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Editorial Team

EXECUTIVE EDITORS

Dr. Pavlina Radia

Christine Clarke

Contact editors at:

nusensecontact@gmail.com

JOURNAL DESIGN

Christine Clarke

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Kayla Harris

ART CONTRIBUTORS

Brittany Lamers

Sara Grainger

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Topic of the Month

Freedom Feature Article **by Allison Tremblay**

When I think about freedom, I keep coming back to this idea of an open road: a straight shot, dust flying out from the underneath the vehicle, leaving a distinct trail behind me. There's no one else, no other image but the view through the windshield. Just me, the front end of some vintage car and nothing, and yet everything, to focus on.

What is freedom? A timeless question? How can it be defined? Or better yet, how can something that should encapsulate so much, be reduced to a word?

Is it a verb, a noun? Is it a state, and if so, a state of being? A state of existence? A state of mind?

Is it a piece of paper that declares it, a bill of rights that guarantees it? Is it something you've come to expect, because the people before you wrote it down to make it legitimate? Is it something you feel needs to be vocalized; "freedom of speech"? Is it something you use in your defence, that it's a "free country"? Can it then, in fact, be self-righteous? Arrogant? Does it make you feel entitled?

Is freedom in solitude, in being isolated from everyone and everything? Is it a retreat into a world that is repetitive, disengaged? Or, is it meditative? Does it profoundly move you in some kind of way, to be alone? Are you truly alone?

Is it being static? Idling? Is it being in front of a screen and simply absorbing? Is it living through your eyes, watching an idealized world flash before you? Is it looking, but not really seeing? Does it pleasure you to find escape in moving images, whatever they may be? Or, is it watching everything, and maybe even seeing everything, but not reacting? Is it not being able to react?

Is it a sensory response? Is it something you touch, you smell, you taste, you hear, you see? Wouldn't that make it physical? Is freedom physical? And if so, do you imagine feeling captured or imprisoned when you cannot use your body to conceptualize your world?

Is it in the unnatural? Is it feeling supernatural, serene, or divine under the influence? Is it losing all your inhibitions? Is it a substance that makes you believe? Believe in what? Are you afraid to feel? Or do you feel more?

Is it in creation, or creating? In artistry? Is it being able to paint, literal or otherwise, anything you want? To make anything you want happen in a fictionalized world? Is it the infamous creative license? Is it a way to make your mark on the world and change the way people think about it? Then is it not also a source of validation? Don't you want your art, whatever medium it may be, to be liked, or at least appreciated? Don't you still share your art with others, even if it's "for yourself"? Can we then say that art is never a solitary effort? And if freedom is in creation, then is freedom something for the masses?

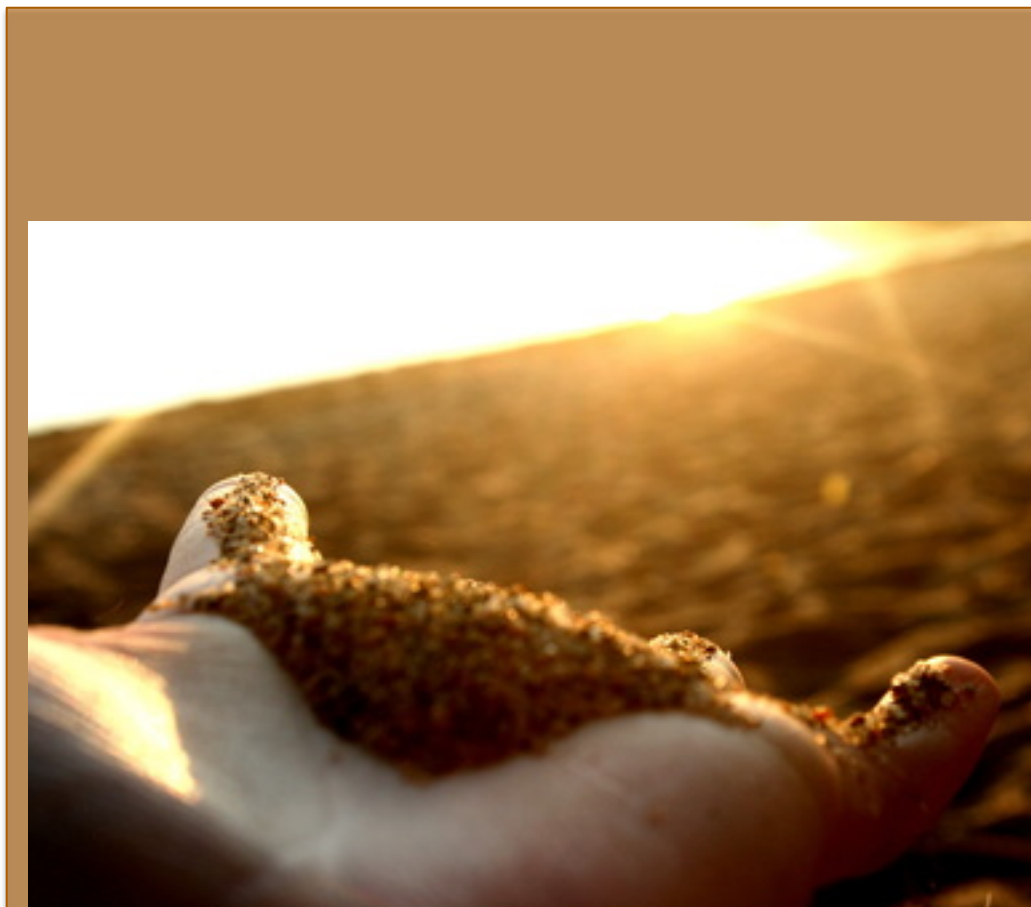
Is it being a metamorphosis, a shape-shifter, always changing? Is it falling into a new category every day? Is it being rebellious, liberal, carefree? Are you one archetype one day, something else the next? Are you ridiculing the conventions? Are you making a satire of them? To what end? Is freedom being able to change course and redirect? Or does it make you flighty and unreliable?

Is freedom in saying what you want, regardless of the outcome? Is it that self-indulgent? Is it being reckless, unfeeling? Or instead, is it challenging to others? Are you making a statement? What is your statement? Do you ever know what you're trying to say? Is there enough of it, or too little? Can it be contained into words?

Is freedom radical? Is it far-fetched? A movement? Towards what? Is it being united with a common cause? Does it promote change, or is change inescapable? What are you challenging? Do you know what you're fighting for?

Is it a driving force, something that pushes you to extremes? Is the extreme the pursuit of freedom, or the result of it?

What are you running from? What are you aiming towards? Does the drive suit the crime? Will you stop at nothing, or will anything stop you?



The Loveliness of a Touch

By Sara Grainger

Is it in facing fears? Is it knowing who you are, and defeating the fear by defying yourself? Are you after the adrenaline? Is it that sweet feeling that defines freedom? Does it make you feel more alive? Is it the rush that consumes every portion of your body? Are you aware of yourself? Awakened physically, mentally, even perhaps spiritually?

Is freedom in death? Is it knowing that you are only human and accepting your destiny? Is it beautifully romantic to perish? The ultimate closure? Is it Thelma? Is it Louise?

Is freedom knowledgeable, or ignorant? Does it distribute responsibility, or take it away?

Is it in peace? Is it in chaos?

Is it then in a set of oppositions? Is it having the ability to choose?

Is it all just an illusion? (Will you stop to consider that?)

Is this work, a self-aware work, a piece of freedom, complete liberation from form, neither poetry nor prose nor theory, but just thoughts. Thoughts that lead to questions, which lead into others and continue to spread in the same way that in an undisturbed body of water, you can see the ripple fan out from a single disruption...

Is it the ability to think at all then? Is that freedom?

I keep coming back to this idea of an open road...

Global Issues**Essays: Thoughts About the World
by Alayna Becker**

“There’s a fine line between permitting free speech and allowing chaos” -Protests in Cairo

The political situation in Cairo is constantly escalating. On January 24, protests began, acting and speaking out against their supremacist President Hosni Mubarak. The president has had 62 years of public life in Egypt, with 30 of them as President. Many thought he would step down as his term finished; however, this was not the case. His reign has been described by many as the “iron fist of repression,” ultimately stifling any minority group.

