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Da: A Journal of
Delta Arts

Delta State University

2023-2024

Da 2024

Delta State University

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Editorial Statement

For more than fifty years now, the Da (“dah”) journal of Delta State University has been dedicated to the seamless combination of the old and the new.

Students submit new and original works from all across campus every fall to be accepted and judged for publication in the Da journal. These works are compiled and formatted by the editorial staff of Delta State’s newspaper the following spring semester.

Originally, the college’s annual journal was not called Da. At the time of its founding in 1972, Da was called Confidante. This name stayed until the 2015 edition when the decision was made to rename the journal in honor of a beloved professor here on the Delta State Campus, Dorothy Sample Shawhan.

The editorial team of 2024 is honored to have been given the opportunity to compile what we feel are the best samples of writing from our campus and showcase them in this time-honored tradition of physical publishing. With any luck, this journal and any of its other editions will survive the test of time, remaining present for many years to come.

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Poetry 101

Cocoa Cortex

First Place Poem

By Canderrian Brown

There's something growing.
There's something growing in this fudge.
Danger sporing, lurking about this soil.
Planting its hypha throughout the hemisphere.

In the garden, these weeds are elastic.
In the garden, these weeds are elastic and chewy.
Toxic dendrites stretch throughout the cortex,
contagion devours tender networks.
Overpowering and decaying neural circuits to
nothing more than crumbs of rotting cocoa.

It's all crumbled.
It's all crumbled down and the soil is cakey,
with remnants of neurons baked into the dirt.
The crust is flaky, dry, and overheated.
The ecosystem has died, molded, and gone offline.

Something has died.
Something has died in this fudge.

Slice of Life

By Canderrian Brown

Please. Tell my tale of treacherous treason.
The tragedy was simply too savage, I could not ignore.
I surrender my freedom for a frivolous sacrifice.
A price I pay in extravagant amount.
Their hearts heavy with hunger and helplessness,
this back will not turn on those in need.
I curse you gluttonous ghouls and your ghastly government
watching as our people wither and weep!
Do they not deserve to indulge on delectable delights, such as we?
Surely they've grown tired of brussels, beets, and beans!

As the law drops down onto me, in my last moments awake
I have this to say:

Let them eat—

SWISH!

PLONK!

Me, he who always

By Canderrian Brown

Me, he who always
daydreams a reality
where I can be free.

Free from scrutiny,
living life courageously
and beautifully.

Me, he who always
wonders by the windowpane
choosing to abstain.

Abstain from harsh pain
and malicious hate used to
bruise my confidence.

Me, he who always
vows to be true to myself
ignoring your haze.

Haze or praise, I'm me.
Forever, he who always.

Allure

Second Place Poem

By Jamelia Mason

Hot and cold brings sudden storms
A whirlwind of rage
A shattered space

Moving forward - Moving backwards
I'm moving constant
Lee, awakens my sea
but I don't speak
I scream, "Inflict, inject sweet heat on my neck!"
Constant moving
I'm inside out and upside down
A branch of this and a twig of that
Hinged with this and unhinged with that
Constant
Lee, makes me speak

Bound
Soul conjoined
One calls out and one covers
Warm, sweet, honey trickles
opening up and oozing

I scream

Screaming distorts *what is screaming*
Euphoric woes
Indicators of sensation
Sensation awakened — what lay forsaken.

Sweet heat drenches
Melting away all debris
I lured, allure the illusion at the core

**PASSION EXTEND
BOUND BY OXYTOCIN**



Life. Love. Health

By Fa'Darryl T. Cooper

In the tapestry of life, we weave our tales,
With threads of love, health, and all that entails.
A delicate balance, a dance of the heart,
Where moments of joy and sadness impart.

Love, the sweet nectar that colors our days,
It blossoms and blooms in mysterious ways.
It lifts us, makes our spirits soar,
A symphony of emotions, forevermore.

Yet love alone cannot sustain our souls,
Health is a vital piece that makes us whole.
In the temple of our bodies, we find,
The strength to conquer, to leave no dream behind.

Like a river, our health flows through our veins,
A precious gift, not to be taken in vain.
We nurture it, protect it, with utmost care,
For in its absence, life becomes unfair.

So let us cherish each breath that we take,
Embrace the sunrise, and revel in daybreak.
Let laughter and joy fill every corner,
In this symphony, we are the conductor.

For life, love, and health are intertwined,
A tapestry of blessings, eternally aligned.
Hold them close, treasure them with all your might,
And in their embrace, you'll find pure delight.

Double D: Discovering and Discrimination

By Fa'Darryl T. Cooper

In the depths of our souls, where truth does reside,
Lies the power to discern, where wisdom does abide.
Discovering the essence of what lies beneath,
We navigate the labyrinth, seeking belief.

Through the corridors of life, we wander and explore,
Unveiling the layers that lie at our core.
Discriminating between right and wrong,
We learn the lessons that make us strong.

With open eyes and open hearts,
We sift through the noise, tearing apart
The illusions and facades that cloud our sight,
To find the gems hidden in the darkest night.

We discriminate not by outward appearance,
But by the content of character and sheer perseverance.
We see through the masks that others may wear,
Seeking the truth that lies beyond their glare.

In this journey of discovery and discrimination,
We learn to embrace diversity, to foster integration.
For in understanding the differences that make us unique,
We find strength and unity, no longer meek.

But let us discriminate with kindness and grace,
Not with prejudice or hate, but with an embracing embrace.

Discrimination can be a double-edged sword,
Used for good or ill, our actions we must afford.

So let us discern and discriminate with care,
Seeking truth and justice, with compassion we share.
For in the discovery of ourselves and others,
We can build a world where discrimination smothers.

Her Story

By Anthony Gibson II

Have you ever been in love? Truly in love?
Where the thought of them made you send thanks above?
A love so strong that you see them as your other half
A love so strong that you lose track of time in the bath
Not a day goes by where they aren't on your mind
A woman as good as her is quite the find
Through ups and downs, she's always there
Greeting you with a smile and warm hug, with upmost care
The good times are plentiful yet fleeting
Her time is limited, like the beauty of a sunset in the evening
While she is not ill or knocking on death's door
There are many places in the world for her to adore
From her beauty, wits, and presence, there is much to admire
If only she could match my desire
In my eyes she is close, but in my heart she's far away
To keep her by my side, there isn't a price I wouldn't pay
As you may have guessed, my love is unrequited
No matter how much I cry, her mind is decided
With limited use of fancy words and allegory
My love is only one chapter of her story

Eros & Anteros

By Lauren Harvey

born was a *child, the epidemy of innocence.*
kissed by Eros at birth,
a single subtle kiss pressed against a forehead.
wings akin to Eros' sprouted.
blessed and in the favor of the god: meant to be his successor.
destined to be the *son of the god who played with love.*

grew with a mind that strayed from *his mentor's.*
bound to the convictions of Anteros,
vengeance took over at the thought of unfair love.
his heart grew with thorns choking out the roses.
rage, revenge, unwanted feelings.
fated to adopt the thoughts of a god known as the avenger of the unrequited.

quivers with endless arrows of yearning.
unrequited love was Eros' favorite pastime.
his blessed watched his every step,
became his shadow, knowing *his destiny to come.*
all the while, *he lived for Anteros.*

the brothers' wills consumed *his life.*
just as mischievous as Eros,
and even more acrimonious than Anteros.
many called *him heartless.*
he disagreed with public opinion.
"love deserved justice," Anteros said.
he believed Anteros.

adolescent fingers deftly stole.

pulled back the string and let go.

over and over, they flew.

his wings flapped as the arrows flew around Olympus and then the world.

the unjust lovers deserved to know abandonment.

Eros' arrows would fulfill Anteros' mission.

he would bring balance.

