

NuSense

Community



February 2014

Issue 4

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Feature Article

Lindsay Smith, “A Most Fortunate Identity Crisis: An English Major under the Guise of a Biologist”

Imagine my excitement to land a position with Parks Canada as a Resource Conservation Assistant. Sure, I am an English major – but that hasn’t seemed to stop me before. We English majors are adaptable. We are the epitome of transfiguration! Put us in any situation and we will blend in with the others as if we were meant to be one of them. While creating a new identity as an established Biologist, I am thrown into a moral warfare–face to face with Mortal Combat–I am an English major, how can I ever fit in with the science crowd? Thankfully, I have had the opportunity before throwing myself into this position to have taken several Biology classes. Vertebrate Zoology, Anatomy and Physiology, Microbiology... please don’t fail me now.

The phone interview had gone swimmingly well: “Describe the procedure for documenting wildlife.” Or... “If you encounter someone who is terrified of snakes while you are in the middle of a live show, how would you handle it?”... or what about “Name one of Ontario’s endangered species and describe it.” As I listen to the incoming questions, I smile slyly into the phone. I am born for this... I AM an English major. I have been trained for this: defending my opinion, crafting intelligent responses instantaneously, confidence is steaming naturally – I own this. Biology questions? I can wing it! The more questions I answer, the better I feel – painted turtles, stinkpots, blandings, black rat snakes, ribbon snakes, and all their other reptilian cousins?... no problem.

The first day on the job I am greeting with bird call memorizations, flora identification charts, trees, and more. While speaking with my colleagues, our degrees became the central topic: “What type of science are you studying?” and “What was the focus of your thesis?” While I listened quietly to the various scientific discoveries my colleagues had contributed to uncovering in the lab, all I could think of was my thesis regarding the conflict between the Hobbits, Orcs, and Elves in Middle-Earth, or my fascination with a race within my readings of Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*–I was definitely overwhelmed with their scientific knowledge.

I knew that my time was coming. They would ask me what I was studying. “So Lindsay, what’s your story?” I think to myself: “How do I construct this, what’s my thesis, do I have a supportive argument, should I throw in a quotation by Walt Whitman: “I chose English to ‘spread my seeds of knowledge!’?”

I look up and blurt out before thinking: “I, well, I am an English major actually.” The silence is so loud that you could just hear the quiet hum of the computer. My supervisor is the only one whose face doesn’t seem contorted in shock or fear – or both.

There does seem to be an overwhelming level of panic that arises in a room when someone admits to being an

English major. It’s an interesting phenomenon you see, just watch what happens with the dynamic in a room when an English major walks in. Almost immediately, the conversation level deepens, word choice changes, and all eyes turn towards you while they worry whether or not they have said something grammatically incorrect.

After overcoming their initial shock that there was an English major in their presence, I am quickly reminded to mention my credentials in Biology and my being bilingual. “Don’t forget, Lindsay,” said my supervisor, “we hired you for your French skills and your obvious knowledge of wildlife and your experience with GPS, right?” It was clear from that moment, that I would have to put away my



Samantha Kurtzer, “Identity and Transformation” (2012)

‘Englishness,’ at least try as well as an English major can hide his or her natural tendency to analyze and look into things much deeper than the average Joe might, if I ever wanted to fit in with Parks Canada’s Resource Conservation sector.

So as the summer months progressed and I had endured rigorous canoeing certification, memorized most of the bird calls in Eastern Ontario, and could finally recognize swamp flora as well as every type of tree imaginable, it was clear that I had infiltrated the system. I was now a member of the Biology team. I was fully masquerading as a Biologist according to those around me. Lindsay, the English major, had pulled a Sherlock Holmes. But instead, I was a regular Cooper’s Hawkeye. My daily routine had transformed dramatically. I never thought that as an English major I would be balancing in a canoe while trapping and tagging 38 pound snapping turtles in the middle of the swamp while ensuring no one’s toes were haphazardly removed as a result of a turtle bite, or having to paddle out into the deepest part of a swamp to listen for the threatened Least Bittern’s cooing. I have even had the pleasure of being puked on by an African python among many other things.

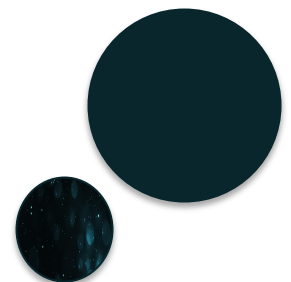
Yet, through all of my adventures as a Biologist, my concept of identity has not changed. What and who I am is not necessarily reflective of where I am, or in what situation I find myself in, but rather it is something that has developed during my years here at Nipissing. If this experience has taught me anything about identity, it has confirmed that I am an English major and will remain an English major at heart no matter what life throws at me – whether it be snakes, turtles, or birds, or whether it just be the regular shenanigans of life, I will be prepared. ■

Academic Life

Dr. Pavlina Radia, "'To Burst Free, Into New and Old': An Interview with Dr. Laurie Kruk"

“Engine-roar-wrapped, I too yearn
to burst free, into new and old. Our blue horizon never changes, just
widens as we wait for the oracle,
in the bow to divine for us,
tell us when we have arrived.”

~Laurie Kruk, *My Mother Did Not
Tell Stories* (Demeter Press, 2012)



It is a sunny spring morning. I am in between meetings, ravaged by pesky phone calls and text messages, those constant reminders of the here and now. I look at my watch: it's not 3 p.m. yet. But before I even step out of the car, I hear a door open and out walks a composed blonde with a smile and a notebook, a mark of spending years taking notes, jotting thoughts and memories that come at random, uninvited. Laurie Kruk is a woman of many talents--an associate professor in English Studies at Nipissing University, a mother to two young girls, a dedicated partner, but also an accomplished poet. Her early collections of poetry speak to the intimacies of growing up, of leaving behind the old for the unfamiliar new.

Her 1992 and 2006 collections *Theories of the World* (Netherlandic Press) and *Loving the Alien* (Your Scrivener) embrace the new with an inquisitive daring of a lyrical poet whose ability to probe the darkest wells of life's many experiences invigorates each page. Both collections tap into the anxiety of moving beyond oneself. When I ask Laurie whether she has her own "theory" or "theories" of life, she smiles and says: "I would never call it a 'theory.' You have to outgrow your old self and gravitate towards communities. I think life is about drawing connections, drawing circles between different people and different places so that your world gets increasingly larger as you get older." *Loving the Alien* takes this idea further by exploring the deep sense of alienation that comes from moving to a different place, where, as Laurie Kruk says, "you are being challenged, but also forced to make bridges."

Contemplating her response, she adds: "But writing comes out of that. It comes out of loss and loneliness. As many contemporary poets told me, it's when you are puzzled and perplexed, or even in pain, that the poems come out."

Such puzzling out of meaning is what drives Laurie Kruk's passion for writing. "That's basically it. Most of the poems come for me from some kind of pain, some kind of puzzlement...I kind of intellectualize the emotional upset, but I don't want to completely lose the emotion because that's so powerful, so I try to come back to the emotion through nature or family life. I seem to keep returning to family life imagery since it's all about circles, coming back to the circle. You are never without that circle when you are a human being."