Tens of thousands of protestors were restrained by police forces for days. Images were circulated in the media of Islamic protestors kneeling in prayer while security forces sprayed them with hoses, of women kissing stone-faced soldiers, of Cairo’s students protesting in front of rows of tanks, and even young children climbing on tanks carrying flowers. Reporters claim “police repression and brutal intimidation” tactics, and there are estimates “that as many as 300 people have been killed – and scores injured” (Bhaskar). Curfews were instituted and ignored by protestors.

More recently, police forces were ordered to stand back, and the protestors seem to have started clashing with each other. Both pro- and anti-Mubarak groups crowd the streets, in sometimes violent interactions.

Many claim that this is the result of classism; those of the higher class support Mubarak because they have the most to benefit from his form of power, while the lower class citizens are generally the minorities and therefore are against his reign because of his oppressive regime. President Mubarak has claimed for years that he must use his method of ruling, for without it chaos would reign. He has been citing this specific uprising and protest as an example. Once the police were removed, looting began.

There are still others who claim that Mubarak himself is the cause of this chaos, not just because of he is the object of protest, but also through supporting and encouraging the class tensions within the protest setting. They state that it is Mubarak’s supporters who have attacked foreign

journalists and human rights activists, not the actual protestors against Mubarak.

On some points, Mubarak appears to have the interest of his people at heart: he states that he is fed up with the situation, but does not want to step down for fear that the Muslim Brotherhood group would take his place. This group itself is controversial, as it does not seem to promote, from what I can gather, all ethnic minorities which may be present in Cairo or Egypt, but Islam to dominate and have political power. They are also believed to be responsible for the murder of the Egyptian president in 1948.

For many, this situation seems much too similar to that in Pakistan in 2007, when in the midst of protests General Msharraf stepped down in August of 2008 in the name of democracy, but Islamist right-wing groups hijacked the movement and intimidated the protestors, and are believed to be responsible for the death of Punjab Governor Salman Taseer, who was standing up for the protection of minorities. Fears that Islamist groups could do the same in Egypt leave many on edge and in fear.

Yet, in the midst of all this chaos, of protests, violence and overall political unrest, how many Canadians know of the situation? Or know any details? From what I gather, democracy is the goal, which would result in freedom of speech and religion for all minorities.

Despite this lack of concrete knowledge, protestors have succeeded in creating enough of a stir that most people have a general understanding that there is ‘unrest in Cairo.’ This is a step forward, considering before January 24, I can assure you that I had no idea what was happening in Egypt on any scale. Egypt has the Nile and pyramids. I admit my ignorance and naiveté. Some knowledge is better than no knowledge. There have been references to the protest in my classes, and I am an English student. This proves that the word is getting out.

Perhaps not unsurprisingly, most of the information I have gathered on this issue was from the internet. In this age, the internet is definitely the fastest means from which people can gather information about current events without actually being physically present. Both despite this fact and because of this fact, 5 of Cairo’s 6 internet providers disabled its networks on January 28, in the midst of the turmoil. A spokesperson stated that there is “a fine line between permitting free speech and allowing chaos to spread.” Following suit, mobile networks also pulled the plug. While the most obvious reason for this is to prevent protestors from congregating as effectively, it also prevented the remainder of the world from receiving information about the uprisings.

Whether valid or not for internal reasons, I have to say the ban makes it seem as though there is something to hide. Indeed, images posted since the internet ban was lifted portray less-than-admirable representations of police officers and the treatment of the protestors in general. The internet ban reminds me of literature I have read about the Tiananmen Square protests in China, 1989.

In this case, media was censored by the government from reporting the protests, as were international journalists, and from what I understand, violence befell those who refused to comply.



Two Worlds (2009)
by Brittany Lamers

Also similar between the two protests is the status of the protestors themselves - in both cases students and youth seem to spearhead the movement. (In another eerie apparent coincidence, the main site of protests in Cairo is Tahrir Square).

However, one internet provider in Cairo was still providing internet services. The Noor Group did not stop providing its services. But was this as a statement to support freedom of speech? The main theory is it was done because the Noor Group has many large clients with western firms. This does not negate the influence of those firms in keeping the internet accessible, but corporations are just those, corporations.

We cannot deny that maintaining a certain image with clients in the Western world would be a high priority. Nevertheless, the fact remains that this image, this fear of public outrage against the infringement on the rights of citizens to have that information, has helped the residents of Cairo give that information. Those in control of information in Cairo do not seem to fear this public opinion.

It is key, during this whole kerfuffle, to avoid taking a gallop on our righteous high-horse of the West. We may have the right to freedom of speech, but 'with great power comes great responsibility.' What are you responsible for?

Academic Life**Freedom of Speech
by Amanda Moss**

When papers are returned, it is easy to determine who is content by their mark and who is not by the moment students reach the hallway: “I don’t know what they want from me!” “He/She just doesn’t agree with what I’m saying” are the two most common complaints I have heard from the unhappy crowd. I researched what several students felt about Freedom of Speech at Nipissing University in papers, extracurricular activities, as well as in class discussions. Through a survey, I gained some insight into thoughts about expression in the classroom.

A majority of students surveyed feel that they have the ability to speak freely in class. However, there were multiple comments suggesting that students feel some professors are not as open to alternate opinions in discussions. “So what?” Clearly everyone is not going to agree with your opinion, so why does it matter if the Professor does not give you a gold star for your insight? By voicing your opinions, you have contributed and are more likely to be engaged in the lecture and receive more from the content. If you have a thought, why not say it? Even if your Professor dismisses your comment (as long as it is not a discussion being immediately graded), there is no harm in speaking up.

With essays, most students felt that they have the freedom to argue whatever they want as long as they do it well and eloquently. We are not instructed to follow the guidelines, ensure our thesis is strong, and have ample evidence for no reason. Unfortunately, many students also felt that they must support an argument the Professor personally agrees with. Clearly, this is frustrating for students when a final grade does not seem to reflect the effort and thought put in, if this is your personal situation: say something. A Professor’s role is to enlighten and strengthen a student’s work. If you feel this is not the case, talk to your professor during their office hours. Otherwise, do not expect a change. Maybe it is your fault. Maybe the professor is being biased since they are human too. But if you do not question why your mark seems unfair, you will never know.

When asked how freedom of speech applies in University, the Department Chair Dr. Ann-Barbara Graff said the following: "Academic freedom is the cornerstone of the academic enterprise. Certainly, our objective as instructors is to give students the tools and confidence to make original and unique arguments about texts. We have no expectation that students will ape our analyses.

But the key word in that last sentence is analyses. Whatever we argue as critics and scholars must be supported by the text, we do not trade in opinions. Part of the training that goes on over the course of an undergraduate degree is learning how to work with a text to produce a detail rich, supportable, nuanced response to a work. When a faculty member asks, 'where in the text do you find support for that idea?' or 'so what?' or 'what about that other thing that happens in the text that seems to contradict your argument?', we are actually trying to strengthen the argument by pointing to its limits or its wholes. The limits and wholes are in the argument not in the student; however, as writers, we sometimes feel as though the criticism is directed at us personally: it isn't, but it feels like it sometimes. The point is to privilege the work." The moral of my research seems to be simple: be certain of what you are saying and back it up, and if you feel there is still a problem, speaking up in the hallway is not going to give you any answers. Freedom of speech may allow students to share their opinions, but the freedom of discussion between professors and students is equally important and should be exercised just as frequently.

Voices of Nipissing Unfettered

by Tasha Barbour

As English students, we often find ourselves so absorbed with essays, papers, and mid-terms that we have little time left for our own writing. For many of us, Nipissing's Creative Writing Exhibition revitalizes the value of our own work by allowing us to set free the ideas expressed in our pieces and share them with the English community. Since 2006, this exhibition has allowed a collective of writers to come together annually to demonstrate their skills in a comfortable, encouraging, and companionable atmosphere.

The sixth anniversary of this event took place on February 14th in the Fideli Room. Like the exhibitions before it, it allowed Nipissing students to showcase their creative work-be it poetry, prose, or anything in between and incorporated both a public reading and a published anthology. It began as a reading to accompany the book launch of Dave Barnardi's *The Rest is Yet to be Written*. Since then, professors and students alike have worked to keep the event alive and allowing it to grow. Since then, Barnardi

himself has returned to several of the exhibitions and praised it for its ability to bring Nipissing's writing community together, to both celebrate the public freedom of non-censored writing and the personal liberation that comes with the release of emotion through each writer's piece.