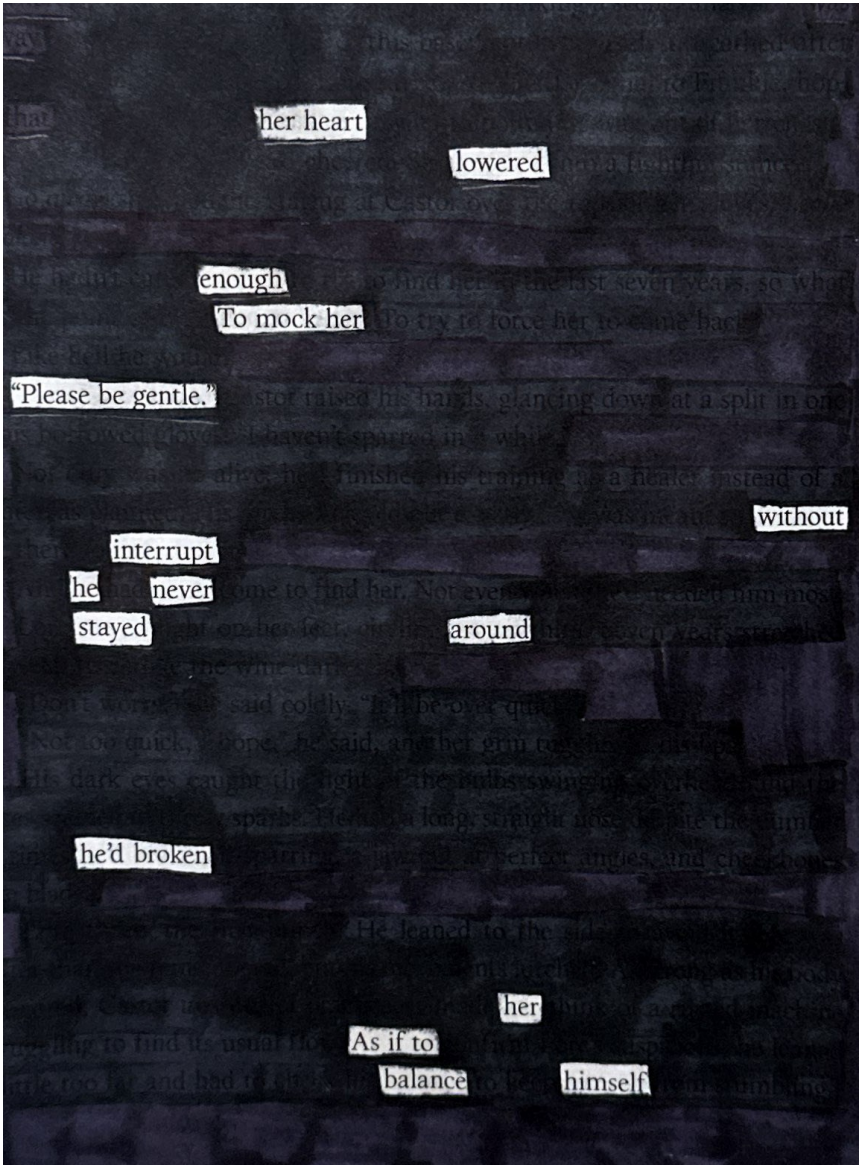
a new age was dawning.

the mischievous matchmaker and the fair avenger.

Eros' shadow, inheritor of Anteros' mantle.

Black Out

By Lauren Harvey



Tornado Warnings

By Baylie Rice

When it happened, they lost everything
They had worked to build together. Their home,
Their routine, their normal lives. They lost
It all. They lived in a temporary
Home for a while. But the sadness still
Remained. There was so much to be glad
For; their spared lives, helping hands of friends,
Family safe from harm. Still, they mourned; mourned
The home they made together. The home
With the little brown door and the curtains she
Picked out. With the couch their dog used to
Lay on. The bed they used to sleep soundly in, the
Kitchen they hosted their friends and family
In. They mourned it all, and they always would
Despite the angels God sent to them. The angels
In human shape who rebuilt their home and
Showed them hope again. They cried when they saw
The sweet blue house with the new furniture
And the room for a small baby they did not
Have. She wept in her husband's arms when they
Saw all of the blessings they were given;
The twelve pillows on the bed, the photos
From their wedding day on the walls, the baby
Blanket down the hallway. But more than all
Of that, they were blessed with hope. Hope
For the future ahead and new life they
Would build, due to those tornado warnings.

Cycle 12

By Beyonce Russell

START

I wonder if I should be gray or blue today.

Should I put up a fight or should I let it go.

Should I remind her of past encounters or bite my tongue?

Because the truth is when you love someone you encourage them, you have a person you can turn to and you are able to talk to each other.

But, our truth is deeper than that.

Between us it is a mix of two different signs under the stars, two different ways of expressing our feelings and three different ideas on how to address our problems.

DELETE THAT SHIT

We don't talk about our problems.

We ignore them.

We ignore the pain we cause each other.

We deny each other that right and forget about it.

Our problems are off limits for discussion because they often lead to chaos.

I often wished that our friendship would just end!

REPHRASE

I often wish our friendship never ends!

That this feeling is just a phase.

That this is all happening because we're together too much.

That this all will blow over with time.

That we can finally speak to each other.

That those silent whispers would disappear altogether.

But, the truth is I know it is not just a phase.

IT IS A PHASE

The whispers turned into mocking comebacks.

Those words became daggers that she used when she stabbed me in the back.

My achievements became those she referred to when criticizing poor staff judgment.

I chose my path.

I chose to be gray because she said I was “no fun” being blue

That I should “let it go” because she did before.

That I should bite my tongue when I want to speak because I’ll maybe say something that will set her off and she’ll think differently of me.

Because, why else would she respond like that?

I DON'T KNOW

I encourage her to do her best, to speak her truths but she doesn’t want to hear mine.

But, why do I call her my friend?

My best friend at that.

My lifeline, even.

I’ve known her forever, it seems.

But, the truth is I know nothing about her.

I only hear bits and pieces of her truth.

I often become engrossed in my own thoughts.

YOU SHOULD WORK ON THAT

I should work on that.

I also often try to reason with the opposite side.

I try not to hurt others as they have hurt me, in which I dare say with no remorse?

On instinct.

I am this way.

I try to spare those who left me with no mercy and bare.

On instinct.

I am this way.

It is my biggest flaw.

I try to change this about myself.

How empathetic and sympathetic I am.

How I am the downfall of my own story.

How biting my tongue in some situations does not always help me in the long run.

Our truth.

Us two.

It is that in reality it is only one of us.

And, never is there anyone to stand with me.
But, I have grown accustomed to it.
I learned that I can't win in this friendship.
That I can not win in this fight of ours.
And that's best if I choose not to stand up for myself or speak my
truth.
So I choose my words wisely.
I control my facial expressions when she talks.
Afraid to give something away.
Because the truth is if I do I'll be deemed a bad friend.
No one wants to be a bad friend.
And, sadly I'll be alone.
Again.
Nothing but her careless whispers to comfort me that are littered in
the wind.

Short Fiction 102

Wasted Youth

First Place Short Fiction

By Canderrian Brown

I hate it. I hate every second of this “fortunate” experience. Every night is the same with the boys and their coked-up one-night stands in the state we perform in. Red cups filled with expensive liquor crowd the tour bus to the point where it resembles the corner store where I got this pack of Marlboros from. Every morning is a repeat of me having to wake these insufferable brats so that we can practice for upcoming, late-night concerts. The talent that was once present in the four members has been simply extinguished as fame, arrogance, and laziness got into their bloodstream—along with the closest drug they could find.

I try my hardest to make the best of it, but it is simply a waste. Our album *Youth* failed to crack the top twenty on the charts, which is unfortunate considering the amount of time it consumed; there were late nights of composing, writing lyrics, pitching melodies, and autotuning Johnny’s screechy voice that dominates most of the choruses. God, his voice is annoying. If I didn’t know any better, I’d assume he’s the long-lost brother of Alvin, Simon, and Theodore.

Magazines and tween girls turned their backs on us after Daniel’s stunt of pissing in a mop bucket went viral. Our manager, Winston, tried his hardest to bribe TMZ into not releasing the footage, but they wouldn’t budge. After that hit the internet, we were called “Yellowstone” all over Twitter, damaging both ours and the television show’s name. It’s bad enough that the video was in color, but did they really have to include the sound as well?