Although Laurie Kruk might claim she has no 'theory' of life, the philosophy of "drawing circles" is nonetheless a common theme that also underpins her most recent collection of work, *My Mother Did Not Tell Stories* (2012), published by Demeter Press. A Work of maturity but also poetic aptness and formal agility, the collection

gives voice to the complexities of motherhood, the pains and pleasures of growing up, the pangs of anxiety surrounding the intimacy of mothering and partnering, as well as the moments where, as Laurie Kruk puts it in “Heart Exercise,” “we meet at intersections of public and private” (5). Whether chasing “our legends of ourselves” as she notes in the melancholy, yet unscrupulously upbeat poem, “Reliquary,” or whether rubbing shoulders with relatives and their “assorted personalities” during the family Christmas, Laurie Kruk says we find ourselves “drawing circles” around things, people, and, most importantly ourselves. These daring journeys into the



unknown—be it adulthood, motherhood, or partnership—which change what she calls “our legends of ourselves” might be an endearing hallmark of her poetry (“Reliquary 8), but they are also relatable signposts, moments of intimate crossings and remembering. The collection thrives on ironic innuendoes, debunking the myths about motherhood and mothering, while simultaneously crafting a new language to communicate loneliness, anger, mis-

Courtesy of Laurie Kruk and Demeter Press

understanding, and fear. But it is also an attempt to make sense of mystery by creating bridges through a poetic storytelling that is witty yet lyrical, intimate yet relatable.

The collection thrives on irony and wit: it has no tolerance for binaries or sexist mythologizing. “The good mother stereotype is everywhere. We see this polarization of women into good and bad mothers. Most of the time we are somewhere in the middle. Like many feminist writers, I am trying to explore that complexity and not accept that it’s either one or the other: that you are either perfect or you are a failure.” The insistence on imperfection, particularly as it pertains to our most intimate and anxious encounters is what is so endearing about Laurie Kruk’s poetry. As she says, “the kind of poetry I write allows me to write narratives that are quick and witty. I like the poem because it’s short and accessible and wonderfully sharable. It’s just a wonderfully accessible medium.”

When I probe deeper into the realities of balancing professional life with creative interests, she graciously ponders the question before answering. “I try to bring them together; they intertwine.” Reflecting on creative themes in her academic writing

provides further insight, but it also helps to flesh out ideas, she adds. It paves the way to new ways of seeing and understanding. However, as Laurie Kruk says, it's all about sharing with others. Once again, she comes back to the importance of drawing circles.

When I ask her what kind of advice she would give to young, aspiring authors, she says: "Just share your work. Don't be solipsistic. I guess today you can share your writing online, which is fantastic and appealing to many younger writers, but also share it live, in readings and writings. I guess that would be my encouragement. A lot of writers start off very, very shy and private. They say 'oh' I write in a journal, but I don't share. I think if you are going to be a writer, then you have to share," she says.

I am touched by her generosity and sincerity. I want to ask more questions, but I know our time is winding down, I have to rush off to another meeting, but I ask nonetheless.

PR: "Where does your poetic inspiration come from? What drives you?"

LK: "Reading leads to writing...and my parents, both teachers, always encouraged us to read...so I was eventually inspired, as a teenager, to begin to put my ideas down in narrative form. I found that I could shape little 'narratives of the heart' in poetic free verse form—inspired by the examples of Canadian poets Atwood, Purdy, Wallace, Patrick Lane, Lorna Crozier, etc. etc. That was both pleasing and immediate. I also love to read, study, and write short fiction (still unpublished), but a poem has the advantage of being both more sensuous (when read aloud) and more compressed, so that it is more quickly written and easily shared, both with intimates and with strangers. As a poet, I'm trying to find...meaning, in the experiences and emotions that puzzle, perplex, provoke, upset, and disturb me. I find that most of my poetry comes from some kind of questioning, if not actual pain or loss. My poetic inspiration, as a mom and a poet, is grounded in my daily life and relationships....and my process is also rather domestic and casual (scribbled notes on paper). The poems sprout like mushrooms, I feel, from the compost heap ('kitchen midden,' Al Purdy calls it) of my changing life."

With her reference to the "compost heap" from which the new sprouts, I know that our time is up. It is 3:40 p.m. I am already late. And yet, I feel that those thirty minutes spent on the porch discussing poetry, the challenges and rewards of creativity, were yet another means of drawing circles, of "bursting free" out of the shackles of the everyday, if only temporarily. ■

Art World

Rebecca Sullivan, "Quiet in a Surreal World"

Marica Villeneuve, a first year Bachelor of Fine Arts student at York University, was kind enough to share with me a very personal and beautiful piece of artwork she completed for a visual arts project in high school in 2010. This piece called *Untitled* represents a moment suspended in time when Marica feels utterly alone and full of inspiration. A meticulous realist that likes to experiment with surrealism, Marica tells me that this particular work reflects her identity. The darkness of the cityscape is significant because of its relation to her own artistic world.

"I do my best work at night," she says, "when everything is quiet and time seems to stop." The broken clock of the clock tower represents time stopping and the balloon symbolizes a spark of inspiration. Marica explains, "There is always an interesting tension between peace and excitement when I am creating something. On one hand, I feel completely calm. On the other hand, I am enjoying myself so thoroughly that I can't contain my energy. Art is an essential outlet for me."



Marica Villeneuve, "Untitled" (2010)

I ask her more specifically about the meaning behind the balloon. She tells me that red is her favourite colour, but that it is the image of the man inside the clock that excites ideas about identity, who we are in this age of constant hustle and bustle.

"What motivates us?"

"What binds us?"

"Who are we?"

These are some of the questions Marica is striving to address in her art. ■

Academic Contributions

Courtney Stuart, "Skin-Deep: Self-Control and the Superficial Narrative of Superiority in *The Beetle*"

The Victorian period is arguably where the characteristic ‘stiff upper lip’ of the British is most apparent. Self-mastery was perhaps so lauded then because so little seemed to be under Britain’s control. New sciences and inventions were undermining traditional social structures everywhere you turned. Women were beginning to trickle into the workforce and insist on rights. Empire was teetering on the verge of chaos. The only way for Victorian society to get through this period of uncertainty – and the only way the government could retain its control over the people – was to act like everything was just fine. A thin veneer of control was projected over issues of gender, science, and empire when no one really had any substantial control at all. Richard Marsh explodes this superficial control in *The Beetle* by repeatedly undermining the one thing every British person should still have control over: themselves.

Marsh’s focus on body language points the audience not only to the immediate lack of control over said body language, but also to the reason each character loses control. Body language is merely another method of communication, and controlling the social or imperial narratives was how the British government maintained its semblance of control over the issues themselves. When the characters lose control over this primal method of communication, it reflects the government’s gradual loss of control over the social narratives that insisted everything was all right. Watching Marjorie and her father’s physical communication and comparing it to the verbal narrative Lindon puts forth demonstrates concern over women’s changing roles in society, and men’s inability to control the situation. Lessingham’s interactions with the other men throughout depict uncertainty about the changing narrative of masculinity as well, while analyzing Atherton’s body language and speech reveals some disturbing questions about science and its direction. Finally we have the Arab, or Beetle, itself, a narrative in which these fears about Victorian society are played out against a wider backdrop of the superficial control Britain has over its empire. Marsh uses the

divide between what the body language is really saying and what the characters are verbally trying to put forth as truth to comment on the superficiality of the Victorian narrative of control, both on domestic and imperial grounds.