This year's three-part exhibition featured prose, poetry, monologues, short stories, general musings, and a delicious assortment of tea and cookies. A break from the restrictive process of formal essays, writers interviewed afterward indicated that the exhibition allowed them to gain confidence and found that writing for an audience added a sense of presentation to their work. Some returning readers noted that they had noticed their own improvement over the years, and because of the exhibition, they have been able to witness the growth of the writing of their peers as well. Though some were nervous, others were curious to see

if the audience would "laugh in all the right places." Running the show this year, Professors Rhiannon Don and Peter Clanfield, showed their dedication to the event by encouraging

Nipissing students to share their work with others. Professor Natalie Dunn, a long-time supporter and

overseer of the event, praised many of the budding writers as they left the lecture room. The entire atmosphere was one of positive encouragement.

Overall, the beauty of the unfettered written word was celebrated while the writers of Nipissing gathered to share their ideas, humour, personal experiences, and raw emotions. Those who came to listen and support the readers were able to enjoy and experience what the pieces had to offer, furthering the development of free-flowing ideas. Despite the initial screening, which takes place when individual pieces are submitted, the collection of works suggested a diverse voice which could not be silenced – the voice of the writers of Nipissing.



Solace in Solitude (2001)
by Sara Grainger

Academic Contributions**Reading as Collaboration: Intimations of Death and Where They Lead Us In The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman and Patchwork Girl****by Robin Gibson**

Why do we read? Or more specifically, why do we read novels? Is it simply a form of entertainment, or is it perhaps an exercise of interrogation? A study which follows the fate of others with a hope that we may signify meaning of our own existence? In reading early religious texts, such as the Bible, the act of interpretation is to seek a form of truth within its pages. Religion, as it is expressed through a text, is a means of helping the individual find a path in life, a way to live through the example of God and a way to die, as we learn we will pass into a new existence in a better, spiritual world. Prior to the written word, the oral tale brings together a community in which stories form a network for reality, where the life and death of a human being is necessarily linked to life and death of others in a common memory. Storytelling figures an individual within a community, where their identity is part of a larger whole of existence. The process of storytelling is part of a natural cycle. However, the novel focuses on the modern individual and their one life and death. How then, is meaning signified when there is no point of comparison, no network to establish or measure against a common knowledge or a higher power, such as God? As Walter Benjamin suggests in his essay "The Storyteller:"

To write the novel is to take the incommensurable to the utmost in presenting human life. In the midst of the fullness of life and through the presentation of this fullness the novel testifies to the profound perplexity of the living. (Weber 3).

In this essay, we will examine two *ergodic* texts, that is texts that require work to find meaning, as examples

of novels which not only require the reader to be aware of our desire to find a satisfactory articulation of life, where meaning is revealed, but insist on the reader's participation in exploring the process of signifying a life within the pages of a text. I will argue that Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* seek to explore and rebuild a sense of community lost to the modern reader of the novel, where meaning can be grasped. Through the intimations of death in each work we find clues to each author's exploration of man's tenuous relationship to the world through a text. For each novelist it is the relationship between the writer, the text and the reader which represents a kind of community where a modern sense of meaning may be developed through collaboration.

As Jean-Paul Sartre states in his essay "Why Write?," "One of the chief motives of artistic creation is certainly the need of feeling that we are essential in relationship to the world" (Sartre 662).

Sartre goes on to suggest that reading is the dialectical correlative to writing. Reading is in fact the synthesis of perception and creation. It supposes the essentiality of both the subject and the object, where both writer and reader seek to find their essential nature as it relates to the world through the process and collaboration of creation and perception.

Let's look first at how Sterne explores the articulation of life in his text. We begin with a race from death.

In Book VII of *Tristram Shandy* Sterne adopts a narrative style which he has avoided up to this point in his text, but which conventional novels of his time insist upon; that of a history which documents the material existence of the hero. Until Book VII, *Tristram* functions mostly as the narrator. As a character he has been absent from the action of the novel, which has been taken up by other characters. When Sterne is writing the novel is a relatively new genre, not yet established as a legitimate art form. In order to illustrate legitimacy, novels by Sterne's contemporaries, such as Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, present a narrative which is as much concerned with the material details of the hero's life, as it is with other rules of form, such as plot development. Many such novels are based on the popular genre of the criminal biography. However a cycle of fall and redemption, or a return to order through the guidance of a higher power, such as God or government, is often added to inscribe meaning into the life of the hero. Sterne, on the other hand, is concerned with questioning these kinds of conventions by subverting them and writing a novel about the writing of novels as a means of exploring different ways to meaningfully articulate the life of an individual within a text.

Tristram introduces Book VII by describing his confrontation and flight from death to Eugenius: "I'll scamper away to mount Vesuvius – from thence to Joppa, and from Joppa to the world's end, where, I pray God he may break his neck" (Sterne 432). In this passage Sterne plays with the notion of an end to his hero in the novel. Instead of *Tristram* suggesting his own end, it's the end of the world, which seems an impossible idea to grasp and the end of death, which is even harder to understand. There is no cycle of fall and

redemption or a need to return to order in this text. It could be troubling that Tristram seems so afraid of death that he must flee from it. However, he is not a sinner who must be redeemed, like a heroine such as Moll Flanders, so he should expect to pass into the next and better world, as was the dominant Christian belief of Sterne's time. So what is his anxiety focused on in Book VII?

And what is the point of its dramatic shift in narrative style? What Sterne points to here is the problem of articulating life and death within the already established conventions of the novel. Although he announces the theme of book VII, he does not actually elaborate on the subject of death again within this section, but instead delivers the eye witness accounts of the places he travels through in the style of the genre of travel writing, which is itself a form of documentary, much like the criminal biography.

So, in coming upon the subject of the end of his narrator and hero of the novel, Sterne makes an abrupt change in narrative style to one that adopts a desire for realism in the form of travel writing and in doing so mocks this same desire found in the novels of his contemporaries. He succeeds in avoiding death as a subject almost entirely in exchange for a grand tour of Europe and the very specific details of its architecture, important historical influences and the cost of city planning, in examples such as this passage:

It was a singular disappointment to me, that I could not have permission to take an exact survey of the fortifications, which are the strongest in the world, and which, from first to last, that is, from the time they were set about by Philip of France Count of Bologne, to the present war, wherein many reparations were made, have cost...(Sterne 437)

Sterne mocks his own narrative in this passage with the notion that he was so disappointed that he was not able to measure the physical nature of the monument in order to grasp its meaning. We get no sense in book VII that his anxiety is concerned with the question of what death means to him, except for the material details, such as the fact that he wants it to happen in an impersonal place, like an Inn, so that he does not have to concern himself with the emotions of his family (Sterne 443). Through these examples we can see that Sterne refuses to attribute any meaning to the notion of death within his novel. In Chapter II Tristram asks the ship's captain at port in Dover: "is a man never overtaken by Death in this passage?" The captain replies that there isn't time (Sterne 433). Tristram's question appears to be referring to the boat's passage, but what he alludes to here is the question he presents through the narrative style he chooses in Book IV; whether death can be articulated through the popular conventions of the novel. The captain's answer refers to a question Sterne continues to ask throughout the text, which is how one understands the notion of time in a text in relation to a life. Sterne is very much concerned with the novel's form and the relationship between the writer and reader. In Book VII he draws our attention to the concept of death and then avoids its signification in order to acknowledge the problem of articulating life and death and the individual's relationship to the world in the conventional form of the novel because it only provides linear, material details where order is restored only with the help of an external power. For Sterne, life is not

satisfactorily articulated through one voice, or one example, but through many, which includes the participation and imagination of the reader.

In order to consider this point more fully, we must go back to the beginning of Sterne's novel. In his essay "Reading – 'To the Very End of the World,'" Samuel Weber explores Tristram Shandy as a hybrid of two genres: storytelling and the novel. Through close examination, we see the passage below in fact reveals Tristram's goal as narrator to create a new way of articulating a life, which supports Weber's theory of a hybrid form:

I find it necessary to consult everyone a little in his turn; and therefore must beg pardon for going on a little further in the same way: For which cause, right glad I am, that I have begun the history of myself in the way I have done; and that I am able to go on tracing every thing in it, as Horace says, *ab Ovo*.

Horace, I know, does not recommend this fashion altogether: But that gentleman is speaking only of an epic poem or a tragedy;--(I forget which)—besides, if it was not so, I should beg Mr. Horace's pardon; – for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived. (Sterne 8).