Our support and momentum are slowing down with every release. Selling tickets for this band hall venue is even a struggle and it only seats three hundred people. We went from record setting attendance at MetLife Stadium to barely selling tickets at the Radio City

Music Hall. Not even the janitors wanna stick around to hear us play, and frankly I don't blame them.

I want out, but what can I do? Where can I go? My reputation is constantly brought down by the rest of them, and I'm never marketed as *the* heartthrob. I'm always marketed as the leader since I'm the eldest. On our third album, management tried to swap Tristian and my roles since the concept was more mature. That didn't go too well as complaints rolled in from our fans saying that I'm "too old to be sexy" and that I should stay in the back. Tristian is like five years younger than me, and he's sexier? Are you serious? The boy can't even grow chest hair.

How can a twenty-eight-year-old survive in the music industry, let alone the pop music scene? I'm far too old to be gyrating and thrusting on stage in front of our demographic and the constantly changing music trends are too manufactured for my tastes. Magazine covers featuring only my face sell the least compared to my members. There is no hope for a solo career. My personal promotion is never the best but decreases as time goes on. You would think that the main vocalist receives better sponsorships than the sub-dancer.

But anyway, here I am, sitting outside of the venue with a cigarette in hand. The ash falls from the dangerously pure-colored monstrosity, resembling a pile of darkness at my feet. Hanging before me is a poster of the five of us with smiles and smoldering gazes. Ten enthusiastic eyes stare back at me, gawking at the eyebags that pollute my sea of misery. With another puff of my cigarette, I scoff and wait until showtime.

CNF 103

Self-Reflections

First Place Creative Nonfiction

By Lauren Harvey

I tried to avoid mirrors. I would pass them and instantly look away. My eyes were always cast down as I brushed my teeth, and my back turned as I changed clothes. Don't get me started on the moments before a shower, naked with the mirror staring me back. It was a cycle. We would stare at each other as it analyzed me and judged me. Mirror pointed out the worst parts of me. It was hard to differentiate its voice from mine, but I could hear the slight differences. This voice was deeper. darker. I tried to speak clearly and loudly so people could hear me and pay attention. This voice didn't want other people to hear it. Mirror only talked to me. Mirror didn't care about anyone else. It picked me to pull apart. It laughed darkly as it pointed at the cellulite that stubbornly clung to my thighs, then the pimples that popped up around my eyebrows. Everything was accentuated while looking at Mirror. I could see everything that it pointed out clearly in its reflection.

The sounds of the room ruminated in my head. I heard the air conditioner turn on, and the tapping of construction workers outside the apartment, but most of all I heard Mirror laughing at me. I wanted to look away from the clear reflection in front of me, but I couldn't. There was a sick feeling in my stomach. The more I tried to shy away from the mirror, the more it attacked me. It was getting bolder, reaching out a hand that touched me. It slid its hand across my stomach first. That wasn't flat enough. It pointed at my eyes. The dark circles from lack of sleep were too dark. My chest was too big and my fingers too chubby. I had never wanted to rip my body apart more than in that moment. I ran my hands up and down my arms in an attempt to comfort myself and shoved Mirror's hands away in the process. It didn't work. The laughing was getting louder. It knew it was getting to me. It shook the ground and a bottle of lotion fell over. That shocked me out of my panic-induced stupor. I turned away and walked out.

I closed my bedroom door behind me and breathed deeply. This is what my therapist said to do. *Breathe, Lauren. Breathe in for four seconds, hold it for two, and breathe out for six seconds.* As I breathed in, I ran my hands up and down my body. I closed my eyes, relying only on touch. I could feel the cold wood of the door against my back, my fingers touched the bare skin on my arms. Smooth skin against smooth skin. I didn't feel imperfections or fat, just smooth skin. I liked this. I changed the position of my hands. They were running down my thighs now, pushing up the fabric of my shorts to feel more. Goose bumps rose up. I could feel the stretch marks and scars. I could even feel parts of the tattoo above my left knee, the scar tissue slightly raised from the skin around it. All the while, my eyes were closed, breaths coming on slower and slower and I calmed.

There was a stark difference in the way Mirror saw me and the way I felt. I felt the imperfections but didn't instantly feel disgusted by them like I did looking at Mirror. Touch opened up a new corridor in my mind. If I just kept my eyes closed, I could be happy with myself. I stayed that way for several minutes. I enjoyed the blissful feeling that came with the touch. I always enjoyed it when people touched me. Not everyone, just those I felt comfortable with, but a small pat on the shoulder or a hug filled me with warmth. Running my hands softly over myself and reveling in the darkness behind my eyelids brought even more bliss. I didn't dare open my eyes until my breathing had evened out and Mirror's voice was nothing but a memory in the back of my mind.

Like a child peeking through their fingers at something they're scared of, I slowly opened one eye. The interior of my room greeted me. Everything was shockingly normal. Nothing in the room indicated the struggle I went through, looking at myself, or the fall of that struggle, touching softly across myself. Everything was normal. It was quiet and peaceful. I ventured a look down at my body. The fabric of my shorts was still bunched up around my upper thighs. The lines of my body looked normal. They didn't look expanded or stretched out by Mirror's reflection. With one last movement, I placed one hand on my arm and the other on my thigh. My breathing had evened out but without meaning to, it picked up. I pinched the skin of my thigh. It had a certain firmness to it. I let go of myself, pushed myself away from the door, and gazed down at myself. Maybe I wasn't as bad as Mirror said I was.

The Sweatshirt

Second Place Creative Nonfiction

By Lauren Harvey

Mom thrusts it into my arms out of a dust-covered storage bin. A smile graces her face as her fingers run over the embroidered letters: *OLE MISS*. That wasn't an expression I saw on Mom's face often. I want to reach out for her hand; hold it like I always do. My fingers twitch, holding back the urge.

"I bought this sweatshirt after I graduated." The worn-out fabric and Mom's comment tell me that the sweatshirt is much older than I am. I'm nearly eleven now.

"You can have it; if you want it." I can tell this is a big deal to Mom, she didn't just give out her sweatshirts to anyone, especially one that gave her a face like that. It means I'm important. She trusts me with it. The thought makes my insides fuzzy with pride.

The hoodie slides down my shoulders and settles on my body. *It swallows me like an ill-fitted dress. She moves on.*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] bedroom [REDACTED] is what [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I [REDACTED] rely
on [REDACTED] cold [REDACTED] fingers [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Smooth [REDACTED] imperfections [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

There [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] the
[REDACTED] Mirror. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I [REDACTED] kept
myself. [REDACTED] blissful [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Everything [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] was [REDACTED] quiet [REDACTED]
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The Heightened Awareness

By Rosie Ellis

Going uphill felt as if I was climbing into the unknown. I was almost sure that the bus would slide down this big hill with how far we kept going. The more we traveled further up, I felt my ears start to pop as if I was chewing gum or on an airplane. The sight laid before me could be described as intriguing because of how green the trees were, or how the little houses peaked out on the side of this big hill we kept descending upwards similar to that of the Bible. Oh, what a joy it would be to wonder *what these people are thinking about living in such a place like this*. The fear of the unknown became even more terrifying despite the reality that those houses were secure as if God had carefully placed them there.

As we stepped off the bus, I took in the scene in front of me with such awe and amazement. The spring air was brisk and slightly chilling which caused me to grab my coat as it left chills down my body. Mesmerized by the slight sounds of wind neither too high nor too windy, I felt that I had reached the ultimate spiritual palace with how high we were up, but the pastures of green that were off in the distance seemed to roll on for miles and miles. As we began gathering our luggage, I began to notice the layout of the camp we were staying for the week. Remember those houses that peaked off as we were going uphill? They looked even smaller like tiny little doll houses that I used to play with as we began walking around the enormous camping site. Yes, it was a camping trip in the mountains!

Thick tree trunks made me feel as if they were ancient to the cabins that were carefully placed about the camping site. By ancient, I mean they looked as if they had been there since Jesus walked the Earth, and it seemed as if they were flourishing even more in his sunlight. It felt indeed like we were camping in an unknown place. The hills rolled up and down like a rollercoaster ride, and once again, I felt my ears popping due to how high we were up. I should have been fear-

ful since I have a phobia of heights, but the mountains I was visiting were so intriguing to me that I just wanted to take a hike. I wanted to hike up the mountains some more to see if I would find a hidden path to the houses off in the distance. I wanted to explore the layout of how the cabins were built in such a way that it was secure. Gone was the feeling of the fear of rolling downhill, but the curiosity of riding a mountain like a rollercoaster began to bunch my soul. OH, how I would love to live in a place so beautifully built.

