy days opened new doors  
so be thankful each and every time that it pours!

It might not be as bad as you think, and I know that's hard to  
grasp

But things aren't always as they seem and that's something  
people should grasp.

There is another example... but no, I'm sure we all know that  
one.

It is love, remember? A love that burns brighter than the sun,  
or even a love that has just started, and it's still small and shy,  
or a love a parent has for their child without even questioning  
why,

or a strong desire a young boy has for his toy cars,  
or a passion an astronomer has for the stars.

Just as there are different kinds of beauty there are different  
kinds of love too

But nevertheless, love is love and it's beautiful whether it takes  
two

or if it's a group of people such as friends  
or a group of people following trends.

The examples go on and on and on,  
and like beauty, love is never gone.

Hmm, *still* not satisfied I see, but luckily there are innumerable  
examples of beauty here.

There really are so many that you wouldn't believe it, but  
enough with that my dear,

how about we look at something different, well, 'look at' isn't  
really the phrase I'd use

since this upcoming example isn't really something you can see  
yet it's possible to lose...

Remember when you were little and you'd always drag around  
that teddy bear...

You loved that thing with all of your heart, giving it all of your  
time and care.

It was your best friend in the whole wide world.

You'd dance together as you swirled and twirled,  
and other times you'd sit quietly and let it absorb your tears.

You'd even share with it all of your secrets and fears.

But that teddy was more than just a confidant though,  
it was more than words could describe but all of that you now  
stow.

You've gotten older and things have really changed,  
and now to you the meaning of beauty has quite ranged.

But for little boys and girls all over this earth  
teddies are being passed on with each and every birth.

But like I mentioned earlier, as you grow up things change  
right?

Well now I bet you have another friend that you love with all  
your might.

I bet someone comes to mind right now, I'm right aren't I?

It's that person whose tears you'd always dry.

They're that absolutely great and a wonderful friend,  
the one who's heart you'd always mend.

And vice versa of course 'cuz it was always them who you'd  
call when in trouble or alone

Any time you were hurt or in need they'd be sure to pick up that  
phone,

or if they couldn't they'd be sure in some way to lend a hand.

Heck, for you they'd travel across half the land!

They'd jump over hurdles or swim the ocean blue,

Climb any mountain, and you know it's true.

They'd run a thousand miles or stand up to any crew,



and they'd do it all in a heartbeat, all just for you.  
They'd be that shoulder for you to cry on,  
or they'd tell you that you were as gracious as a swan.  
They'd be there to pick up all of the pieces after they fell apart,  
and as always to repair your quite loving yet broken heart.  
They would never let you fall,  
and they'd see to it that you got through it all.  
Forever and for always they'd always tell you,  
and from then on you believed and knew your friendship was  
true.

And now you see what beauty can do,  
how it can strengthen relationships and heal the hurt,  
lift you up from the ground and out of the dirt.  
It can do so many marvelous things as it constantly surrounds  
you and I:  
it gives us that hope that makes us believe we can fly,  
and it is beauty that makes us want to try,  
it is beauty that makes us cherish those moments and sigh,  
and it is beauty that makes us wonder why...

Well, now you know that things can be beautiful in many  
different ways,  
and how beauty is always with us, never leaving, it always  
stays.  
It's with us in everything we do, all of our efforts and all of our  
strives,  
but most of all, it is beauty that helps us continue on with our  
lives,  
giving them meaning and us a reason to continue on here,  
and it is beauty in which we all share.

## Inshallah

Farisha Hosein

Author's Note:

This poem utilizes seventeen phrases/sentences from Khaled Hosseini's novel, *The Kite Runner* (Riverside Books, 2003).

**“For you a thousand times over”**

I sit thinking as a rover:

What did this mean? Was it only for the kite?

Perhaps there's more to it, something with more might

**“If you asked, I would”** he had once told me

And just like the time he had said **“trust me,”**

I believed him and trusted him, or so I thought

Now it is all my fault, look at what I have wrought

**“Whatever you wish”** Hassan had also said

He meant it which kills me; I wish I were dead

**“All I could manage to whisper ‘No. No. No’ over and over again”**

Because all I had said was that, **“He is my servant! He is not my friend!”**

**“One final opportunity to decide who I was going to be”**

And who was this opportunity best for? Could it be us? No, just me.