Let us begin with that most domestic relationship of father and daughter. According to his speeches, Lindon would have us believe that he is in control of the relationship, but his body language belies it. He has “warned her against the scoundrel [Lessingham] more than once; [he’s] told her to cut him dead” (Marsh 159). His tone is one of command and he is frustrated that Marjorie continues to disobey him. However there is little wonder she does, when you compare Lindon’s body language to her own. Throughout the novel, Lindon repeatedly works “himself into a state of heat in which his countenance presented a not too agreeable assortment of scarlets and purples” (159). He is always blustering and gesticulating, and has about as much control over his speech as he does over his body, evidenced by the pronounced stutter that gets worse when he confronts his daughter. Marjorie, by contrast, is always cool and calm in her physical reactions (169). When she possesses such self-mastery it is unsurprising to find her besting her father, so lacking in self-control. Marjorie is headstrong and insistent when it comes to doing as she pleases, and her father is comically unable to bend her will to his, when he cannot even master himself and his own body language. The narrative of filial dominance he insists upon verbally is unequivocally undermined by the body language of father and daughter during their arguments.

Marjorie can be described as anything but passive and submissive, except when she is with Lessingham at the beginning of the novel. Lessingham is renowned for his unflappable stability (75). In the face of such “unruffled coolness” Marjorie becomes a passive character, resuming the traditional role of subservience to masculinity, losing some of her own control over her body language in the process. She shivers, cries, and is struck dumb, requiring Lessingham to comfort her until her self-control returns (191-2). At this point in the chronology, Lessingham has yet to encounter the beetle in London and remains the unflappable politician. Lessingham’s narrative of control has not been wholly undermined yet, and indeed even readers do not yet know the secret of his past. Lessingham is still in control of the story of his life, in control of his body language, and therefore in the controlling position in his relationship with Marjorie.

Even Lessingham’s control is fragile and superficial however, as we have already Witnessed by the time we reach Marjorie’s diary. While his superior position to

Marjorie is not immediately questioned, his superior status in comparison to the other men is entirely uncertain from the get-go. According to the historian John Tosh, “manliness and gentlemanliness were sharply distinguished in the early to mid-Victorian period” (458). In *Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England*, Tosh discusses the notion that as the Victorian era wore on, gentlemanliness was increasingly associated with pleasant, but empty and superficial politeness (463). More and more it was considered appropriate to be thought of as “manly” rather than “gentlemanly,” since manliness denoted “energy, virility, strength...[and] the moral qualities which enabled men to attain their physical potential – decisiveness, courage and endurance” (460). The men in *The Beetle* are held up for comparison as though Marsh would determine which is truly more beneficial for society: the gentleman or the man. Lessingham is not quite the gentleman of the early nineteenth century, but he has built his career on his oratory skills rather than action. Part of Tosh’s superficiality of gentlemen comes out through their skill in conversation and social settings contrasted with their idle lifestyle – gentlemen did not work, they socialized. Though Lessingham is a great politician who will make history, we never see him take any action; all he ever does is talk.

Take the burglary scene, for example. Instead of making some move to take the revolver and apprehend Holt, he tries to talk him down (Marsh 76). This pattern is repeated throughout the narrative – it is Atherton who investigates the Arab and Lessingham’s past; Lessingham merely approaches Champnell and hires him to do the investigating. Though Lessingham accompanies the two men, he contributes nothing to the chase except his fears for Marjorie’s fate. As far as heroes go, Lessingham is decidedly lacking in vitality, courage, and strength. Marsh places Lessingham in the position of gentleman, as inferior to manly men, and he emphasizes this through Lessingham’s body language. During his speech at parliament, Lessingham “was coolness itself. He had all his faculties under complete command” and Atherton compared his self-mastery then to earlier in the day when he had seen Lessingham “a nerveless, terror-stricken wretch, grovelling, like some craven cur, upon the floor, frightened, to the verge of imbecility, by a shadow” (126). In social situations where the power of speech is required, Lessingham is upright, cool, and in control of his body language. He is “unflappable.” When faced with a situation that calls for some kind of action, however, like the face-off with Holt, or his confrontation with Atherton, and any dealings with the Beetle, Lessingham loses complete control of himself and his body language, revealing his fear and panic and rendering him incapable of doing anything.

Lessingham, comfortable in gentlemanly situations, is useless when any kind of action is required – when he needs to “play the man,” as Champnell says (294). Old notions of superiority and the controlling class need to be reassessed since gentlemen, traditionally the dominant class, prove themselves so woefully inadequate when any kind of decisive action is required. In this period of uncertainty and unravelling traditional social and political controls, decisive action is required all the time – gentlemen, the erstwhile dominant class, must either learn to act or step aside in favour of those who are prepared to. It is Champnell, the upper-working-class investigator, who is the real hero of *The Beetle*, in the sense that he is the one who actively works to find and rescue Marjorie and capture the Arab.

Atherton falls somewhere between the two men. Awkward and clumsy in social situations, he cannot stand in for a gentleman, and while he may take action, he fails to really achieve anything. Again, it is Champnell who brings order and direction to the chase at the end. Atherton may be a highly physical individual, and more a man than Lessingham, but his body language is anything but controlled. A scientist and inventor, Atherton’s lack of self-mastery is particularly unsettling, especially considering he is developing volatile and early forms of weapons of mass destruction. In



Brittany Lamers “Body Language” (2012)

the cab with Lessingham and Champnell, Atherton “sometimes sat on [Champnell’s] knees, sometimes on Lessingham’s, and frequently, when he unexpectedly stood up, and all but precipitated himself onto the horse’s back, on nobody’s. ... Never, for one solitary instant, was he at rest, or either [Champnell or Lessingham] at ease” (255). Atherton has no control whatsoever over his body language, so much so that he actually endangers the two other men, putting his elbows into their eyes and knocking off their hats. At no point in the novel does Atherton really demonstrate any effort to control his impulses. The only show of self-mastery is when he succeeds against the hypnotising power of the Beetle (144). The scene is more an illustration of science triumphing over superstition and magic than Atherton demonstrating self-control however, as Atherton does not control himself for the rest of the novel.

In *The Gothic Body*, Kelly Hurley discusses how the gothic genre supernaturalizes “both the specific content of scientific theories and scientific activity in general” as a way of bringing the anxieties inherent in science to a more manageable level (6). In the Victorian era, science was rapidly undermining traditional understandings of the world. It blurred the lines between humans and animals, cataloguing and explaining miracles, and even trying to scientifically ascribe character traits to genders (Tosh 465). What the new sciences could not guarantee, however, was the provision of a new understanding of the world that was as complete as the traditional one. It produced more questions as quickly as it answered them, and this generated a lot of anxiety over our ability to control the direction of the new sciences. Atherton is a scientist developing toxic gas as a weapon of war, and while you arguably see the triumph of science and technology over the Beetle’s mysticism, Atherton’s lack of self-control is terrifying considering the power of life and death in his hands. By depicting Atherton as lacking that self-control, Marsh refuses to permit his readers to feel satisfied that modern developments would always save the day. After all, Woodville almost died because of Atherton’s invention, and was only saved by the Beetle. Marsh uses Atherton’s body language to explode the comfort people take in the new sciences – if they can so easily, accidentally be turned against us, then how can we claim to have them under our control?