As I began to place my luggage inside my assigned cabin, I noticed the layout of the room. The room consisted of four bunkbeds with a top and bottom each for each individual to lay on. There was also a cupboard on the side to place our belongings such as toiletries, clothes, and even shoes. Because of the way it was built, the top bunk was closer to the ceiling which meant it was almost as if you could reach out and touch the sky. The bathrooms were like communal showers and stalls. It had showers placed on the left side which held three shower stalls, and on the other side, there were three bathroom stalls. There was only one sink, and from the looks of it, I knew it was going to be a pain to try to use. I knew this was going to be a spiritual and exciting camping experience because I was still mesmerized by all the nooks and crannies I could find here. I started to feel as if I was becoming one with God's nature in such a strange place.

After playing detective on what was in the cabin, I placed my items inside the cupboard and began getting ready for dinner. As I stated, the camping site was huge, and its hills went on for miles and miles which made walking to dinner feel like we were taking a hike. After the big hike uphill to the dining hall, I became in awe again. Laid before me was a big dining hall that consisted of big wooden tables seemingly made from the thick tree trunks outside. The chairs at each table were wooden as well, but it was the glass ceiling that let light peek through at the top. The ceiling was so high up that you needed a ladder taller than your average one to reach it. I felt small for a moment looking upwards because I just wanted to reach out and touch it. I wanted to touch it to see if I could touch the thick and puffy clouds that were waving by as I looked on. However, my attention in the room was removed from my surroundings when the camp director took the stage.

As I sat down, I noticed the decorations on the wall. Each one

consisted of a bible verse with words of encouragement. They were done in big letters as if they were done with a stencil, and the colorful posters consisted of some reds, white, and blues. The tables themselves had little small books that were small pocket bibles that we could carry around with us. As you probably figured out, this was a Christian bible camping site where we could do all fun activities such as hiking, swimming, rock climbing, and pole climbing. There were also little games that we were able to play. For instance, I'm still in the dining hall when these funny-looking food characters come on the stage. One was dressed as a big steak, and the other was dressed as a vegetable. All of a sudden they started saying, "*Eat, Eat, How you like your steak?*" and most of us replied, "*Rare or well done!*" That was just the beginning of some of the activities I took place in during my time there. I felt that while I was here I was on a spiritual journey myself. Remember my height phobia? It was long forgotten when I started climbing up big poles high off the ground, or diving into a pool knowing I had never swam before. While I was there, I became closer to God, but I also had fun fellowshiping with my friends from school. The late-night hikes to the cabin to wash the day off felt thrilling to me. I never wanted it to end, but sadly, it was ending way too soon.

The last night we were there the camp directors sat us down around this huge bonfire. We each sat in this gigantic circle, and we told of our camping experience, the activities we enjoyed, and what we learned from there. After the bonfire, the next morning it was time to leave it all behind. I wanted to stay just a little while longer because I grew closer to God in a very spiritual way. But until next time, *Adios!*



Formal Essay 104

Human and the Inhuman: Jonathan Swift's Criticism of Human Nature

First Place Formal Essay

By Justin Porter

Throughout the whole of his novel, Jonathan Swifts uses the fantastic to illustrate his satirical approach to criticizing human conventions and human nature. Particularly, the final section of *Gulliver's Travels* is where Swift's narrator and world travel reveals self-revelation and criticism of his own nature through a new perception of himself. Lemuel Gulliver details his travels as well as the observations and insights that will fuel his new perception by the end of the novel. While there exists some ambiguity with regards to defining "humans" and "human nature," *Gulliver's Travels* attempts to provide solutions to the issue, and from his self-evaluations, Gulliver comes to understand or believes he understands aspects of himself in the species he will meet on his final journey that convey aspects of what it means to be human, leading to criticism of himself as well as humanity on a larger scale.

The final part of *Gulliver's Travels* portrays both personal revelations and further unusual circumstances for Swift's narrator. It is appropriate to consider that "the *Voyage to the Houyhnhnms* is a distinct unit, differing radically from the earlier *Voyages*, and complete in itself" (Eddy 172). Before his account concludes, Gulliver is faced with new observations about human nature, and this is seen in the new species he meets in the land inhabited by the horse-like Houyhnhnms and the inhuman Yahoos. This final section of the novel is where Swift criticizes humans and human nature through his representations of the inhabitants of Gulliver's final landing. This section showcases "a bitter denunciation of human affairs, placed in the mouths of beasts" (Eddy

177). Indeed, Gulliver's perception of himself and his fellow humans is altered because of his observations and interactions with these creatures, but there is an issue beforehand because there is ambiguity with regards to the precise meaning of "humanity" and "human nature." Some appropriate meaning to these terms can be applied, but they should be applied with caution because there needs to be some understanding of what these terms might mean in accordance with the criticism thereof.

The definition of "human" is neither clear nor distinct in Swift's novel, so the terms "human" and "human nature" are left ambiguously with regards to his representations in the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos. Questions become necessary for the exploration and dissection of *Gulliver's Travels*, imploring, "But what are human beings? What is it like to be human" (Bennett and Royle 297). Swift does, however, offer some insights to help alleviate the perceived ambiguity. Gulliver assesses the Yahoos in accordance with the Houyhnhnms and later applies his assessments to himself and then the English people. There is some new revelation for when Gulliver returns to England and presents himself as changed. Before his new perception can be better understood, however, it is essential to note that *Gulliver's Travels* remains "bound up with these questions" (Bennett and Royle 297). Swift narrator attempts to offer some relief to the issue, but the questions remain essential to determine what Swift is illustrating through is criticism.

After his arrival, Gulliver encounters creatures that are unlike the other species and peoples of his earlier travels. He hesitantly observes what seems to be some form of sub-human species that Swift depicts as subhuman-like. These creatures resemble apes as opposed to being exactly human, and while the question of what it means to be human stretches further than physical appearance, these creatures range in variations of hair color and are tailless. Despite these details, Gulliver insists that "I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, nor one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy" (Swift 207). His resolution towards the creatures is ill-favored because of their natural looks and seemingly primitive behavior, and this point illustrates a sense of separation between himself and these creatures. He perceives them to be some sort of animals, nothing *human*.

Swift's Yahoos remain unlabeled for some time in the course of the latter section, and it is until the Houyhnhnms alleviate Gulliver's ignorance of the name, nature, and history of their species. By observing the behaviors and intellectual natures of the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms, it seems that Gulliver comes to understand "some fantastic examples of real or apparent humanity" (Ehrenpreis 127). As Gulliver learns from and about the intellectually capable Houyhnhnms, he perceives some aspects of them as preferable to those of the Yahoos. The former show signs of intelligence in their abilities to communicate through some form of speech, their abilities to perform acts related to agriculture and construction, and their understanding of social hierarchy, and their apparent historical knowledge. Between the two species, the Houyhnhnms closely resemble human civility and capacity for intellect, while the Yahoos more closely resemble human physique and ignorance. The comparison showcases a "problem of animal rationality and human shape" (Ehrenpreis 130). While he does not see the resemblances initially, Gulliver opens himself to the knowledge of the Houyhnhnms. The scene presents unusual images because Gulliver is at the behest of creatures that resemble animals, but he becomes fascinated with the Houyhnhnms and prefers them to the company of Yahoos.