After all, **“he was just a Hazara, wasn't he?”**

Deep down though that can't really be what I think, can it be?

If I believe that Hassan was just some Hazara then I'm very much mistaken,

Besides, how does ethnicity or race rather, even compare with what was taken?

If somewhere deep down I think that **“Assef was right”**

Then I might have to do something to see the light

He can't be right though; he's so despicable and cruel!

But I'm no better; I can't even stand and duel  
"Maybe Hassan was the price I had to pay"  
"But was it fair, the price?" This I cannot say  
"You may not even know . . . But you will someday"  
Ironic isn't it, the words that man will say  
I bet if Baba knew what I did he'd throw a fit  
Oh no, Baba! He won't approve of this! Not a bit!  
"In his arms, I forgot what I had done. And that was good."  
Someone should have knocked some sense into me; old Baba  
would  
But maybe I could make up for it, do something that would  
weave  
Weave this tragedy with something better; "that's what I made  
myself believe."  
"There is a way to be good again" or so I was told  
I really don't think there is though, that man's just getting old  
I ran like a dumb stupid coward so how can I be better?  
Even sitting here I feel it as I read Hassan's last letter.  
How do I move on when I didn't stop them or help him?  
I clearly can't move forward and the light is so dim  
Whatever will I do? Do you know? How am I supposed to get  
rid of the shame I show?  
Whatever I do though, can't be worse than this low  
Perhaps things will get better.  
"Inshallah."  
Perhaps I'll no longer be a regretter.  
"Mashallah."

## **Laundromats and Lounges**

**Roger Smith**

there's a lounge in queens village called the pour house,  
you'd be wise not to ask for a shot of prosperity.

i ordered a glass of hope,  
topped off with bitter dreams  
shot down by crooked cops  
and sirens sang  
from their stools.

put a quarter in the jukebox,  
if u dare  
listen,  
the nine to five men  
struggling to pay their bills,  
the everyday house wife needing a sip of something  
just to deal with her kids,  
the middle class; classless,  
suffering from summer's dry, thick, humidity,  
bank accounts like mouths  
thirsty.

the bartender's eyes are no more filled  
with poverty than a newborn  
her smile whispered  
brightness that this merely part-time,  
night-time oblivion  
though day time academics couldn't have taught her anointed  
head  
and hands  
to tap

dance beer mugs overflowing,  
surely goodness and mercy  
shall follow her, all the days  
she communicates with consumers  
of her art and craft,  
she speaks eloquently  
even through vodka induced, liver weakened  
stress fractured ear drums.

in the air lingers the smell of fish-  
net stockings chased with torn,  
worn out latex mixed  
in a familiar stench.

tomorrow's sorrow  
holds hands with the infantile reality of today,  
and springboards  
into snifter  
with aspirations of drowning in cognac.

the bar itself,  
is a bloodstained, vomit infused cherrywood  
with tips  
plastered all over it.  
dimesacks, nickelbags, copperheads  
and tales of how not to end up here  
in the back,  
where pre-Magellan's flat  
Earth lies;  
with sticks, balls, holes;  
traps  
for uneducated balls to roll into,  
moors to fall into,

into an abyss which hovers over  
ground so close to home,  
the familiarity  
crowds the entrance;

blocks away  
the exact same people  
exit  
a Laundromat,  
carrying wet clothes, loads,

and pockets quarter filled with  
quarters quarter  
filled with lint  
half empty but fully conscious  
of clean, dirty and indifferent  
they,

like the fabric  
are survivors of the tsunami  
they,

pour experiences into  
wash, rinse and spin cycles  
to increase the resistance of letting tears or sweat fade  
origin of character  
they,

cover frail feelings with rigid skin snuggled with fabric,  
softener;  
and this juxtapose is  
just supposed to be ignored  
but it's Wednesday,

drying clothes or buying a metrocard is a  
decision left to ponder  
two days before payday;

next round on me.

# Pyramids

Roger Smith

The sands, storm around the base  
spinning around solid foundation as we watch in amazement  
questioning the conception  
of a structure created by the  
Omnipotent hands of God, gazing at Giza  
staring into the sun shining on the back  
of the pyramids.