Sterne has Tristram point here to a kind of hybridization at work. He will not play by any man's rules in the account of his own history, yet he draws our attention to two different forms of narrative in his suggestion of the form his history will take. The necessity of consultation Sterne has Tristram refer to here speaks more to the genre of storytelling than the novel. Tristram Shandy is in fact a compilation of many stories and reflections about the details of his life and of his narrative, from many characters and even readers, such as us, the physical readers and *Madame* and *Sir*, the fictional readers. All of these influences make up the fabric of Tristram's life. His story is not a linear history of each and every action he takes, or the material details of his life. It is like a quilt, made by a community of voices. Traditional Storytelling is such a quilt. As discussed above, it is a bringing together of community in which stories are linked and the life and death of a human being is necessarily linked to the lives and memories of others in such a way that a natural cycle is created which enables the individual to situate themselves in relation to the world.

Tristram also refers in this passage to Horace's praise of Homer. This reference points to the epic poem whose hero is the genesis of the modern hero of the novel, where the emphasis, as Weber suggests, is on the individual with one hero, one odyssey, one battle (Weber 3). However, the epic poem is the offspring of storytelling and is still inscribed with traditions of comprehensive memory, so that it can "appropriate the way of the world and still make peace with the violence of death" (Weber 3). Death then is a part of the chain of events that pass from one generation to another. The hero of the novel, on the other hand, further develops the notion of the individual in solitude which the epic hero initiates, as the hero's experience becomes an isolation from community; what Benjamin calls a definitive separation, which translates

from Benjamin's German to mean something closer to a withdrawal or removal from community which is similar to death. Weber sums up the distinction thus:

Instead, however, of functioning as it does in the story, as a kind of relay, relating individual beings to a larger network, death in the novel appears far more definitive – and also more enigmatic. Rather than punctuating the rhythm of an ongoing process, death seals the fate of the solitary individual. The world of the hero is over. But out of this end, the reader seeks to draw a certain continuity. (Weber 3)

The continuity Weber refers to here is the reader's desire to decipher meaning in their own lives through the life and subsequent death, either figurative, by means of the end of the novel, or actual death of the hero within its pages. Weber's hypothesis of hybridization helps to identify Tristram's citing of Horace, juxtaposed with his need to consult everyone in the forming of his own history, as the text's intention to subvert this experience of isolation where meaning is only found in death. This is why Sterne's race with death in Book VII is a parody of travel writing, which is also a parody of the conventional style of the novel in Sterne's time. He will not allow death to be the final and absolute signifier of meaning in his text. Sterne looks to past genres to inject collaboration into the process of signifying the life of an individual as an alternate way of articulating meaning. As humans, few of us live or die in complete isolation, so Sterne's hybrid text offers a form that is perhaps closer to reality.

Weber suggests that what distinguishes the novel from the genre of storytelling is nothing more or less than an impossible point of arrival towards which Tristram directs his readers at the beginning of his narrative: "the end of the world," which signifies in the text as the end of the novel or death of the hero and thus plot (Weber 10). Weber refers here to a passage in Book I where Tristram states that he writes for the curious and will point out different tracts of investigation to come at "the first springs of the events I tell." However, he ends this point by stating that his heart is devoted to assisting the inquisitive – "if any such reading as this could be supposed to hold out so long, to the very end of the world" (Sterne 59). What Weber points to is Sterne's "first springs" as an intention of directing the reader to a place where we will find meaning, but that Sterne also insists here that we must wait to the end of the world, or end of the novel itself. He suggests that Tristram himself is addressing Sterne's hybrid form and whether it is possible that such a reading can hold out to the very end of the novel. Weber infers that it may not be possible for Sterne to create or more importantly sustain meaning in a text that he believes tries to reintroduce storytelling within the form of a novel.

However, I would argue that Sterne himself does not have this concern. He is simply playing with the expectations of the reader of a conventional novel, as he does in Book VII and as he does throughout the text. As Sterne identifies in the passage cited, he writes for the inquisitive reader, one whose active

participation is required in the exploration to figure his hero's life in relation to the world around him. As the narrator of his own history, Tristram is only a guide, not a creator. As we have seen, he requires a collaborative effort where he consults everyone, including the reader of his text in forming the signification of his life. In this collaborative form meaning for the reader is not at the end of the novel, or end of plot, but along the journey where, much like the genre of story telling, many voices interpret meaning and the end of the story is not an absolute, but just a part of a larger whole in the reader's imagination and memory.

Weber also suggests in his essay that death, like birth must be knowable for the reader of the novel in order for them to grasp meaning (Weber 5). However, Sterne, who does not follow the conventions of the novel, treats the bringing forth of life and death in his text as interruptions which are never truly delineated to a particular time or place and thus cannot be known in the sense that Weber refers to. Much the way Tristram's race from death in Book VII is an interruption in the narrative style of the rest of the text, Tristram's conception is also an interruption in the notion of chronological time as a measurement of life. Tristram cannot identify with certainty when his conception took place except to say it was "betwixt the first Sunday and the first Monday in the month of March," and it is suggested several times that his paternity is also suspect (Sterne 8). Most importantly the time he suggests it takes place is when Mrs. Shandy interrupts Walter in the act by asking him whether he has wound the clock (Sterne 6). Weber suggests that without grasping life or death with certainty, the reader of the novel cannot grasp meaning. However, I would argue that in the case of Tristram Shandy it is exactly Sterne's point that empirical evidence, such as the location and time of Tristram's conception and the measurements of the monument which I cite in Book VII, are beside the point. It is not within these facts where meaning is found but it is what lies between our shared interpretations of reality where meaning is created. As Sartre states:

Nothing is accomplished if the reader does not put himself from the very beginning and almost without a guide at the height of this silence; if, in short, he does not invent it and does not then place there, and hold onto, the words and sentences he awakens. (Sartre 664)

For Sartre, and for Sterne, it is not the marks on the page, but the silences between where meaning may be found. It is these silences that Sartre identifies as the very process the reader must follow to meaning. It is within the silences, the places between voices of the characters in Sterne's novel who tell their versions of stories, and between the words of the writer and the perceptions of the reader, who brings his own strategies for interpreting the work, where meaning may be grasped. For Sterne, then, the meaning of a life can be found in a text only through collaboration.

For Sartre, all literary work is an appeal to the reader to freely take up the task of reading and interpreting a text. As a *cybertext*, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* insists on the reader's participation

on both an intellectual and physical level, as we must actively move our cursor in order to travel to the next point of the narrative, which is freely chosen by us. In this way we truly act out the collaboration that Sartre refers to between writer and reader, the synthesizing of creation and perception. However, Jackson, like Sterne, also looks back to the art of storytelling as a precursor to this collaboration between writer and reader. As in *Tristram Shandy*, we can look to the intimations of death in the work to find clues to where the text looks back to in order to move forward.

Patchwork Girl finds its inception in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, which itself deals with, in the author's words, "the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability that it would be discovered," and most specifically, the frightful endeavor of a human to mock the mechanism of God by, himself, creating life (Shelley 10). As it looks back to this novel about the monstrous creation of one life by another, Patchwork Girl's own monster acts as a metaphor for the process of creating and interpreting a life within a novel, as it is her body and its formation which forms the narrative. The questions around signifying a life in Jackson's text are figured first and foremost in death.

We can begin, if we choose, in the community of a graveyard, where the various limbs that make up the monster are described in the context of their original owners and the kind of lives they led. This presentation of community, like the stories of Sterne's many characters in *Tristram Shandy*, links back to the tradition of storytelling and community as a means of locating the individual in relation to the world. However, its grotesque subject matter also links to the gothic presentation of Shelley's original novel, where the question of science and empirical experimentation as a means of finding the answers to life find monstrous consequences. In this way Jackson refers us back to a sense of community that makes up an individual's life in a text, while at the same time she questions the process by which meaning may be found in a text. To find meaning, Jackson refers us to the seams which sow the limbs in the graveyard together. These seams act as the silences referred to by Sartre, which make up the meaning of a text by the very act of the reader interpreting what the writer reveals. As the narrator suggests:

I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself. (Jackson/graveyard/headstone)

We simultaneously get an historical sense of the inceptions of narrative through community and storytelling and the importance of the act of interpretation by the reader, who is also a member of the community which exists between writer and reader.