The Houyhnhnms evaluate Gulliver in accordance with their understanding of the Yahoo species. When Gulliver takes interest in learning their language, the Houyhnhnms teach him and soon converse with him. Through his conversations with them, Gulliver acknowledges, "that I must be a *Yahoo*" (Swift 216). His physicality establishes this connection because that is what the Houyhnhnms are able to compare him with Yahoos. Fortunately for Gulliver, he is accepted by them because of his "Teachableness, Civility and Cleanliness" (Swift 216). His intellectual capabilities and social presentation are distinct traits that the Houyhnhnms recognize apart from his physical appearance. Before their acceptance of him, Swift's traveler becomes "passionately concerned with keeping himself clothed in the land of the Houyhnhnms" (Morrissey 16). In a broader view, Swift portrays the Yahoos with human-like physical traits, but he deprives them of a mind. The Houyhnhnms are in turn portrayed as intellectual and able to construct a social hierarchy with roles of masters and servants, enslaving Yahoos to some extent. The Houyhnhnms understand war,

genocide, and some forms of malice, but their language and intellect prevent recognition of these vices. There is almost some level of ignorance on the part of the Houyhnhnms, but Gulliver remains consistent in his preference to them than the brutish Yahoos.

A particular scene in *Gulliver's Travels* explores Gulliver's direct contact and consideration of a Yahoo. The Houyhnhnms allow Gulliver to observe the creatures they recognize Gulliver to be, and Gulliver notes the Houyhnhnm's readiness "to apply the Character. . .of the *Yahoos* to myself and my Countrymen" (Swift 243). There remains an association between Gulliver and Yahoos, which the Houyhnhnms are easily persuaded, but there is an exception to their assessment of him. The Houyhnhnms are also aware of Gulliver's use of civil manners as well as his intellectual and linguistic capabilities. For the Houyhnhnms, these characteristics in Gulliver are the attributes that seemingly set him apart from the creatures they are familiar with. While venturing to observe them for himself, Gulliver encounters a Yahoo. He narrates the event and records, "It happened that a young Female *Yahoo* standing behind a Bank, saw the whole proceeding, and enflamed by Desire. . .came running with all speed" (Swift 245). There is an immediate attraction on the part of the Yahoo, some level of recognition and attraction in Gulliver. There is some ambiguity to what he exactly means by the conclusion of his statement, but it can be assumed that the Yahoo saw another one of her own species in him. Gulliver becomes disgusted and rejects the advances of the female Yahoo. He narrates further, "She embraced me after a most fulsome manner; I roared as loud as I could. . .whereupon she quitted her Grasp, with the utmost Reluctancy" (Swift 245). Because the narrative is in first-person it is difficult to understand the situation beyond Gulliver's own assessment. Her purposeful and rather aggressive contact showcases some level of either recognition or attachment, and the scene becomes interrupted when the female Yahoo attaches herself to Gulliver. Indeed, she seems unwilling to leave Gulliver. It is only when he calls for assistance from a nearby Houyhnhnm that she releases him and departs.

The previous scene produces in Gulliver a personal revelation, where he seems to finally understand the Houyhnhnms' belief that he is a Yahoo. Gulliver confesses, "For now I could no longer deny, that I was a real Yahoo, in every Limb and Feature, since the Fe-

males had a natural Propensity to me as one of their own Species” (Swift 245). This is the instance when Gulliver perceives himself differently. It is what he sees in the Houyhnhnms that further drives him to possess a new perspective on his newly acknowledged “Yahoo nature.” Without question, Gulliver accepts:

As these Noble *Houyhnhnms* are endowed by Nature with a general Disposition to all Virtues, and have no Conceptions or Ideas of what is Evil in a Rational Creature, so their grand Maxim is, to cultivate Reason, and to be wholly governed by it. (Swift 245-46)

His recognition of the *rational goodness* in the Houyhnhnms establishes Gulliver’s new perception, believing the Yahoos to lack such a trait. Since he perceives himself to be a Yahoo, he in turn believes that the way to alleviate his realized condition is to be like the Houyhnhnms, and he must achieve this kind of reason. Swift remains slightly ambiguous with his point, but he attributes vices like lying and Yahoo ignorance to be the pre-established condition of humans. This is where Swift’s criticism of humanity comes into focus.

Before the close of the section, Gulliver returns home to England. Immediately, Gulliver plans “to apply those excellent Lessons of Virtue which I learned among the *Houyhnhnms*, to instruct the *Yahoos of my own Family as far as I shall find them docible Animals*” (Swift 270). The result of his unintended venture to the land inhabited by the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos leaves him in a state of revelation because he still applies the term “Yahoo” to himself and his own family, recognizing those creatures in similarity to humans. To some extent, Gulliver is degrading humans because of his association with the brutish Yahoos, and the apparent solution to “Yahoo nature” is the rational goodness of the Houyhnhnms. For Gulliver, the Houyhnhnms demonstrate that “human nature exists in another dimension” (Tuveson 105). These creatures are separate from Gulliver himself, but their attributes are within reach of human desire for their enlightenment. There exists capability for what the Houyhnhnms possess that the humans must strive for to become less like Yahoos. In a biblical sense, there is exists some sense of preconditioning, where “Man, like the Yahoo, is easily dominated by the flesh, by his animal nature” (Morrissey 160). Humans and Yahoos are naturally ignorant and animalistic, and while Swift does not reveal how the Houyhnhnms possess their *rational good-*

ness, Gulliver asserts his desire to become less of a Yahoo and achieve this sense of enlightenment.

Furthermore, his discontent is explored when he writes about the use of horses for transportation. Gulliver expresses, “To lament the Brutality of *Houyhnhnms* in my own Country, but always treat their Persons with Respect, for the sake of my noble Master, his Family, his Friends, and the whole *Houyhnhnm* Race” (Swift 270). Gulliver seems to express some tribute to the creatures that provided him with his new sense of self. Gulliver is wanting to move beyond his Yahoo nature in accordance with the nature of the *Houyhnhnms*, but the passage alludes to how he views the *Houyhnhnms* in the horses of his native England. His *A Letter from Capt. Gulliver, to His Cousin Sympson* illustrates his discontentment when observing a post chaise. Gulliver views the scene critically and writes, “Have not I the most Reason to complain, when I see these very *Yahoos* carried by *Houyhnhnms* in a Vehicle, as if these were Brutes, and those the rational Creatures” (Swift 6). His criticism revolves around viewing the roles of “man” and “animal” as reversed. He perceives the horses worthier of respect and regard for their association with the *Houyhnhnm* forms. Gulliver is attributing to the horse similarly to how the *Houyhnhnms* attributed him to *Yahoos*. Gulliver’s perception seems to be entirely his own, believing that “men should be like the *Houyhnhnms*” (Tuveson 108-109). This is not the case beyond Gulliver himself. His discontentment arises because he recognizes the subservience of the horses that he associates with the *Houyhnhnms*—creatures of respect and admiration. Gulliver acknowledges that the Yahoo nature of his fellow humans separates him further from them because he believes himself different from other humans.

Gulliver’s criticism comes across as harsh when he points out the minor differences between humans and *Yahoos*. He believes earnestly that humans “only differ from their Brother Brutes in *Houyhnhnmland*, because they use a Sort of *Jabber*, and do not go naked” (Swift 8). Presumably, Yahoo nature in humans remains intact because Gulliver’s sentiment proposes that humans do not differ entirely from *Yahoos*, and this is why Gulliver believes that the *Houyhnhnms* are the solution. The human is nothing more than a type of ignorant beast, despite communication or appearance. Yahoo nature extends further than physical traits, but it seems that Yahoo

nature is imbedded within or makes up human nature entirely. Swift's narrator seemingly desires to "plunge into a belief in a life conducted as the reasonable horses conduct it" (Morrissey 161). The relative contrast between Yahoo nature and the Houyhnhnm's perception and rationality provides a sense of biblical damnation and salvation because the Yahoo nature is a less perfect form of existence, while the latter represents elevation and "pure" thinking. It becomes essential to understand Gulliver's perspective through such an assessment. The issue becomes presented as, "Man that is born in sin is born a Yahoo; and, unless he be born again, will live and die a Yahoo" (Eddy 191). While Gulliver does not argue in any religious terms, the contrast between natures becomes evident because Gulliver perceives one to be the solution to the errors of the other. To Gulliver, Yahoo and human nature exist within a realm of a truly undesirable condition. If others could perceive what Gulliver does, then there could be a broader need for pursuit of the *rational goodness* of the Houyhnhnms.