Hurley points out that while on the one hand gothic seems to bring anxieties to a manageable level, on the other it also aggravated them (6). Atherton’s inability to completely control his invention (or himself) is just one example of an anxiety Marsh refuses to relieve with the death of the Beetle. Britain’s tenuous hold over its empire is another. Jamil Khader also discusses how gothic fiction manages trauma;

while his essay *Un/Speakability and Radical Otherness* deals specifically with *Dracula*, many of his points apply equally to *The Beetle*. Trauma theories today focus primarily on the Holocaust but, according to Khader, “twentieth century violence...cannot be adequately understood without accounting for the five hundred years of European conquest, terrorism, and genocide committed against indigenous people around the world” (77). Empire received support from the British populace only because it was presented as a positive thing. Empire allowed cheap, exotic goods to flood the British market, but the narrative of empire went beyond consumerism: by colonising these inferior nations, Great Britain was making them better. Increasing revolts and wars, and growing anti-imperialist agitations was quickly giving lie to this narrative of superiority and civilization, bringing instead the horrors of imperialism to the forefront. British control was wavering. Marsh takes the trauma inherent in imperialism Khader speaks of and brings it sharply to light by turning it against the British people. Rather than Englishmen invading a colonial land and assuming control, the colonized are invading London and taking control of the citizens.

Again, the trauma of foreigners taking over is expressed most poignantly through body language and self-mastery of it. The Beetle hypnotises Holt, Lessingham, and Marjorie, and tries to hypnotise Atherton. While under the Beetle’s control, these Londoners are incapable of controlling their own bodies. Holt describes his “passivity [as] worse than undignified, it was galling. [He] knew that well. [He] resented it with secret rage” (52). The frustration and horror they experience when the Beetle controls their bodies is equivalent to the frustration and horror of imperial efforts to control colonized countries. Holt’s “secret rage” is the same rage the colonized feel as a result of their oppression by the British, gradually beginning to express itself in the revolutions of so many colonies. Khader argues that *Dracula* constructs a sense of community – the isolated narratives compiled into a single whole – that allows the trauma to be considered and managed on a level that supersedes the individual. He cautions, however, that the development of a community around a trauma could result in the “violent and xenophobic disavowal of the Other” (Khader 78). This concept is evident in *The Beetle* as well: Though the colonials are striking back against Britain through the Arab, the novel makes literal the anxiety that just as England has violently oppressed the colonies, so too might it be oppressed in its turn. Consequently the Beetle, and the colonies it represents, is not depicted with sympathy by Marsh, but rather with horror. The Beetle becomes even more violently disavowed as Other.

According to Hurley, the Beetle “represents a barbaric Other...a sexually perverse Other...and a magical, supernatural Other” (126). This excessive Othering serves primarily to distance the Beetle and all the anxieties it represents from the implied narrative that defines ‘Englishness.’ Lessingham, our unflappable protagonist, becomes flappable only when confronted with the Beetle. When Holt first says, “THE BEETLE”, he remarks that Lessingham, “so far from exhibiting the impassivity for which he was renowned, all the muscles in his face and all the limbs in his body seemed to be in motion at once; ...his very fingers were twitching aimlessly, as they were stretched out on either side of him, as if seeking support from the shelves against which he leaned” (Marsh 76, 77). When Lessingham speaks to Atherton the following morning however, and even when he tells Champnell his past experiences with the cult of Isis, he remains completely in control. It is only when directly confronted with the Beetle that he loses control. While incapable of doing anything productive during the chase, and clearly consumed by fear for Marjorie, Lessingham remains in control of his body as long as a distance between himself and the Beetle is maintained. In the same way, as long as no one looks too closely at the colonies, or the state of the empire, then the British government can continue to seem in control.

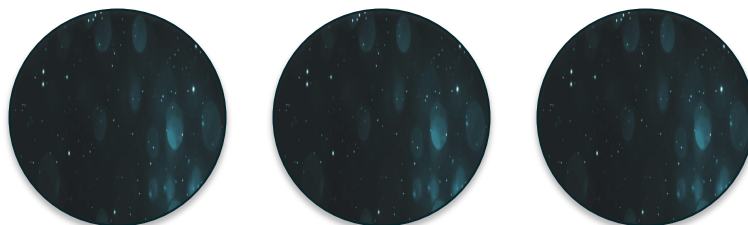
This superficiality of control is also why it is so important that Marsh created the Beetle to represent so many Victorian anxieties. As Hurley explores in her book, the Beetle embodies anxieties regarding the fluidity of gender roles (it is neither clearly male nor female), anxieties about the efficacy of science and the creeping popular interest in old world science and mysticism (after all, in the technological race to capture the Beetle, it is not definitively destroyed), and, of course, the anxieties regarding empire that I have just outlined. If control can only be maintained at a distance from the Beetle – further suggested by the fact that it is capable of hypnotising the majority of characters who encounter it – then really, no control over it is had. Again, at the end the Beetle is killed in a train crash. None of the principal characters chasing it have anything to do with removing the threat, if the threat is even truly removed. Marjorie takes years to recover her sanity – her control over her conscious mind, never mind body – and even after her recovery, neither she nor Lessingham can bear to hear the word ‘beetle’ mentioned but must leave the room, presumably to prevent giving in to fear or panic and losing control (319, 320). Even with the threat’s removal, Lessingham and Marjorie remain on the edge of losing control, suggesting that the control they have managed to regain, is not really control at all – it is only skin deep.

Marsh creates a vivid commentary on the superficial nature of Britain's control over all aspects of its society toward the end of the nineteenth century. Gender roles, both of women and men, science, and the empire are all sources of intense anxiety for Victorians, both alleviated and exacerbated by the gothic mode. Marsh alleviates them by allowing people to deal with them in a distanced manner – the events in *The Beetle* are fictional and therefore manageable. However, Marsh exacerbates them by exposing just how ineffectual that process of distancing the concern really is. Control is not regained by distancing the concern, just the illusion of it. And as happens to Lessingham, that illusion could shatter at any moment. While the end of the novel restores the illusion, the inconclusive destruction of the Beetle suggests that it could, once again, fall apart at any moment.

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***Originally submitted on December 9, 2012, as a final paper in ENGL 4516 Honours Seminar (Dr. Robert Breton); revised for NuSense. The paper was awarded an English Studies Essay Prize. Congratulations, Courtney! ■**



Creative Contributions

----- PROSE -----

Tyler Hosken, "Lollipop"

The senator paid his driver in exact change and stepped into the torrents of that afternoon. Quickly he dashed beneath the metal awning in front of the Baron Nights Hotel. He pulled out his cell phone to check the time: 11:17. Perfect. He slipped the phone into his left back pocket and pushed through the revolving doors into golden-yellow warmth. He didn't notice the colours, for he was there for business. He saved such thoughts as wall colours and furniture placement for Sundays: his mother had the most fascinating opinions on floral arrangements over brunch.

The lobby was mostly empty—it was Wednesday—and he walked directly to the front desk. He tripped over a young girl—garbed in grubby clothes too big for her and no more than thirteen he wagered—not four yards from the clerk. He grumbled a half-hearted apology and let her run off to some corner or another.

“Robertson Sporting Goods,” he said to the clerk as he straightened himself up. “The 11:30 appointment, sir?” asked the clerk who pretended not to have seen the other man's stumble. The senator nodded. “Room 1707, by the elevators to your left.”

He thanked the man at the desk and stepped into an empty open elevator, pressing for his floor. The machine whirled motion when by all bad luck the box shuddered and halted. The white florescent glow flashed out and was replaced with red emergency light.