The narration itself is led by several voices, including Mary Shelley's and the monster's, so that the perspective of reality changes from the supposed author of the monster to the monster herself, who is a living, breathing intertext within the narrative. While the text seems firmly connected to a history and

community in the graveyard, it is also fragmented, in much the way Tristram Shandy is, by temporal instability. Just as Tristram's conception cannot be pinpointed, the monster's life is made up of many others, and thus cannot be exactly calculated in chronological time. Also, just as Sterne's work does not offer a linear progression of a life, but only digressions and diversions, the *cybertext* form of Patchwork Girl does not allow you to locate yourself temporally in the text, you have no page to measure your progress within, only vignettes within screens, which are random, so they appear to have no history and no future (Jackson "This Writing"). In each of these *ergodic* texts then, it is up to the reader to form the story.

Though Jackson's monster, as the metaphor for the process of creation and interpretation, can only be perceived through random vignettes, it does follow a path of progression, which suggests this monster/text evolves from Mary's time and territory and so evolves from the traditional concept of the novel (Jackson "I am"). Her birth, as she describes it, takes place more than once, both under the *needle* and the *pen*. In this way Jackson underlines the parallels she draws between modern man's desire to understand and thus inscribe order onto the creation of life, as it is portrayed in Frankenstein through science, and our desire to order a life in the form of a conventional novel (Jackson "Join"). Mary's stitches don't hold over time. Though, as the author, she grafts some of her own skin or identity onto her monster, she cannot control her creation's identity as a whole. One vignette in particular suggests that the author has no control over the end of the work, or death of the hero as an absolute moment of meaning. In the section named "Diaspora," the monster's death appears imminent, as her seams come apart in a macabre scene in her garden, as her foot flies toward the sky, her guts spill out and her head leaps from her neck. The naming of this section refers to the historical scattering of the Jews from Babylon to other countries. Here Jackson's allusion to the Jew's reminds us of the many ways lives and history can become fragmented and, in turn, language and meaning becomes fragmented. The historical reference of Diaspora reflects how her own text illustrates the fact that meaning cannot be held together by the author's intention, but is affected by the influence of those who read and interpret it.

Jackson celebrates the *cybertext* as an evolution of textual form which allows the reader full participation in forming the story and interpreting meaning. In the section titled "I Made Myself Over/Elsie Triumphant," Elsie, from whom the monster has borrowed identity, comes to her rescue, as she holds the monster's floating parts in the bathtub:

Elsie was immersed in me, surrounded by fragments, but somehow she held me. I was gathered together loosely in her attention in a way that was interesting to me, for I was all in pieces, yet not apart. I felt permitted. I began to invent something new: a way to hang together without pretending I was whole. Something between higgledy piggledy and the eternal sphere. (Jackson "I Made Myself Over/Elsie Triumphant")

I would argue that “Elsie” is a loose conversion and thus allusion to the name “Eliza,” given to the famous program, built in nineteen sixty three, which allowed one to talk to it. As Espen J. Aarseth identifies in his essay “Cybertext,” that this program could imitate a Rogerian psychoanalyst, and through a simple pattern-matching algorithm, it used the information given by its “clients” to make them believe that it somehow “understood” their situations (Aarseth 12). Elsie, seen as a similar computer program which holds the

monster and thus the text together, does so without the same need of a conventional *non-ergodic* text to simulate a

“whole” life and thus absolute meaning in the finality of death. What it does is allow the reader to initiate, participate in and sustain a kind of dialogue and thus a community with the writer and even the program itself.

Jackson’s “eternal sphere” in the passage above alludes to the natural cycle inscribed in the tradition of storytelling, one that locates

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by Brittany Lamers



the individual as a part of a larger whole. In fact Jackson refers to a “universal mind” in the section “I am,” which points to the bank of all possible stories, or a collective memory that exists in storytelling. As she states in the section “Interim” the monster’s life is made up of a cacophony of voices, so a single identity imposed by the author is not possible, and with Jackson’s *cybertext* form there is never an absolute ending, only different variations to the cycle, so there is no possibility of finding meaning in a finite end. The beauty of *ergodic* texts, such as *Tristram Shandy* and *Patchwork Girl*, is their imperative to avoid the pitfalls of trying to impose order as a means of signifying a life within the confines of a text. Instead, these texts allude to the past to help us see the importance of connection to the world through collaboration, while forcing the reader to actively participate in the process of creation and perception as a means of satisfying our desire to explore and find our essentialness in relation to the world.

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Acceptance and Advancement of the Spinster's Role in the
Public Sphere of 1848 in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*,
Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, and Charlotte
Brontë's *Shirley*

by Katrina Schurter

By the mid-nineteenth century, the doctrine of separate spheres which placed men in the public world of finance and women in the private realm of domesticity had been embedded in British society. This ideological social structure was threatened when the increase of industrialization created jobs for educated middle-class women and made it possible for "a small group of [them] ... to live, however poorly, on their own earnings outside heterosexual domesticity or church governance" (Vicus 5-6). This opportunity combined with the mass emigration of British males resulted in an increased number of unmarried women, or spinsters, in Britain (Zangen 53). Numerous social critics of the time including noted journalist W. R. Greg expressed discomfort with this new position for women and considered the proliferation of spinsters "symbolic of the larger social disorder brought about by industrialization and urbanization" (3).

In his 1862 publication entitled “Why Are Women Redundant?” Greg demonstrates his negative opinion of spinsterhood by declaring the existence of women in each social class “who have to earn their own living, ... who not having the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers, have to carve out artificial and painfully-sought occupations for themselves ... [and] are compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence” (5). Interestingly, such opinions are not included in works of fiction published in the years surrounding 1848 such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son*, Schurter 1 and Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*. In fact, the ways that spinsters are portrayed in these novels indicate that the idea of women remaining unmarried was well received by Victorians of that period. These three works suggest that being defined by their positions outside of the ideal family sphere, spinsters transform their communities into pseudo-domestic spaces in which they fulfilled the expectations imposed on Victorian women. Almost all of the other characters in the novels as well as the authors imply acceptance of this societal role for spinsters which not only validates the status of single women and deems their influences on society appropriate, but also allows for some approval of the idea of women entering the public sphere of men.

In her article entitled “‘Strange and Rare Visitants’: Spinsters and Domestic Space in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*”, Anna Lepine argues that the Victorian spinster occupied a “marginal social position” due to her “paradoxical relation to domestic space—at once alienated from the domestic home and cast as a born homemaker” (122). In order to reconcile these two aspects of their shared situation, the spinsters in the studied novels reinterpret their communities as domestic spheres in which they can act as caregivers and even mothers without the prerequisite of marriage. One way in which the spinster can achieve this conversion of a public space into a domestic sphere is through her gradual progression out of her father’s house, through multiple familial spaces, and into the public world. In *Mary Barton*, when Alice is offered a job as a domestic servant she is happy to accept it and thereby leave her father’s domestic sphere and relieve him of the responsibility of providing for her. As a servant Alice is able to be part of a familial space and meet some of the expectations demanded of Victorian women by taking care of her missis’s children. Alice reveals the success of her transition out of the domestic sphere of her immediate family and into that of her employer’s when she states, “I was as happy there as could be; almost as happy as I was at home” (Gaskell 28). Alice’s situation changes when upon the death of her master she becomes unemployed and is thrust out of her adoptive domestic realm and into the public world. Nevertheless, Alice is admitted into familial spaces time and again due to her employment with numerous families. When Alice becomes her nephew Will’s foster-mother she decides to leave her employer’s abode “to make a bit on a home-place for him” by developing her own domestic sphere (30). When Will leaves Alice’s home she no longer has anyone in her realm of influence to take care of and therefore expands the scope of her motherly sphere to incorporate the poor and needy people in her community. Thus, Alice is able to extend her domestic sphere to encompass

her neighbours through slowly moving from her father's house into those of her employers and finally to her own abode while continuing to act as a mother to everyone she encounters.

A second way that spinsters can transform their surroundings into a large domestic sphere is through using their social and financial positions to conduct charitable deeds for the people of their communities. In such cases the spinsters generally belong to the middle or upper classes and it is their sense of societal duty that causes them to absorb their community into the realm of their influence. This is the way in which the spinsters in *Dombey and Son* and *Shirley* create domestic spheres in which to conduct the duties expected of them as women. Dickens's Miss Tox uses her social status and comfortable fortune to relieve the anxieties and better the situations of the middle and upper-class people in her social circle. For example, Miss Tox uses her middle-class education to teach the Toodle children (Dickens 587) and her financial means to employ Robin Toodle as her domestic servant (912). Similarly, in *Shirley* Miss Mann and Miss Ainley provide what they can in both money and deeds to help the working class members of their enlarged domestic sphere. The spinsters willingly give their time, money, and health to comfort the poor and sick (Brontë 142), and though financially Miss Ainley is "too poor to give much, ... she straiten[s] herself to privation that she might contribute her mite when needful" (145). Thus, these middle-class spinsters are able to turn their communities into personal domestic realms simply by acting on their senses of social duty and their desires to help those in need. Therefore, according to these texts, in the period surrounding 1848 spinsters were able to transform their communities into pseudo-domestic spheres.