Furthermore, in his *Letter*, Gulliver defends his new perception. He attests, "in the Compass of two Years (although I confess with the utmost Difficulty) to remove that infernal Habit of Lying, Shuffling, Deceiving, and Equivocating" (Swift 8). There is the notion that Gulliver's final ventures in the land inhabited by the Houyhnhnms alleviates himself of vices common in human nature. His personal transformation appeals to Gulliver because of the good experiences of his time with the Houyhnhnms and Yahoos. These two species are literal embodiments of human vices and virtues. Specifically, Yahoos seem to embody, "the level to which human existence might sink" (Lock 9). Their lack of cognitive and virtuous capabilities seems to Gulliver a low form of life. At least, he resists intensely the idea of remaining one, even after leaving their lands. Once he returns to England, he only sees the vices in his fellow man, and he sees these vices as "deeply rooted in the very Souls of all my Species; especially the *Europeans*" (Swift 8). Religious or metaphysical language persists to illustrate either Gulliver's internal convictions of the matter or how human nature actually is. Swift's philosophical evaluation of human nature is now persuaded through Gulliver's criticism. From viewing them separately, Gulliver believes that he "can place men, Yahoos, and Houyhnhnms in proper perspective" (Tuveson 110). All these species

are different or contrasting in some fashion, but Gulliver evaluates all of them, agreeing with the Houyhnhnms that humans are or if not closely related to Yahoos. The Houyhnhnms remain separate from both and remain preferable to Gulliver. These creatures are not human, so, therefore, humanity is less than the Houyhnhnms as well as the horses he associates with them.

Gulliver admits that he does not hate his fellow humans, but he possesses disdain for them, nonetheless. He says, “My Reconciliation to the *Yahoo* kind in general might not be so difficult, if they would be content with those Vices and Follies only, which Nature hath entitled them to” (Swift 271). Swift’s narrator again alludes to some pre-established condition and the vices that accompany the condition. These are what he sees in other human beings and what he attempts to remove himself through his experiences with the Houyhnhnms, and so Swift ends the novel with a dismissal. Gulliver alleviates himself by stating, “I here entreat those who have any Tincture of this absurd Vice, that they will not presume to come in my Sight” (Swift 271). The vices of Gulliver’s disdain are acknowledged in his *Letter*, but Gulliver acknowledges that the vices are present and no less persistent in the people of his native country. Gulliver’s final criticism is ultimately his rejection of the unwillingness of others not to pursue the wisdom and self-revelation of the Houyhnhnms. Gulliver’s assessment appears to be a “pessimistic treatment of the problems of human nature” (Lock 10). There is a sense of judgement in Gulliver’s assessment, and he makes clear his utter dismissal of humans who remain in their Yahoo condition. For them, he possesses no time, consideration, or patience. Gulliver determines that his perception, enlightened by the Houyhnhnms, is the utmost view of human nature, and that his disdain for it is utterly justifiable to himself.

Gulliver’s Travels explores not only the relationship between “human” and the “inhuman,” but Swift portrays characters and creatures that illustrate aspects of human nature that offer representations as opposed to exact definitions. Through his Yahoos, Houyhnhnms, and his main narrator, Swift’s novel showcases the complexity of how to both perceive human nature and then how to assess it. Lemuel Gulliver is changed through his experiences and observations and encounters with different representations of what human nature contains. As

ambiguity remains consistent throughout Gulliver's approach to understanding human nature, he becomes a staunch critic, nonetheless. The vices and virtues that make up human nature---to a certain extent ---are the attributes that Gulliver recognizes within himself and in other human beings, and these remain in accordance with the vices and virtues of the species he meets before the conclusion to his travels.

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A Short Analysis of Gustav Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*

By Justin Porter

Emma Bovary delves into a hysterical state-of-mind when she learns about her lover's departure and opt-out of their secret "relationship." For Rodolphe, the affair seems to be another instance of his sexual interactions. The novel reveals that his relations with women extend further than just Emma Bovary. She is the latest in a line of lovers and prostitutes that Rodolphe becomes involved with, but his rejection of Emma emphasizes something tragic on her part because of how she responds to it. After she receives his letter in a basket of apricots, Emma is suddenly, "seized with foreboding" (Flaubert 190). Flaubert reports her receiving Rodolphe's message with suspicion seemingly because it is received indirectly. His servant delivers the letter in the basket of apricots, and Emma receives the basket with severe unease, leading to panic. In her state of alarm, Emma becomes almost frantic, and she discovers his letter, eventually feeling, "as if some great fire were raging at her back" (190). Flaubert reveals further her extreme response by insinuating a level of anxiety, but the anxiety or feeling becomes physical and not just mental. Her body responds and reflects the mental dread she exhibits.

It remains evident that Emma does not receive the news of her lover's desertion well. After she reads the letter initially, Emma retreats, "upstairs to her room, sickening with horror" (190). Her feelings towards the affair are clearly shown because she views the affair as an escape from her despise of her husband, Charles Bovary, and their life together. She desires a life away from Charles and all that is associated with their current state of living. She desires to leave with Rodolphe and travel and live exotically. Even in her distress, she does not regard his concern for her. The passage discloses that, "Charles was there, she realized" (190). Charles witnesses Emma's

hysterical state of being when she receives the letter of which he does not understand or know the reasons for her distress. She does not regard his presence with much acknowledgement other than simply knowing he is there. Flaubert writes that, “he spoke to her, she didn’t hear, and she hurried on up the stairs, out of breath, aghast, befuddled, and still clutching that horrible piece of paper” (190). Her action proves total dismissal of Charles and his concern as she focuses purely on her immediate feelings. She dismisses Charles to confront the reality of her situation.

The letter itself becomes a focal point of the narrative because there is seemingly an intersection between the omniscient, third-person narrator and what seems to be Emma’s own observations or opinions. She retreats, “still clutching that horrible piece of paper” (190). While she endeavors to run with the letter tightly grasped, an assertion is made regarding a specific characterization of the letter itself. Emma evidently does not receive the letter well, and the language reflects a third-person view---except for the assertion, “horrible” (190). The word choice resides personally in accordance with Emma’s current state of distress and devastation, so it seems appropriate to interject her voice or view into the general flow of the narrative.

Emma finds herself in a place where she observes the outside world and its happenings. Though Emma returns to the letter, “sneering with rage” (190). Flaubert does not disclose her emotions or thoughts specifically in the moment, but it seems that her distress becomes severely aggravated. Because of her perception of the affair, Emma seems to reveal another personal insight because of how she further responds to her situation. The anger implies possibly a sense of betrayal. Originally, she perceives their relationship as *more* than sexual gratification and as significant. She views Rodolphe as the solution to her issues with her marriage, her financial status, and her dissatisfied life, but these remain unresolved and devastate Emma to respond intensely.

The letter takes an emotional and mental toil on Emma. She becomes anxious when “her heart’s poundings, like a great hammer knocking inside her chest, came quick, quicker, in a broken rhythm” (190). Her distress leaves her in emotional ruin. Flaubert

reemphasizes the extent of her distress and how much she regards her affair with Rodolphe. She becomes severely numb, recognizing, “Why not have done with it? Who was to stop her? She was free” (190). Suicide becomes the solution, and she gives herself to these considerations fully. The scene showcases that, “she edged forwards, she looked down at the pavement” (190). Her intentions are clear. She willingly gives herself to these considerations and possesses a will to act upon them, emphasizing a new and immediate purpose.

Ultimately, the result of her affair does not produce the fruits of her fancies. Emma is in a state of pursuit, convincing herself to end her life. She says ultimately, “Do it! Do it” (191). Her desire for a new life without Charles ends with her affair, and while she and Rodolphe view one another as a means to an end, Emma expresses some level of passion. Her suicidal impulse becomes paramount as she stands ready, acknowledging that, “The blue of the sky invaded her, air was circling in her skull, she had only to let go” (191). The natural sensations offer some level of earnestness. She feels in the moment a sense of pursuit in her new goal, as if nature is pulling her towards it. Noises and sensations appear to her, “like a voice furiously calling to her” (191). She knows that what she wants in and from Rodolphe ends with their affair, and so she seeks refuge in her passions. These passions lead to her attempt at suicide, which becomes the ultimate solution to her disdain for her life with Charles. While she does not follow through, Emma exhibits a state of mental, physical, and emotional toil that persists and swells her distress in a last attempt to take drastic measures for a final resolve.