The storm must've taken the power, he realised but didn't curse—there were worse things and the meeting wouldn't start in total blackness. Someone would collect him when the power returned. He had learned to ignore stress—he had quit smoking to help his image and his doctor had been warning him about his blood pressure for nearly a decade. He sighed and slid down the wall to sit, noticing for the first time that the girl he bumped into minutes before sat in the corner nearest the door staring quietly at him.

They remained silent for a few minutes, which the senator was grateful for. He had nothing to say to a girl of this sort: dirty, thieving, probably in the sex-trade. *Probably does drugs too*, he thought, although he wished he didn't because a joint in mind so easily becomes a cigar to an ex-smoker. He chastised himself for not carrying any gum with him.

"So what do you do?" said the girl in the corner. *Damn*, but he decided to give her something, if as little as possible.

"A girl your age probably wouldn't understand," he said gruffly without making eye-contact.

"You mean because I'm a girl or because I'm too young?" she said offended. The senator's back straightened and he looked at her to apologise but she laughed. "I'm joking, dude, don't worry about it. You're probably right, I mean I don't have much for education. I just know you gotta look someone in the eye when you talk to them. Lets you get right inside, all personal, so you know when you're being cheated or something. It's natural instinct, you know?" Being in politics and PR before, he knew that and more, like how eye contact causes a hormone in the brain to simulate a bond and that you can tell if someone likes what you're saying by how wide their pupils are compared to the brightness of the room. It was important to know your audience. He nodded to her to be polite.

"So how old are you, anyway?"

"Sixty-seven," he replied, although he was a little off-put by her straightforwardness. *Damn I could use a smoke!*

"Damn, and you're still going to work? You must really be stuck for cash if you're still running around for the big man! I'm only fourteen and frankly I'm fine with what I've got. Could be better, but I could be dead too, you know?" she giggled that last one sadly, but changed the subject quickly. "You smoke?"

"Not anymore," he said truthfully, not liking where she was going.

"Ah me neither. Can't barely afford clothes that fit, damn well can't afford smokes. Got these though," and she pulled out a half-dozen lollipops. "Well go on, take one. I always carry lots. Cheap stuff."



Katarina Stewart "Eyes on the Prize" (2013)

He reluctantly accepted the candy, pulled off the wrapper and let the sweet cherry-flavour quell his craving.

"Thank you," he said through his teeth. "Although I'm not sure your parents would feel comfortable with how friendly you are with strangers."

"Why not?" she winced. "Strangers only hurt you bad if they don't know you. This is me getting to know you. Friends can still hurt you too, I guess, but then it still wouldn't be a stranger doing the hurting. Besides, my parents aren't really around to be comfortable with much of anything."

The senator savoured his candy in silence.

"Not that I mind, or even blame them, really," she went on.

"Like, dad doesn't have much choice in being away, being dead, you know? Mom neither, for two more years at least. That's when she's supposed to get out if she doesn't knock out another cop before then. Strange how people change, huh? They go from a happy-ish sort of suburb-Johnson show to picking out garbage and grand larceny. Not that I minded the garbage: tasted like the garbage we had over in Brookdale, you know? Everything tastes like food if you're starving, I guess. It was

probably harder for them, because I was only nine when the bank kicked us out, and it wasn't hard to go with less. I was the sort of kid who didn't eat their snacks at lunch. Glad too. Weird how such little things make a difference later. Like there was this one boy at lunch who'd always take people's snacks—he was a big bugger.

I think his parents had one of those needles full of Coca-Cola hooked up to him at bed time or something because he was rounder than a basket ball, not that he knew how to use one. But he'd walk up to kids all tough and he'd just take their snacks. And one day I wasn't all that hungry so I just gave him my granola bar and pudding—just left it there on his desk. He was so confused his face turned bright red! Probably thought I liked him but really I just wanted to avoid him hustling me. And we had a kind of relationship after that.

Freaky, because we didn't get along or nothing, and I thought he was pretty gross. Like how mom hated her boss and dad always had some joke about him that mom covered my ears for. They worked together, which I guess they weren't supposed to but they did anyway. And when they lost their jobs they said even meaner things about their old boss because they didn't really have a relationship with him anymore. So like when we were living at the shelter for a few months mom started saying how we deserved our piece of her work because she and dad and all her old coworkers helped build it or something. So she started hanging out with grubby looking people and people like us while dad kept me fed as best he could.

Good guy, him. Anyways, mom got caught with her hand in the cookie jar, like they said in school, and got locked up for it. Course, I could've told her that would happen. Like that snack kid, well, one day he brought more than he could eat so I took his fruit roll up and get this: the little bugger told on me! I tried to say that he took from other people but Ms. J said that didn't make what I did right. Maybe that makes mom wrong or maybe Ms. J wasn't as smart as she wanted to look—I never thought she was all that smart myself, but she figured out for me what would happen to mom before she did it. Anyways, all this was going through my head when we were left alone, dad and me, and I told him not to take anymore because only buggers get their own way and he wasn't a bugger. He kept getting me food when I needed it but . . . you don't talk much, do you?"

"Hmm?" said the senator. He was so engrossed in her story he had zoned out. "I'm fine listening." He'd rather there be silence until the elevator started up again, but he had a feeling the girl didn't talk to people much. He was interested where her story would turn.

“I gotcha. I don’t get to talk much because other people don’t like to listen to me. They say I shouldn’t talk like this to people, but I think what they have to say is worse. Frankly, I don’t make much sense of it.

Like this tall geezer, Kyle, though not as old as you. I think he’s a social worker or something. He keeps telling me I should go to some foster-hell and be raised up proper, but he never gives me anything new and since I didn’t like what he said the first time I just stayed back and have been doing fine.”

“But why not give it a try?” he found himself asking. He was shocked he cared so much.

“Because systems that say they help don’t. Like mom’s work was supposed to help our family if they helped it, but it didn’t. And the bank was supposed to help us keep our house, but it didn’t. And the snack-stealer bugger was supposed to keep his mouth shut, but he didn’t. And mom’s friends were supposed to get us off the streets, but they didn’t. And then there’s me, myself, and I, and together we kept me breathing for four years with no help from nobody, so I think I’m a little better off, don’tcha think?”

“Perhaps,” said the senator.

“Damn straight. All systems like governments and jobs and foster homes don’t work for people like me because they’re made to work for the people that run them. And that’s fine for some people, the ones who are told they want what the big guys want, at least until it backfires and they end up in my neighbourhood because some company making baseball gloves decides to downsize. What does that even mean?”

The senator was silent.

“Like I miss my parents, sure, and I miss my friends from back in the day, not that they’d recognise me or want me because I’m bad for their system, you know? And that’s fine, because at least this way I’m in control of the system I’m in and the only way I can lose control is if I give up and join a system run by someone else. So no, even when Kyle came around, and then Janine after they dropped him, sure I took their food when they’d leave it but I’m not about to sell myself for that. I’ve got enough to get by on and nothing else for some big-shot to take away.”

He bit down hard on the paper stick that had been turning to liquid in his mouth.

“And every once in a while, I get to talk to someone like you. I usually don’t get to talk to them again, like I move around a lot and I’ve been offered a place to live by some but—oh!” she started as the lights flickered on with a high-pitched buzz.

“Looks like the juice is back on.”

The light caught her smile, yellow-white and toothy, and her soft blue eyes. The old man felt black inside. He smiled weakly back at her and the elevator started raising again. In seconds the box stopped on the seventeenth floor. The senator stood up.