The novels further suggest that spinsters used their positions within these reinterpreted domestic spaces to satisfy the societal expectations imposed on them as women. The Victorian female was taught that "she should be the selfless queen reigning over the private sphere, the bearer of all feelings, the caretaker of her family, the guardian of the children, the mirror and moral influence to her husband, the representative of his social status, the saviour of the world, all of which had a necessary prerequisite: marriage" (Zangen 50). Regardless of the fact that they had never been married, spinsters were able to fulfill a number of these requirements within their pseudo-domestic spheres. Though not regarded as queens these women act selflessly in order to benefit others. Even if she "may have done a hard day's wash, there's not a child ill within the street, but Alice goes to offer to sit up, and does sit up too, though may be she's to be at her work by six next morning" (Gaskell 8). Similarly, Miss Mann is said to have "passed alone through protracted scenes of suffering, exercised rigid self-denial, [and] made large sacrifices of time, money, [and] health for those who had repaid her only by ingratitude" (Brontë 142). In lieu of having their own families, spinsters act as caregivers to the people of their communities. Alice is known to be often away from home for days "to help in some sudden emergency of illness or distress" (Gaskell 69), and does everything she can think of, taking pains far past what she would allow for herself in order to make Mary and Margaret as comfortable as possible in her home (25). Miss Tox also acts as the caregiver to a child that is not her own through her deeds concerning little Paul. Miss Tox's actions towards this child are said to be the result of her "overflowing goodness [which] induced her to volunteer into the domestic militia as a substitute of some sort for his deceased Mama" (Dickens 59). Lastly, though they lack husbands to influence morally, the spinsters's

spheres enable them to act as moral models for their entire communities.

Again Gaskell's spinster

demonstrates the ability of a single woman to fulfill domestic roles as she sets a moral and religious example that is followed by others. Alice exudes meekness and selflessness, revels in the "pleasure o' helping others" (Gaskell 28), chides herself "for not leaving [her] days in [God's] hands" (71), and apologizes to Mary when she fears that she has weakened the latter's faith by revealing a slight weakness in her own (139). The ability of spinsters to act as models of piety and morality is also seen in Brontë's Miss Ainley. This lady is "religious, a professor of religion—what some would call 'a saint'" (Brontë 145), and Caroline "discover[s] [in her] so much goodness, so much usefulness, so

much mildness, patience, [and] truth that she ben[ds] her mind before Miss Ainley's in reverence" (145-46). Thus, though spinsters did not have familial spheres their expanded realms of influence enabled these females to act as selfless caregivers and moral and religious models and thereby fulfill at least some of the domestic duties expected of all women.

The fact that spinsters performed the feminine and even maternal activities demanded of Victorian wives within their pseudo-domestic spheres is highlighted in two of these texts when the spinsters are made into genuine and recognized mother figures. In *Mary Barton*, Alice becomes the guardian of her nephew Will after both of his parents die. Alice expresses motherly anxiety and fear that Will has drowned at sea when she hears that his ship has come in but he has not yet been to visit her (Gaskell 139). Then, when Will arrives it is described as "something different from common to see Alice's joy at once more having her foster-child with her.... [T]ears came coursing down her old withered cheeks, and dimmed the horn spectacles she had put on, in order to pry lovingly into his face" (140). Alice's motherly affection for Will

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but he also acknowledges her as a maternal figure. When he sees Alice in the deepest stage of her decline into death Will “[weeps] passionate tears at the sight of her, who had been as a mother to him, so standing on the confines of life” (327). Thus, Alice is placed in a maternal role which highlights the fact that though a spinster she conforms to the feminine and motherly expectations of Victorian women. Similarly, though to a lesser extent, the fact that Miss Tox is named little Paul’s godmother calls attention to her adherence to the feminine and maternal roles expected of her. Indeed, Miss Tox does what she can to act as a mother to little Paul. She “preside[s] over the innocent repasts of the young heir, with ineffable satisfaction” and “[a]t the little ceremonies of the bath and toilette, she assist[s] with enthusiasm” (Dickens 59). Miss Tox also demonstrates a very feminine sympathy for little Paul when it is necessary that he consume “infantine doses of physic”, and shows her admiration of the child through her inability to restrain herself from praising his progress (59). It is because of this motherly manner concerning little Paul and the fact that she “exert[s] herself so warmly in the child’s behalf from the first” that Mr. Dombey agrees to name Miss Tox little Paul’s godmother (59). Thus, the ability of spinsters to fulfill the feminine and maternal roles dictated by Victorian society though they are not part of a traditional domestic sphere is emphasized through the fact that both Alice and Miss Tox act as mothers to their respective foster-child and godson.

As the above discussion reveals, these three novels published around 1848 suggest that though barred from natural domestic spheres because unwed, spinsters of the time were able to expand their realms of domesticity to include their communities and then act within those spaces to fulfill the roles demanded of women. However, it is necessary to examine the texts individually to determine the degree to which each work promotes acceptance of the actions of these women by considering other characters’s responses to the spinsters and the authors’s imbedded and implied commentary.

In Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton*, no direct comments are made that either question why Alice never marries or suggest that she should. Since this novel was written in a time when marriage was not only the ideal but also the expectation (Zangen 61), the absence of criticism concerning Alice’s marital status can be understood as a form of acceptance of her position as a “celibate spinster” (Vicus 5). Further, the lack of censure that Alice receives from the other characters indicates either that in mid-nineteenth century Britain individuals accepted the influence of the working-class spinster on her community or that Gaskell was attempting to promote such acceptance through her novel. Perhaps in a further attempt to raise the status of single women, Gaskell equates the spinster to the widow to some extent. According to Martha Vicinus, “no one could claim that widows, beset with the problems of raising children and working, were redundant” (6). This same statement applies to Alice who uncomplainingly struggles to raise Will, act as a caregiver to the members of her community, and work as a washerwoman to support herself. Gaskell again elevates the spinster to the social position of the widow by demonstrating that her well-being deserves equal consideration and that she too is important to the people who surround her. When Jem’s master buys his invention and he becomes a man of means, he purchases incomes for both his mother and Alice (Gaskell 138). The fact that Jem chooses to support both women suggests that spinsters, though perhaps not as

However, though Alice, and by extension all spinsters, is portrayed as an accepted member of society, this novel upholds the ideal of the Victorian wife and the associated domestic sphere. Throughout her decline Alice experiences clouded recollections of her happy childhood spent within the domestic space of her immediate family. These memories bring peace to Alice in her last weeks and she spends her hours happily with the spirits of her long-deceased “dearly-loved ones around her” (259). Alice’s nostalgia for the time that she spent enclosed in this domestic sphere presents the situation of the nuclear family as the ideal. Thus, though *Mary Barton* encourages acceptance and appreciation of spinsters, Alice’s desire to return to a traditional domestic realm reasserts that the role of wife and mother is idyllic and suggests that this position is the natural desire of good and pure women such as her.