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A Short Analysis of Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*

By Justin Porter

In the second volume of *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland is guided on a tour of the Tilney's house. Earlier in the novel, Catherine expresses her presumption that the abbey is in ruin and holds archaic secrets, but it is once she arrives to Northanger Abbey that she realizes, to her disappointment, the abbey is both furnished with luxurious fixtures and furnishings and is in a suitable condition. Catherine notices that the "bed-chambers, with their dressing-rooms, most completely and handsomely fitted up; every thing that money and taste could do, to give comfort and elegance to apartments" (174-75). The description of the rooms does not coincide with Catherine's preconceptions about the abbey. She realizes through her tour of Northanger that the abbey is maintained in a comfortable condition and is furnished. Northanger Abbey does resemble the depictions of Gothic castles she reads about in various novels. Furthermore, Catherine's investigation of the abbey showcases the Tilneys' living condition, and she notices that the rooms, "being furnished within the last five years, they were perfect in all that would be generally pleasing, and wanting in all that could give pleasure to Catherine" (175). Northanger Abbey is presented as a home of luxury and comfort, but the emphasis remains on Catherine's acknowledgement that the abbey is furnished for occupants to live well. In her situation, reality is showcased differently from her expectations before arriving at Northanger. She discovers on her tour that the abbey does not fulfill her sense of wonder and idealism, according to the fictitious Gothic tradition of the novels she reads and admires.

Catherine's character reaches distinctly through the objectivity of the narrator, or the objective narrator coincides with Catherine's subjective feelings at a distinct point in the passage. On her tour, Catherine perceives, "rather angrily back, demanding whither she were go-

ing?---And what was there more to be seen” (175). There is emotion present with these insights because the emphasis on intrigue and disappointment reveals her own feelings in the moment. Before Catherine is informed of the matter, General Tilney averts Eleanor from opening doors that lead into a disclosed corridor. In the moment, Catherine seems to question the aversion from Eleanor allowing them into the corridor, and it seems to showcase Catherine’s dissatisfaction with the abbey and her interest in their perceived secrecy. Even so, it becomes clear that she desires to know the contents of that section of the house not revealed to her by the Tilneys. While the narrator makes her feelings clear, Catherine’s voice pierces through the narration and makes known her perceptions in the situation. The question becomes, “Had not Miss Morland already seen all that could be worth her notice” (175). It remains difficult to determine who exactly asks the question, but the question, nonetheless, exposes Catherine’s interest in private matters hidden away by the Tilneys. She becomes encompassed and asserts strongly that the abbey possesses wonders that she previously believed otherwise.

Catherine’s curiosity is provided with an answer, and with the answer to the questions of the narration, her notions about the condition of Northanger are reignited. Before the doors are shut by Eleanor, Catherine notices, “in a momentary glance beyond them, a narrow passage, more numerous openings, and symptoms of a winding staircase” (175). These descriptions establish a curiosity to Catherine because the nature of the corridor and the secrecy of the Tilney’s provides Catherine with a real instance of intrigue and a chance of discovery at Northanger. She seems to believe that the abbey could still coincide with the descriptions she reads about from various novels. In that moment, Catherine, “[believes] herself at last within the reach of something worth her notice” (175). Her immediate perception of Northanger is met with dissatisfaction because the abbey does not align with the ideal depictions in novels, but this instance showcases her reinforced belief that Northanger Abbey holds some Gothic characteristics. She is not interested in the abbey aside from what aligns with her ideas of the Gothic tradition like the mystery of the hidden corridor. Evidently, Catherine understands “that she would rather be allowed to examine that end of the house, than see all the

finery of all the rest” (175). She reveals further her desire to peer into the secret lives of the Tilneys’ home to satisfy her own interests and expectations that come from her indulgence in Gothic literature, and so, her desire for satisfaction reveals a level of arrogance when regarding her friend’s home. While she is newly introduced to Northanger Abbey, she does not view their living condition favorably, until she believes some mystery exists behind the shut doors of the closed off section of the abbey. Catherine appears willing to invade their privacy in her attempt to satisfy her own curiosity and avoid further exploration of the suitable conditions of the abbey that she views as trivial.

Her interest in the corridor becomes clearer when she learns that Miss Tilney’s mother died in one of the rooms on that section of the abbey. Without resistance, Catherine insists to Eleanor “her wish of being permitted to see it, as well as all the rest of that side of the house” (176). Her sense of exploration showcases her desire to interfere with or to invade private, personal quarters of the Tilneys’ home. While *invasion* seems extreme, it is evident that Catherine desires to infiltrate the private nature of this section of the house, despite General Tilney’s self-exile from that section of the abbey. Catherine learns details about the circumstances of Mrs. Tilney’s death. From this, Catherine’s imagination formulates events that illustrate her desires for reality to align with the traditional Gothic. Catherine believes she finds a secret within the walls of Northanger Abbey to explore, and she believes she uncovers a family secret. Ultimately, she persuades herself that the situation is in absolute alignment with her perception of the traditional Gothic, and she finds satisfaction in living the experience, despite her limited understanding of the reality of the situation.

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Sex, Lust, and the Dynamics of Marriage: Analysis of *Paradise Lost*

Second Place Formal Essay

By Lauren Harvey

The sex positivity and sexual messages that take place during Milton's *Paradise Lost* are interesting to note. At the time that this book was written, sex-positive messages were few and far between in literature. Milton takes a different approach to proposing sex in this work. Sex and love are addressed numerous times during *Paradise Lost*. From the sexual relations that Adam and Eve have before, and after, the fall to Adam asking Raphael about Angels' sexual relations, sex is talked about openly. While these interactions may not be explicit, they still describe sexual relationships that were considered scandalous at the time. The importance of sex in this work is rooted in human relationships and how that pertains to religions. Religious views on sex are often negative but Milton proposes that sex can be both fruitful or damaging depending on the relationship. Sex, marriage, rape, and love are all themes in Milton's *Paradise Lost* depending on the people present throughout this work. Marriage has a big impact on the sex positivity that is seen through Adam and Eve while some other relationships in the book are given a negative tone because of the conditions that the sexual relationships happen in. There are overlapping tones and meanings behind the sexual experiences in this book.

There is a stark difference in the sexual relations that Adam and Eve have before and after the fall. Before the fall, sex is discussed in a way that brings love and the good parts of marriage to the readers' minds. The theme of sex positivity is highly present in this section of the work. This work is highly dependent on the book of Genesis in the Bible. Because the Bible does not have sexual interactions between Adam and Eve inside of it, Milton was taking creative liberties that were unusual for the time. Sex was not common in many of the liter-

ary works that were commonly read at the time. Because of this, it is interesting that Milton made the choice to display the differences in sex from before the fall and after the fall. Douglas Anderson states in his academic journal, *Unfallen Marriage and the Fallen Imagination in Paradise Lost*, “[T]he full nature of the bond between Adam and Eve only emerges when we place their relationship in the context of the poem’s rich sense of place.” (Anderson 126). The purity and holiness of Adam and Eve’s marriage are highly influenced by the place that they are in. Paradise, or Eden, was a perfect setting with both Adam and Eve being perfect before the fall. The sexual display that is seen before the fall is highly contingent on the fact that this marriage and sex have not been marred by the impurity that comes from sin. During their period of purity, the tone towards their sexual interactions is positive. In Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve have sex. This takes place before their fall and at the height of their innocence. The text states, “Hail wedded Love, mysterious law, true source / Of human offspring . . .” (Milton Book 4 Lines 750-751). Throughout this section of the book, Milton depicts their sexual desire as a result of their innocence and purity, and their sexual union is presented as being a reflection of their love and devotion to each other, similar to the union that is described in the Bible between Jesus and the Church. The knowledge of the connection between Jesus and the church as a union of sorts would have been common knowledge to the audience that read Milton’s work. This innocence is a display of the sex positivity that is present in this work. However, this innocence and purity are shattered when they eat from the forbidden tree, and their sexual desire becomes a source of shame and guilt.