“If I offered to let you stay with my wife and I,” he said gruffly, “I suppose you’d decline.”

The young girl smirked and said “thanks for listening.”

The man blinked but put on his best press-conference smile and nodded farewell.

He walked down the pale hallway, lined with green wallpaper that would make his mother cry. *No, back to business*, he thought and shook his nerves out. He reached to his back pocket to check his phone for the time to find the weight of his wallet was absent. He slipped his hand in and met the sharp crackle of thin plastic. He pulled out the candy. It was cherry. ■

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----- POETRY -----

Tyler Hosken, "Alastor on Games"

The problem with empires is they fall.
Do you know why they always fall, my Slave?
They scramble above the rest, and then all
crumble without a want of true fear, save



Kimb Keough, "Jagged" (2013)

The end.
Perhaps I fear, Bartholomew;
For rules to my play bend.
May time in mercy leave askew
this prideful hole I rend.

But the Trojans feared the Greeks before me
until thinking themselves in Nike's grasp
they too fell, for courage seeks to be free
and render the end's benedictive clasp
innate.

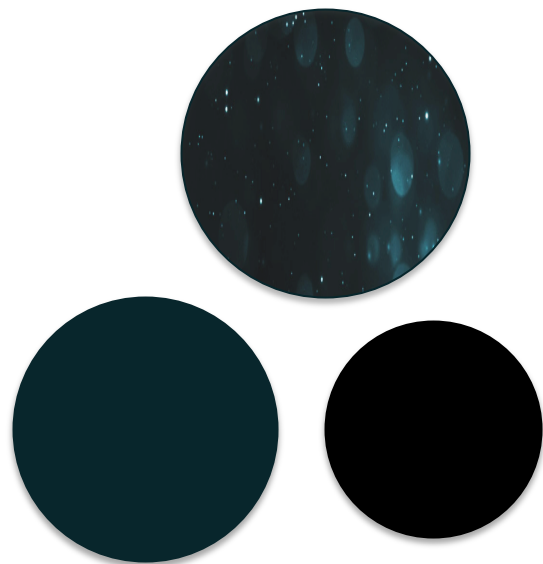
Can I be certain of my pride?
That it won't fell my state
of wealth or coincide
with the game I create?

I need a break. Barty, bring me my wine! The king takes a pawn but thirsts for the blood of his own bishop; it need not be mine but the break from law as it would else be Tickles my discomforting mood. Oh grand of White to see The fault, and my knight's defence crude but a checkmate to me!

The game is not played with a careful eye;
well is the player blind to what's clever.
For if one expects what skill might imply,
to play any move else would endeavour
the win.

Wherefore are my enemies, Slave?
Have all succumbed to sin
or met by my hand a lame grave?
How dull this life has been.

I need a new White, Barty. A player
with finesse, guile and not short of wit:



Me, Slave, I need a Me in not my ware
nor else fair; you know all rules are writ
to bend.

If Troy had not known the Greek's wrath
They'd no story to end,
and, as they ought to say, "Hell hath
no fury like a friend."

Or some such truth therein lies but a cause
to believe it makes scorn too light a word.
A game has rules but for this, perhaps laws
make better bones to break; what have you heard
Barty?

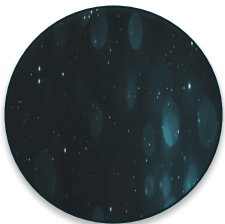
Is there such a player alive?
Don't you dare be tardy
for this above all else I strive
lest from this life part me!

A friend then, but of what flavour? Above
the law, for no rule should govern our play,
so perhaps a god, lord, feigned true love?
The choice overwhelms! Slave, a glass to stay
My thoughts!

A fortnight in years and no such
enemy my way trots;
Without the game I fear check's touch
as the Red chessboard rots. ■

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Nicole Potter, "Unconscious Writings"



Many things lie beneath the surface,
What you must find is called the purpose,
What you hear, and what you see
Frightens all, including me.

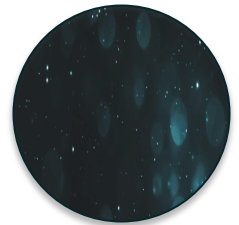
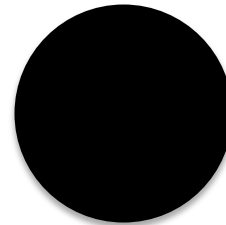
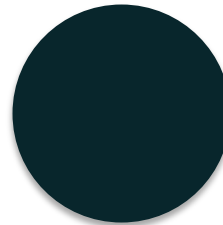


Samantha Kurtzer, “Blue” (2012)

Lies, control and manipulation,
All I want is to save the Nation
Hate, deceit, and spoken half truths,
Ethics, morality, and trust played fast and loose

Break the walls to find what remains
Even though it might cause pain
You will find what you need to carry on,
Not be just another pawn.

Find your direction,
Allow for connection. ■

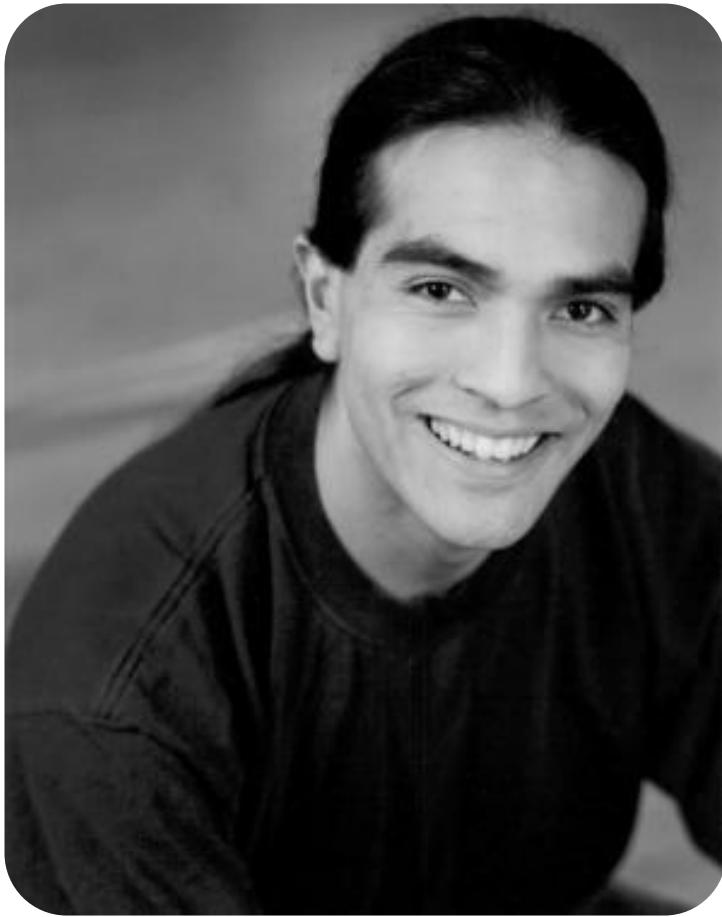


Community Profile

Jenna Demers, “Sharing the Spotlight”

A successful acting career does more than reel in the big bucks. Just ask Sid Bobb, a Gemini-award winning actor. He uses his acting skills to enhance and inspire Canadian and Aboriginal youth. Currently, he hosts Kids’ CBC and is the co-founder of Aanmitaagzi, a professional theatre arts company for Aboriginal people.