Definitive, undeniable shape of heaven crafted,  
towering over me I bear witness to the Nile  
acting as umbilical cord nourishing earlier civilizations  
as legendary futures become historical pasts.

Grains of sand enter my nasal cavity and I breathe  
in the essence of life, tasting millions of years  
which have the calculated scent of a few trimesters.

Positioned next to sisters and protected by  
the guardian Sphinx who flanks the temple,  
rather the body...

The perfect portrait of a pyramidion.

Less material high with a majority of weight pushing down  
towards canals distant from Suez,  
anatomically

built of Nubian limestone labeled melanin

I see cultivation within angular eyes  
and the rising population of pharaohs in wombs  
of Egyptian ancestry.

Images depict you,  
wonder of the world  
wondering how you stand strong for lifetimes as  
time gives life before you



while nations disrespect you,  
wild masons abuse your meaning  
taking you for granted when they should worship  
the sands beneath  
because you silently screamed in childbirth as the Sahara  
deserted you just as the Blue deserted him before  
and the sand storm cycle continues  
blowing the genetics of fury through the placenta to be washed  
away in the Red Sea,  
but its not...  
It travels from dynasty to dynasty,  
through your heartbeat in Cairo to that of your offspring in  
Aswan  
creating sharper edges,  
strengthening your stone-like exterior  
from apex to base,  
every face of you is exquisite.  
Your goodbye causes the sun to set  
and I've finally learned to say I love you in Arabic,  
mother,  
you're a pyramid.

## **Help Wanted**

**Alyssa Solazzo**

I'm looking for work  
Is anyone hiring?  
I've searched high and low  
It's getting tiring.  
I'll do anything for money.  
Weeding, washing  
Dancing on a table  
It's not even funny.  
I can work cheap as free  
For quarters, or nickels, or dimes  
Anytime!  
Would someone please hire me?  
Even in this economy?

# **Hypnotized**

**Alyssa Solazzo**

Twitching fingers  
Racing hearts  
Entranced by the chaos  
Two struggle to survive  
In a game of life and death  
Who will win?  
Tapping the trigger  
Young soldier aims his weapon  
Target locked  
Finish him!  
The enemy lies defeated  
The victor rests for the next mission

## **A Loyal Viewer**

**Alyssa Solazzo**

In the glowing darkness  
Your glare is so bright  
My eyes are hypnotized  
By your square frame  
And glassy gaze.  
I'm glued to your every word  
And picture and sound.  
No matter what  
My eyes are on you  
Every day.

## **Rise and Shine**

**Alyssa Solazzo**

Sailing through clouds of marshmallow fluff  
Above a city of satellites  
Gravity was no obstacle here.  
Then a toxic fog blocked my vision  
Fading in to a plastered ceiling  
With the alarm chirping in my ears.  
Muscles aching, eyes shot, spirit low,  
Might not even go to school today.  
I would go back to my dream instead  
But a voice keeps pounding in my head;  
“Get up! Get up! You have to get up!”  
With a pair of invisible weights  
Resisting the urge to stay in bed,  
Feet slowly creak down the carpet stairs.

## **The Story**

**Alyssa Solazzo**

Like dragging a whale  
Back into the ocean  
This is not an easy task  
Drowning in a sea of possibilities  
Losing consciousness  
For weeks it seems  
Plucking the hairs  
From my dreams  
To weave into a tapestry  
Of an imagination  
Running rampant  
Into a spiral  
The pen writes the words  
The mouth doesn't dare speak  
And a story is born

## **Endless Fear**

**Lauren Spotkov**

I was afraid.

I was scared to death.

I thought all the feelings were going to come back.

I thought I was going to fall apart all over again.

I faced my fear not because I wanted to,

But because I needed to;

I needed to feel whole.

I needed to gain my life back.

With that, I realized I was no longer afraid,

Because I did remain whole;

Yet I will continue to always live with that fear.

That fear of breaking.

## **A Fairy Tale Life**

**Lauren Spotkov**

When we were younger, life was believed to be a fairy tale.

A place where we could have everything we have ever dreamt of.

A place where we could find our true love and live happily ever after.

As we grew up, reality set in, and told us otherwise.

We realized that a fairy tale ending is hard to come by.