The fall that Adam and Eve went through was rooted in disobedience. While the fall itself was not completely rooted in a sexual nature, there are sexual ramifications that take place after the fall. There is a stark contrast that is seen between sex before the fall and sex afterward. After the fall, Adam and Eve begin engaging in a sexual scene. Unlike the scene in Book Four, which displayed love, innocence, and abiding by God’s commandment to be fruitful, there is a different tone to this interaction. This scene shows lust and desire in a way that does not promote sex positivity. The text states, “Carnal desire enflaming; he on Eve/Began to cast lascivious eyes, she him/As wantonly repaid; in lust they burn/Till Adam thus ‘gan Eve to dalliance

move” (Milton Book 9 Lines 1013-1015). The carnal desire that overtakes Adam as he is looking at his wife is lust that is rooted in sin. Milton takes special steps in inserting juxtaposing scenes like the one from Book Four and this instance to give a message about the differences between pure marital sex and sex that takes place from a position that is less than pure. Unlike the scene in Book Four where Adam and Eve pray to God before their sexual relationship, this scene has no mention of God or their desire to please him with their union. This displays the disconnection in their relationship that the fall has caused. Fredson Bowers states in their Cambridge University Press journal, *Adam, Eve and the Fall in Paradise Lost*, “Disobedience, as Milton was to illustrate can stem only from a breaking of the law of love which binds the universe together and to God – the love of the creator for the created, the love of the created in grateful return to the creator.” (Bowers 264-265). The love that connected both Adam and Eve to God and his will was broken by their disobedience thus resulting in a lustful interaction that was not rooted in the glorification of God but something that fulfilled the needs of the flesh. This is a stark contrast to the earlier interactions between Adam and Eve. While sex is looked at positively in the confines of a marriage that glorifies God, the sex that results from the flesh and a lustful mindset is seen as carnal and given in a tone that is very sex-negative.

Several forms of love are discussed in the conversation between Adam and Raphael in Book Eight. Raphael is one of God’s angels who converse in depth with Adam. Sex is brought up in this conversation through the discussion of Adam’s weakness toward his wife. Adam tells Raphael, “From all her [Eve] words and actions, mixed with love / And sweet compliance, which declare unfeigned / Union of mind, or in us both one soul; / Harmony behold in wedded pair” (Milton Book Eight Lines 602-605) This union of mind and soul that Adam is referring to is a reference to sexual experiences that have bound the couple together as one. This is a highly Biblical reference as the Bible often refers to marriage as a union together. Matthew 19:4-6 states, “And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who ⁱⁿmade *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” This reference to the union of two people through marriage, and ultimately marital sex

would have been a notion that most of Milton's audience understood. Adam is articulating the connection that he and Eve exhibit while also displaying common themes that the Bible displays as well. While in this passage, the love that connects Adam and Eve may seem like it is without fault, Adam says something that is concerning to this. He states, "All higher knowledge in her presence falls / Degraded, wisdom in discourse with her." (Milton Book 9 Lines 551-552). Adam is referring to Eve's beautiful appearance which is often the downfall of Adam's common sense. Eve is aware of her beauty and it is not stated if she uses it against Adam but it is not a far-fetched idea. Barry Edward Gross proposes in his journal, *Free Love and Free Will in Paradise Lost*, that "Eve is guilty of self-love; we first see her worshipping her image. And when she leaves the pool to seek Adam, she is still pursuing the love-object of her own reflection." (Gross 97). Gross is referring to the instance where Eve gains consciousness and becomes infatuated with her reflection. This is another form of love that does not fit into the mold of a holy, God-sanctioned form of love but one that is selfish and often seen as a form of pride and thus sinful.

The last display of sex or love that is given in this section of the book is the admission from Raphael that angels engage in a form of sexual intimacy. Adam asked Raphael outright if angels have sexual relations like he and Eve do. Raphael blushes in "love's proper hue," meaning he blushes red, and then replies, "Let it suffice thee that thou know'st / Us happy, and without love no happiness." (Milton Book 8 Lines 620-621). He then goes on to say, "[I]f Spirits embrace / Totally they mix, union of pure with pure / Desiring; . . . soul with soul." Raphael is explaining that while he and other angels may not have sex with two bodies, they have a mental form of sex that they consider intimacy. This is an interesting concept in the context of Satan being jealous of the sex that Adam and Eve have in Book Four. Satan may have not only been jealous of their physical union but also wistful for a type of intimacy that he could not have any more with angels. Satan tempting Eve to take from the Forbidden Tree is rooted in jealousy. Seeing the two humans participate in an act he was jealous of may have contributed to this jealousy even more.

There are also other sex scenes in this book that display violent forms of sex. There is the mention of rape in Book Two of the work. The passage states, "I fell, but he pursued (though more, it

seems, / Inflamed with lust than rage) and swifter far, Me overtook, his mother, all dismayed, / And in embraces forcible and foul / Engend'ring with me of that rape begot / These yelling monsters" (Milton Book 2 Lines 790-795). This is described when Satan has sex with Sin then their child, Death is born. This is a vivid and vile picture of Death eating parts of his mother and then raping her. The choice to include a rape scene performed by one of the evil spirits in the story is an interesting choice. This rape scene shows the vile forms of sex that are completely against the will of God and the sex that God promotes inside Adam and Eve's marriage. This interaction is the exact opposite of that seen in Book Four and even holds a much more violent tone than the sex that is seen in Book 10. This is a violent encounter with evil spirits. It can be assumed that the violent nature of this sexual encounter is rooted in the fact that these characters are not connected to God and the sex that is positive in his eyes. While the angels have a form of sexual intimacy, stated by Raphael, that is positive and intimate this form of sex is violent and vile. The polar opposites of these two forms of sex by spiritual beings is a deliberate comparison that Milton added into this epic poem to show the differences between positive sex and negative sex. Even Satan's form is connected to sexual promiscuity. Sarah R. Morrison states in her academic journal, *The Accommodating Serpent and God's Grace in "Paradise Lost,"* "Across cultures, it [the symbol of the serpent] suggests sexual potency and fertility as well as sexual transgression: wisdom as well as cunning and deceit, and trickery...." The sexual tones that follow the image of the serpent are an intentional move by Milton to display the sexual discontent that follows the evil spirits that are involved with Satan. This also makes a connection to the lust that Adam and Eve feel after their fall into sin.

After the fall, Adam and Eve experience shame and embarrassment at their nakedness, which represents their loss of innocence and purity in sex. God and Adam have a conversation while still in the garden and Adam states, "I heard thee in the garden, and of thy voice / Afraid, being naked, hid myself." God replies, "[H]ow has it become dreadful to thee? That thou art naked, who / Hath told thee?" (Milton Book 10 Lines 116-122) Adam and Eve run from God with embarrassment after they fall and make special notes to mention their nakedness.

The sex positivity that was present in Book IV is gone and replaced with a shameful view of not only sex but of their natural bodies. God did not tell them of their nakedness so the fact that they were aware of it and furthermore shameful of it was a marker that they were aware of their shame and regret that resulted from the fall and their actions after the fact. Rachel J. Trubowitz states in her journal, *Body Politics in "Paradise Lost,"* "[T]his thrilling promise of freedom exacts a terrible price." She goes on to say, "Adam's failure to mourn in his soliloquy (i.e., to come to terms with the catastrophe that is the Fall) traps him in his impossible, melancholic in-betweenness: he can neither go back to the ruined past nor go forward to a future that seems to promise only unmitigated suffering." Adam is stuck in a place where his sin and nakedness have been seen by God and he is shameful. This is connected to the body and how embarrassing lust and nakedness are to Adam and Eve after the fall.

In conclusion, the sexual dynamics that are present in Milton's *Paradise Lost* are a defined aspect of analysis. Many forms of sex are present in this work. Many of them take on a tone towards the type of sex there is, either positive or negative. The fall was a defined point that impacted the sexual relationships of humans. Meanwhile, demons and angels are capable of sex but the tone in which their sexual experiences are presented depends on the instance and the individuals that are involved. Altogether, there are positive and negative forms of sex, intimacy, and rape, as well as overlapping human experiences. Sin, love, marriage, lust, and intimacy all overlap in the expanse of this work.

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