Sid got his acting start quite early, joining his high school’s drama club in grade 9. He landed his first role in a professional play when he was only 18, through a family friend. From there, he “just fell into a handful of different jobs,” he says of his acting career.



The modest actor has had multiple television series appearances, as well as film roles, not to mention his spot on Kids' CBC, which he has held for eight years now. Yet somehow Sid has escaped the city's bright lights and returned to his First Nation. Along with his wife, Penny Couchie, he is a founder, director, organizer, and facilitator for Aanmitaagzi, his own professional theatre arts company on Nipissing First Nation. The company has a children's program geared towards pre-schoolers. Controlling dozens of loud pre-schoolers on stage may seem like a nightmare to most, but Sid just sees it as fun. "I'm like a big kid," he says. "I just try to provide avenues for them to channel their creativity and misbehaviour, and I just play along with it."

Sid's heritage plays a large role in his career, not only in the theatre company built on Nipissing First Nation, but in his career with Kids' CBC as well. Sid says that the program is "a simplified version of the ethnic diversity of this country." The characters and hosts are from different geographic regions of Canada. Sid claims that his favourite part of working with Kids' CBC was the freedom to represent his own nationality. "You just do what you want to come forward," he says. Free from imposing views, Sid is able to present himself as a First Nations Person in his own way. "It's nice to know that the executives are comfortable with me stepping up and stepping out as I see fit," he adds. They embrace Sid stepping up wholeheartedly, even letting him write a few of the scripts for the show. "They've asked me to come write some content related to my own traditions, so I've written some small scripts on feasting a drum, and giveaways. They're just small things that I can share with the kids about elements of my culture, about giving, sharing, receiving."

The giving, sharing, and receiving carries over to Sid's work in the theatre company that he runs. Sid shares the skills and knowledge of theatre that he has gained over his career with the participants in a practical manner, through acting. When asked why he felt theatre was important to aboriginal youth, Sid responded: "I think

theatre is a good way to challenge people to step into various roles and invest in characters; and by extension, you have them stepping into their own role.” Sid relates theatre back to the traditional practices of First Nations people, saying, “one of the common practices we have is preparing young people to speak, it’s really common at some point in your life that you’ll be asked to speak on someone’s behalf.”

Sid explains that theatre is an easy and fun way for aboriginal youth to practice public speaking. The amusement was easily recognized at the Aiming Higher conference held at Nipissing University. Sid ran a workshop at the conference for Aboriginal high school students from across Ontario. His comedic improvisation workshop was geared towards getting comfortable with public speaking, and the room was filled with laughter. In regards to First Nations youth, he believes that theatre is a strong part of discovering your own identity. “Traditionally it’s a common practice to teach or prepare you to speak in order to know who you are.

A part of your identity is finding your own power song. When you create that song you also have to speak to that song,” he explains.

Rather than using acting as an escape, Sid Bobb uses acting as a means of finding his true identity. His undeniable talent, easy personality, and motivational words make Sid Bobb an inspiration to Aboriginal youth in Canada. ■

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Megan Hewitt, “Piebird: This Pie is Not Made Out of Bird!”



Meet Sherry Milford and Yan Roberts, owners of Piebird Bed and Breakfast in Nipissing, Ontario, where they make entirely vegan meals and play with their “goat friends” on a daily basis. They have a one-acre garden, so they are able to produce their own vegetables, herbs, and flowers – enough to sustain them throughout the year.

“We are still eating out of the garden in November, and if we had listened to all the old farmers, they would not say that was possible. I think the seasons are changing and people need to change with it,” says Sherry. She emphasizes a need for change and a move towards healthier living.

A large aspect of healthy eating begins with eating herbs and vegetables, which you can even grow yourself. Sherry and Yan are able to harvest the food from their garden, which sustains them throughout most of the year. They accommodate the diversity of their guests by providing entirely vegan meals. “People are super excited to try it. They appreciate the importance of the health aspect and having a health retreat,” says Sherry, who is a nutrition consultant.

Sherry explains that “the biggest challenge is getting people to change and have a non-animal eating diet in the North, where people feel they have to hunt.” While meat can be a healthy part of your diet, it does not need to be consumed at every meal. Piebird offers healthy, vegan food and they even have workshops to show you how to cook these meals. Sherry and Yan are interested in helping others to achieve a healthy way of life.

Healthy living also includes having a positive outlook on life. Sherry and Yan are very excited about healthy living and they have a lifestyle that many would find desirable. Even though they have to work hard, they are doing what they enjoy. They grow their own food, work together to make their home a better place, and they get to play with animals.



Sherry and Yan have a great love of animals, which has led them to adopt several abandoned goats. “I feed the animals and snuggle them. We also have two hens and a rooster now; they are a bunch of babies and are awesome!” adds Sherry. They are very fond of their animal friends and only use them for love and companionship. Sherry and Yan do not milk the goats or collect the chicken eggs. Rather than being used for material purposes, the animals are simply allowed to frolic in the sun. It may not be traditional, but Sherry finds harmony in this lifestyle.



Sustainable living consists of using natural resources, including homegrown foods, wood to heat the house, and rainwater for all daily uses. Sherry and Yan have a solar shower. They also collect rainwater on their metal roof. With this limited amount of water, they have

to shower according to their resources. By using only rainwater, they are able to appreciate the amount of water that is naturally provided to them. “We are really aware of how much water we use ... People don’t understand that water can run out, like with guests in the summer in a drought: it hasn’t rained in six weeks, so there is no water – ‘Here is the biodegradable soap and the river is down the road,’” says Sherry. She believes that people should be aware of the food they intake, the resources they use, and their impact on the universe.

Sherry and Yan are very creative individuals, making use of everything they can. Yan and Sherry give a lot of thought to their impact on the land and waste management. “We have a composting toilet; pretty darn sustainable. Any waste is composted, turns into soil, and goes in the orchard ... Waste turns into beautiful soil, contributing to land again,” exclaims Sherry.



While this is a new concept for most people, Sherry says that it helps people to be aware of what goes into their bodies. It helps train guests to eat healthier foods, which will eventually become habit.

Sherry tries to show people by example. She allows them to learn from her life experiences. She provides information on sustainable living and veganism. She teaches people her ideas through farmstays and multiple workshops, so others can benefit from her daily lifestyle. Farmstays allow guests to partake in the daily chores: feeding the animals, harvesting the food, and then sitting down to a delicious vegan meal.

“The idea grew organically. We found that guests wanted to help. People want to be a part of something that they don’t have in their daily lives, so we accommodate them and it really is a service. It is called agri-tourism and it is for people who want to get their hands dirty. It’s about physical activity and hangin’ with the animals,” says Sherry. Along with farmstays, they have workshops to teach people how to use herbs for medicinal purposes and how to make vegan meals: “Herb workshop is really popular. It’s medicinal herbs to take care of our selves naturally. People like the idea of insight into living like us, and creating a community,” says Sherry. Her and her husband Yan help people find a connection to the land and gain energy from its life source.