Charles Dickens’s *Dombey and Son* displays acceptance and appreciation of spinsters through the author’s ultimate treatment of Miss Tox. This woman’s charitable deeds, while significantly smaller than those of the spinsters in the other novels, are appreciated by most of the other characters. Though Miss Tox’s attentions to little Paul “were a heavy discouragement to Richards, who lost flesh hourly under her patronage, and was in some danger of being superintended to death” (Dickens 59), it is understood that the spinster’s actions are intended to ensure the well-being of the child. Indeed, even Mr. Dombey approves of the pains taken by Miss Tox, though part of his appreciation is based on his belief that the spinster has a thorough understanding of her position in society and its lowliness in comparison to his own (59). However, Miss Tox does not seem to share Mr. Dombey’s belief that their social statuses are disparate. Unlike Gaskell’s and Brontë’s spinsters, Miss Tox “wants to be part of the system of heterosexual marriage. Setting her sights on Mr. Dombey in the earliest moments of his widowerhood, Miss Tox ... offers herself as a woman in want of a man” (Dever 167). In her attempts to attract Mr. Dombey’s attention and approval Miss Tox behaves in ways that she believes will be most appealing to him and therefore often conducts acts without a “distinct idea why, except that [they were] expected of her” (Dickens 63). Such behaviour presents Miss Tox as a pathetic and comic character which subjects her, and perhaps other spinsters, to ridicule. Correspondingly, Vicinus states that Victorian “[s]ociety trained women for one function, marriage, and then mocked those who sought this idyllic state after having reached maturity. No longer innocent and ignorant, it was obscene and comic in performances that a middle-aged woman should still want marriage” (Vicinus qtd. in Zangen 56). However, the reader forms a more favourable opinion of Miss Tox when she proves to be loyal to Mr. Dombey even after she is barred from his domestic sphere and he falls from his position of affluence. Yet, though the conclusion of the novel brings about numerous marriages including the unforeseen coupling of Bunsby and Mrs. Mac Stinger, Miss Tox is not one of the newlyweds. Instead, Miss Tox remains a spinster but is welcomed back into Mr. Dombey’s domestic realm and “is not infrequently of the family party, and is quite devoted to it, and a great favourite” (Dickens 943). Dickens’s decision to leave Miss Tox unwed amid a host of marriages suggests some acceptance of the presence of spinsters in society. Further,

the fact that Miss Tox is permitted to be part of a domestic sphere in which she is able to care for others and be loved in return implies that women do not need to be married in order to fulfill the feminine expectations dictated by Victorian ideology. Lastly, the explicit statement that Miss Tox's admiration of Mr. Dombey is "platonic" (943) at the happy conclusion of this novel hints that this is the preferred relationship between them. This situation suggests that some women should not aspire to marriage but should remain single and help those members of their community in need of their assistance and positive influence.

Finally, Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* appears to incorporate both the least acceptance of spinsters by the other characters and the most overall support of the idea of unmarried women. Though neither Gaskell's nor Dickens's spinsters are portrayed as attractive, animated, or wealthy, Miss Mann and Miss Ainley are described as particularly ugly, tranquil, and poor. Again unlike Alice and Miss Tox, these two spinsters are not appreciated by the men in their social community but are instead ridiculed as "loveless" (Brontë 141) and "hideous" (144). Furthermore, though the spinsters's aid is accepted by the working-class these people are too accustomed to their support to thank them for it (145). The numerous comments describing the poor treatment of these selfless spinsters which are concentrated largely in a single chapter entitled "Old Maids" highlight the error in such treatment and suggest that spinsters deserve more respect and gratitude. In addition to this subtle encouragement that society accept and value spinsters, Brontë includes a direct call for more occupations for women in order to emancipate them from the necessity of marriage. In contemplating her despondency, Caroline comes to the conclusion that "single women should have more to do—better chances of interesting and profitable occupation" (309). This forthright comment reveals the opinion that single women should not only be accepted in society, but that they should be provided with the opportunity to obtain meaningful work through which to support themselves. Caroline's thoughts progress to a call to the men of England which urges them to "look at [their] poor girls, ... reduced to strive, by scarce modest coquetry and debasing artifice, to gain that position and consideration by marriage which to celibacy is denied" (311). This plea indicates that females are forced to be degraded through participation in the "overstocked" marriage market (310) because single women are denied the regard given to those who are married. Finally, Caroline's thoughts suggest that if single women are given "scope and work" they will become honourable contributors to society (311). Thus, Brontë portrays Miss Mann and Miss Ainley as respectable and valuable yet unappreciated members of society in such a way as to censure the negative contemporary opinions of spinsters and add strength to her call for more acceptance of and opportunities for single women in Britain.

In conclusion, if these three novels are understood to reveal the prevalent social actions and opinions of spinsters in the years surrounding 1848 they collaboratively communicate that both the existence and deeds of single women were largely accepted in British society. These texts indicate that due to their marginal societal positions spinsters reinterpreted their communities as pseudo-domestic spheres in which to fulfill the

expectations imposed on all Victorian women. Throughout the novels, other characters's opinions about the spinsters and the authors's commentary combine to denote acceptance of the unmarried status of these women and the role that they play as caregivers and mother figures in their communities. Such approval further allows for some suggestion that single women can be productive members of society outside of the domestic sphere and that more public occupations should be made available to them. It is interesting to note that Gaskell's Alice is a virtually flawless spinster yet *Mary Barton* is the text that provides the least support for single women by reasserting that the wife and mother is the ideal Victorian female. This anomaly indicates that Victorian society of the time could not consider spinsters idyllic when compared to married women. Accordingly, *Shirley*, and to some extent *Dombey and Son*, agitate for more permissive societal attitudes towards single women that allow them progressive and industrious roles in which they are not measured against wives. However, Greg's 1862 article indicates that such hopes were not soon satisfied.

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Creative Contributions: Poetry

The Gospel of Mark by Erin Woods

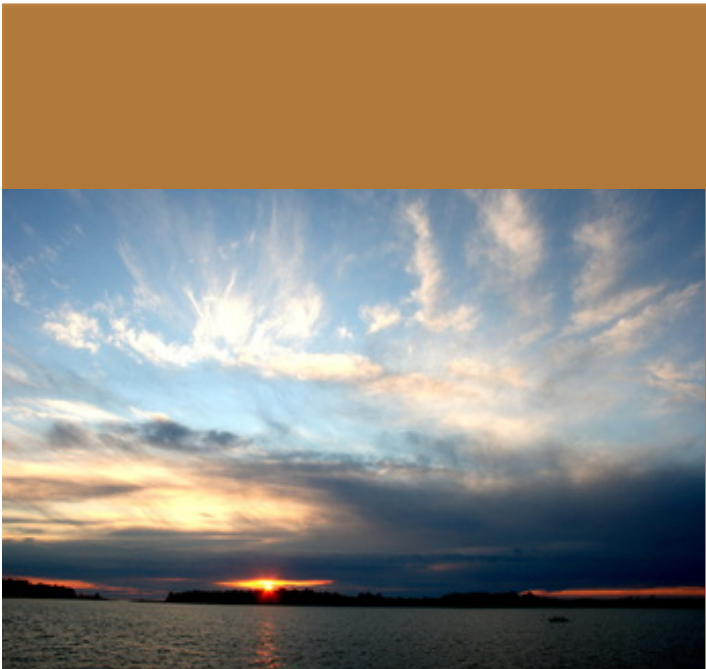
The news was over, and the three of us –
Myself, my brother Mark, his fiancée
Amanda (flicking channels absently
On Mute, her eyes unsettled), watched the day
Go out on cups of decaf. “Still the same,”
Said Mark, who (like a lot of us, I guess)
Could never bear a silence quietly.
“Depressing news – they probably report
The worst on purpose. And it’s all the same.
The riots, marches, protests, shootings, blood,
Here a bomb, there a bomb, everywhere bombs...”
He scowled. Amanda flicked the channels. Bob
The Builder’s latest project – click – became
A demolition. “Mm,” I said. Outside
The hungry shadows ate their way across
The yard and tripped the porch-light sensor. “And,”
My brother said, “It’s pointless. All of it.
I mean, what lasting good has ever come
From revolution? Name me one regime
That came to power in violence and went on
To actually bring Freedom. Freedom! Christ.”
From revolution? Name me one regime
That came to power in violence and went on
To actually bring Freedom. Freedom! Christ.”
“America,” Amanda said, then winced

And glanced at me with “sorry” in her eyes.
She knows as well as I they way he gets
When somebody encourages his rants.
I rolled my eyes and let them wander off
While Mark began on government controls,
And press, and censorship, and “Call that free?”
My gaze found out a cobweb strung across
The window corner, anchored to the light.
It danced, the air disturbed by moths that came
In ones and twos and twenties now to mob
The light, all striking it with frantic wings:
A quick tattoo. A drum beat. Mark went on,
“You know that march the other day? The guy
Who threw the first brick was a cop’s son.
They wanted to incite them, wanted an
Excuse to arrest them. Did you hear? Christ.”
Outside, one dark, unlucky moth had brushed
A wing against the cobweb. It fluttered,
Struggled, pulled, spun around the thread, hung limp.
“Then there’s the Middle East. Don’t even get
Me started!” No, please don’t. “The peace talks there
Were useless. Don’t they know by now there is
No compromise?” Outside, the dark moth strained.
“I mean, come on.” Crazy wing-beats – And I was
Surprised to find I held my breath. “You know,
The problem here’s the concept. What the heck
Is “freedom” anyway, that everyone
Keeps yelling for it? Man, if you could find
Two people who agreed, I’d buy them both
A beer and let them run the world. No joke.”
He paused to drink and choked, his coffee cold.
I blinked and looked at him. “Of course. You’re right,”
I said, and smiled, and left to wash the cups.
Outside, a cobweb dangled, broken.
Somewhere outside, a dark moth, limping, flew.