We began to lose touch of who we were as we longed to be accepted by the world.

We all wanted to establish a name and place for ourselves, no matter the cost.

To fit in, we chose to let go of our childhood dreams, and fantasies.

We decided that they were no longer important.

We wanted to forget because we wanted to be adults, in the wrong sense.

To be an adult is to be mature about hard decisions and strong about painful ones.

But, we all forgot that all the adult around us had pasts.

They have memories.

Good, bad, or indifferent, they were important.

They were once all children, with dreams.

They all believed at one point or another that their dream would come true.

They believed too that they would have a fairy tale life.

When it came time to start living in reality, they were scared, too.

They didn't know what to make of the world, as we don't.

But, they all held their dreams close to their heart and never forgot who they were.



We just need to hold on.

Hold on to our dreams, fantasies, and desires.

Most importantly, we have to be able to look back on our memories and smile.

We all have to grow up, but, we can't forget what was important to us.

We need to hold on to our dreams, and attempt each one of them.

Trying and failing is one thing, but, not trying at all is another.

## **Personal Essay:**

Jillian DiBlasi

*The Rain Storm*

# **The Rain Storm**

**Jillian DiBlasi**

As I lie on my extremely comfortable small twin bed on top of my colorful striped quilt, I'm reading my book. I stop reading and look around and see my enormous Pooh Bear staring back at me. I take a quick scan over my room and have mini-flashbacks of my childhood as I see my Disney princess collective dolls displayed on shelf and the doll house my Mom's aunt built for me when I was born. I catch myself staring at pictures from my 8<sup>th</sup> grade "prom," my Sweet Sixteen, and Senior prom. As I am lying on my bed, I ask myself, "Where did the time go? I feel like just yesterday I was starting at my new elementary school in third grade and graduating eighth grade. Now, in just four short months, I'll be graduating with my Bachelor's degree? How is this possible?" I snap back into reality when my entire room lights up as if the sun were shining in my room at mid-day from the rain storm.

I hear what sounds like acorns hitting my air conditioner, "clunk, clink, thump." My dogs, Mia and Dixie, come running in my room barking because of the acorn-like sound outside, which are the pellets of rain, along with the thunder and lighting. Dixie, a hundred-and-ten-pound Border Collie, jumps on my bed and covers me in her light brown and white fur. Dixie comes over to cuddle with me until the storm passes, whereas Mia, a forty pound hound mix, is barking at my window, ready to attack. Little does she know, the rain won't attack her. My once colorful striped quilt acquired a tint of brown and white fur.

While I'm trying to tell Mia to calm down and comfort Dixie who is partially laying on me, my room lights up as if a

meteor from outer space were about to make a crash landing in my room. I look out my window and see the sky turning different shades of green, blue, purple, pink, orange, and yellow in the matter of ten seconds. After witnessing the color explosion in the sky and the bright burst of light into my room, I began to reminisce about rain storm in the summer when I was younger. My brothers and I would change into our bathing suits and run into our backyard and begin to dance in the rain, as well as go on our play set. We would swing as high as we could on our red, blue, and yellow swings and go up and down the red slide countless times, until it became a water slide, which ended in a mud bath. Once it started to thunder and lightning, we would hurry back into the house and begin playing countless board games from *Candy Land* to *Trivial Pursuit*.

All of a sudden, Dixie jumps off my bed, Mia stops barking and although it is still raining, the drops don't sound like acorn torpedoes hitting my air conditioner. I hear children laughing outside my window. I take a peek out of my window and see my neighbors' children playing and dancing in the rain without a care in the world, just as I had done when I was at the young, wonderful, and carefree age of six.

As the rain subsides by the evening, I take Mia and Dixie out for their evening walk and see the destruction of the storm from earlier in the day; tree branches are blocking the street, large green leaves are covering cars and lawns. Mia and Dixie are trotting along on their normal route until they come to an emergency halt. They are unable to continue walking because of the branch which is blocking the street. I move the branch over and we continue on their way. The branch is just similar to the next milestone in our lives because we must conquer the next task in life. Yes, it would be nice to go back to

that carefree time and dance in the rain, but it's unrealistic. We can't go back in time. We must keep moving forward and prepare ourselves for our next milestone or task in life.

For myself, that will be graduating in May.