Piebird is not just a house. It encompasses Sherry and Yan’s ideas about life. They allow life to guide them and make their decisions. They learn from the land, do what needs to be done, and take the path that they were meant for. It has led them to a wonderful lifestyle that many would desire. “I have a home where people can sit by the fire, drink tea, and cuddle animals,” says Sherry,

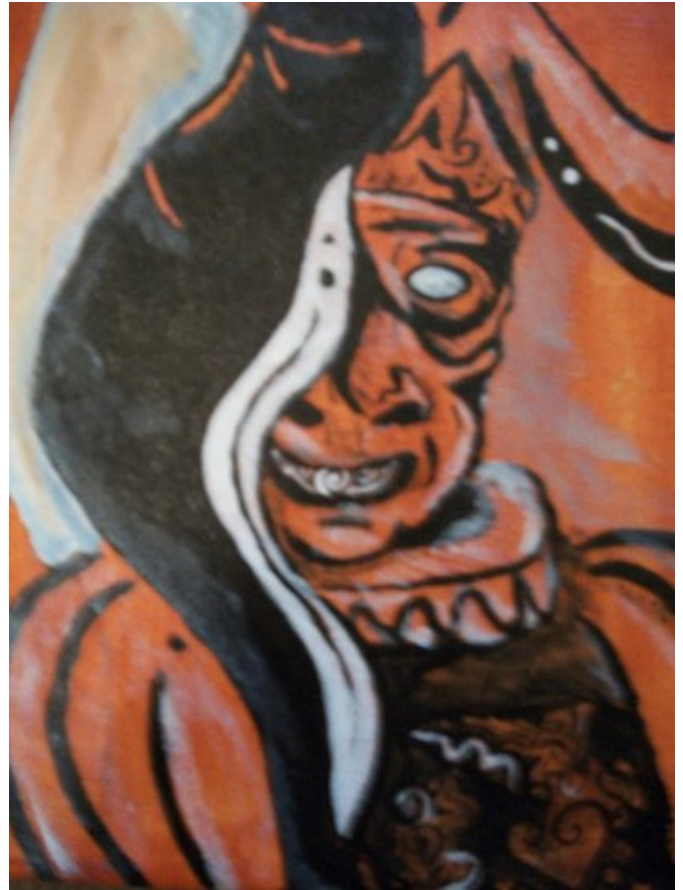


“Everything I have ever done in my life happens here, it makes sense now. I learned what I did so that I can do it here – learning compassion and caring for people. I have recognized that I don’t have to look very far to reach my goals. Everything we do is something people can learn from ... It’s about being able to do what we need to get done. It’s better for the planet and the animals; and it’s important. It’s simple: my career is my life, and something I totally love.” Sherry’s lifestyle has benefited her and provided happiness for both her and her husband. The family found at Piebird is one of both humans and animals, and is an eye-opening experience for all who come to stay.

Reviews

Taylor Seed, "A Student's Review of the Common Book Project: M.T. Anderson's *Feed*"

M.T. Anderson's dystopic novel, *Feed*, critiques the decline of contemporary culture and its deleterious effect on language and grammar. "Text talk," or the shortening of words and phrases, has crept into everyday speak to meet the ever-growing desire for immediate gratification. In *Feed*, this is shown through the eyes of Titus, a teenage boy living in a futuristic society, run by the world's big corporations. Words such as "like," "shit," "huh," and "dude" dominate Titus' and his friends' everyday language. This is only one of many language lapses present in *Feed*. M.T. Anderson imagines a future in which society as a whole has begun to collapse, but the people have lost the ability to understand and comprehend that they are in decline. As Anderson's *Feed* suggests, when we lose our ability to communicate and use language properly, we ultimately lose ourselves. ■



Samantha Kurtzer, "Jester" (2012)

A Word from "Loose Sense" Lauren

"Loose Sense" Lauren, "Attacking Sleeping Beauty"

Oh look! It's story time with Lauren!

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful princess. There was also a witch, a couple

of fairies, a huge dragon, and, later, scholars added vaginal imagery just for fun. I swear, they did it for fun. In any case, that princess came to be known as Sleeping Beauty. Look at her flitting about without a care in the world....

Now, Lauren had a serious issue with Sleeping Beauty. Actually, she had many problems with her, but she didn't feel like airing all her grievances. After all, that requires time and no self-respecting princess would listen to a rant that long.

Sleeping Beauty, after she woke up, spent a considerable amount of time whining about all the time she lost while sleeping. And while she complained, she looked refreshed, energized, ready to face the world. Lauren, on the other hand, could only watch her jealously. Because really, what a nerve! Walking around, complaining about sleeping when some people are seriously lacking and looking beautiful while doing it! Someone needed to take her down and Lauren (because she wasn't sleeping anyway) decided that she would be the one to do it.

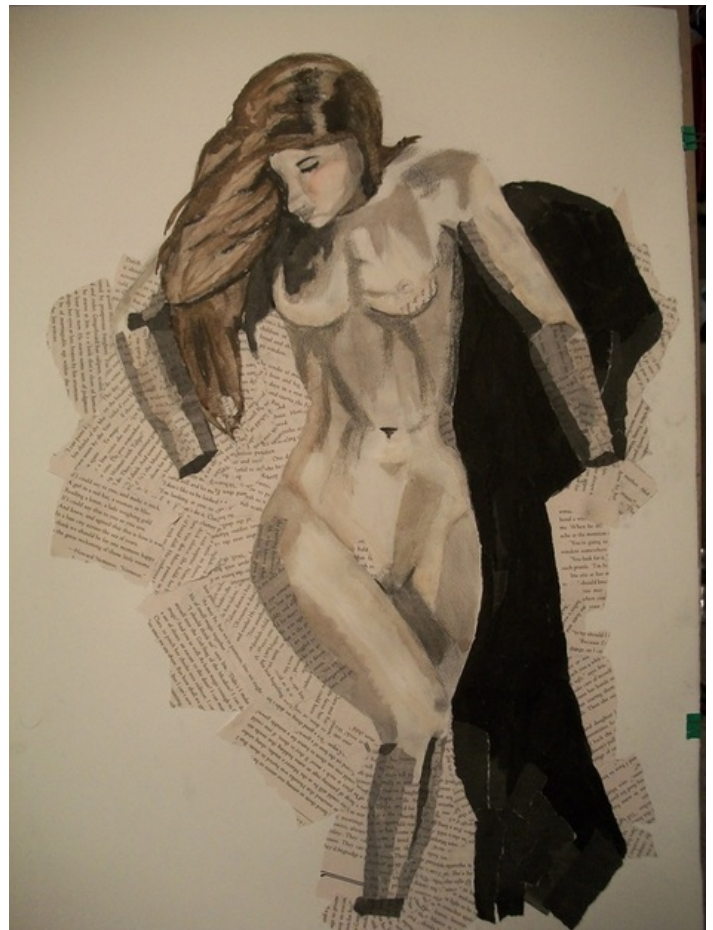
One day, when the princess was alone, Lauren approached her, holding a cup of coffee in her outstretched hand. The princess was grateful for the refreshment and very much enjoyed the burst of energy she got from the caffeine. She drank more and more coffee and slept less and less as the days progressed. Lauren had succeeded in her mission. Now they were both tired and just crazy enough to indulge in maniacal laughter.

Mwahahahahaha! Success is mine! My plan is complete!

Night! But not you Sleeping Beauty... you've had enough. It's time you learned to share.

Cheerio Darlings! (Insert English accent)

"Loose Sense" Lauren



Samantha Kurtzer, "Beauting Sleepy" (2012)

Next Issue...

The Future of the Humanities



Katarina Stewart, "Sex, Drugs, and Winehouse" (2013)