**You Are Free
by Tiina Vilu**

The seagull flies lightly over the wind
Watching the docks where boats toss up lazily as beach balls
And people stumble across deck as though drunk
Not quite reaching the sea's outstretched hand
And others walk away back into the maze of city streets
Never to find their way out into the wide world
Trapped in a matrix of thoughts like fish in nets
Each slides into their place, one at a time
like figures moving around a clock to mark the hours
and at midnight everyone pushes inside
not seeing the swirling mass of lights overhead

lighting the way to things beyond
the people don't dare look up
they are too tired to be confused by what they don't know
and would sit inside waiting for the sun to guide
with one right ray of light it's not so hard
but you wonder why you feel so heavy on the ground
and you wonder why the days lose their meaning
when you never took the time to think outside yourself
you never took the time to ask what you were doing there
no wonder you are tired, hearing yourself mutely scream
you are free, you are free



Insignificance under the Sky (2011)

Six White Horses
by Erin Woods

It weren't so bad to be a mouse;
The life was small, but so were we.
Our highest cares were crumbs and tea
(Which ain't too scarce in a manor house).
A fine life! Nibble, nuzzle, be
Just nimble enough to 'scape the broom,
Just glad enough to 'scape the gloom,
Just free enough to know ye'r free.
And sure, a humble life. Why not?
When "ostentation" meant ye wore
Yer whiskers curled, or oiled yer fur,
Or weren't well-pleased with what ye'd got.
Aye, what we'd got weren't much, it's true.
Ye'd call us poor – but poor's no vice,
And poverty's enough for mice;
It does us, or we make it do.
And all we asked was room to creep,
A bite of food, a bit of drink,
Quick feet to flee, bright eyes to blink,
A common nest, and dreamless sleep.
Imagine, then, how t'was for us
(Who'd scarce imagined once before),
Sent skittering across the floor,
In a squealing, stumbling, tumbling fuss
Of paws and claws and hoof and hair,
And straightening up to unheard-of height,
And seein' ourselves in each other: white

And tall and proud, and Lord, I swear
The seein' weren't the marvel. No,
'Twas the feelin'. The feelin'! The wind! The heat
Of our breath and our legs as we beat, we beat
The road, and the cry was "Go! And go!"
Then the race in the dark on the stroke of the hour –
It was breathless and boundless and freedom and flight –
What were mice? We were gods! And we breathed in the night
And the rush of the air, of the pulse, of the power.
And then – and then – mere mice again,
But mice aware of grander things,
We scuttled home with folded wings
And glowing eyes. And glory! when
The others heard our tale, we knew
They'd knot their tails for envy. Why,
If once we only closed an eye
We'd see that wondrous chase anew.
It weren't so bad to be a mouse.
The life was small, but so were we.
What made you show us liberty
Too wide for the walls of the manor house?
You dressed a cinder-girl in white;
You granted us fleet glory. Why?
We never asked to stand so high.
We never wished to dream of flight.

Creative Contributions: Prose**Rooted Victim
by Kayla Harris**

Looking out the window here, I can see the tall trees, growing freely in community with one another. That's the way that they should be. There was a tree that I once knew, like a good friend, and she was not free. She lived on the street outside of my apartment. Each day I would leave the building in which I lived, proceed down the steps to the sidewalk and stand still for a moment. There in front of me stood my friend, strong and proud, her leaves glowing a green that emeralds envy. I would take in one deep breath, gaze at the world within my reach and make an intuitive decision to seize the day. I exhaled. I nodded at my friend. Then I embarked on the adventure of the day. I lived in that apartment for nearly two years, then I suddenly noticed a change. I had just returned from work. I saw the grim mark of death on my dear friend. She was leafless, with grey bark and cracked branches. There were bricks. All around her trunk and burying her roots, bricks. The bricks were not new, but before they did not stand out so greatly. I went to bed that evening feeling a certain sadness shadowing me. In the morning I crept outside, I tried to sneak off to work without my friend seeing me, but it was impossible. As I made an exit from the apartment building, she stood there, as if she had been waiting for me. The bricks confining her, she was trapped. Like an animal taken from the wild and placed behind bars, or within cages. My dearest friend was held hostage in this concrete jungle. Queen Street east is no place for a beautiful tree like herself. There the bricks held her. She had no choice but to remain. She could not uproot herself and move to a valley or a woodland. She was demanded to live her life in this darkened location, a victim to herself. I could not work that day. My friend was somehow stripped of her freedom and I had not heard her cry until now. Her life was so sad... she had no voice. Perhaps she did, but she did not know how to use it; or perhaps nobody wanted to listen. This colourless figure arched before me, trying to tell me something but unable, so I waited. I sat down on the steps outside of my building and I waited. I waited for my friend's request to somehow make it from the center of her wrinkled bark into my heart.

Rush hour faded out. Soon the traffic was slow enough that the passing cars were nearly aligned with thump of heart that resided in my ribcage. I sat there, staring at my defenceless friend not knowing how to

help her escape the humility of this torture. Lunch breaks occurred throughout downtown Toronto. I remained still. The sky reached its peak in the sky and the clouds became luminous. Soon it faded out and the reflection of light in the cars gleamed directly into my retinas. People were leaving their busy jobs now, I had not managed to get to work that day, nor did I even call with some pathetic excuse concerning my absence. As the streets filled up with chaos, life, and the blur of world...more and more I saw the stillness, fatality, and the degrading truth displayed in my friend across from me.

I closed my eyes. I thought. I'm not sure what happened, but when I opened my eyes I was kneeling before the tree. Crying, weeping, and digging, I was digging deep. I brushed away soil little at a time, penetrating deep into the ground. As I did, more and more of my friends' roots were displayed. I pulled the bricks up. The once perfect square outline surrounding my friend was not a crooked mess of rubble and stacked concrete. It was nearly all torn up now. I was sitting in soil; my dress suit stained. There was blood on my fingertips and palms from digging and probing at the bricks. I started to laugh, a true laugh, when I looked up to see my friend somehow standing taller and stronger than before. I think that she was instantly nourished by this small gain of freedom; she was strengthened by this loss of confinement. I kept digging and removing the bricks; soon there was no sidewalk left out front of my building right up the road.

I was exhausted. I sat still. I took a deep breath and gazed at the world which was slipping through my fingertips. People were standing all around. Cops cars were parked on Queen street and an officer was about five feet away from me warding people off. I must have missed something. It was dark, the stars and the moon were bright enough to see beyond the smog and haze that hovered above the city. How long had I been sitting there? I stood up, a cop yelled for me not to make any sudden movements. There was a collection of bricks and dirt piled up on the curb, seeping into the traffic which was oddly not there.

I looked at my friend, though she has no lips upon her bark, I could swear she smiled a sweet and smug smirk as if to gloat in my humiliation. As the cops confronted me and tried to rope me in tightly I tried explaining how my friend had lost her freedom... I sobbed into my town suit, I screamed for justice and hope in this world's future. I thought that it was the bricks confining my friend, but I was deceived. All of those bricks were gone, removed for her but she remains still. Her roots are wound deep in the dirty soil of Queen Street and she will die in the place which she has lived. I could not help her, for it was her fate, to never be free. Every day I watched her living her confined life, a life in which freedom was only a word with no purport. Now I, behind bars...the floor smelling of dust and urine, the ceiling leaking something that does not run like water, the walls hard and wet with condensation... I look out through the small window of my jail cell and I can see trees. Trees growing wild and free; trees that will soon glow a luminous green. I will remain fenced in, surrounded by bricks and rooted in this grey, grim place. I'll be dreaming of a freedom that may not exist at all.

In a Name

by Christine Clarke

Adelaide Lange had been a formidable woman. The set of her shoulders announced her innate authority. The careful way in which she always spoke denounced her intelligence. Her immaculate clothes betrayed not her desire, but her need for perfection. And she had the determination to see that perfection achieved. Adelaide had no idea how fortunate she'd been to die when she had.

Addie shivered at the thought of finding the timing of her grandmother's death in any way fortunate. How morbid the world was becoming... and she along with it. Her most recent customer looked up at her, annoyed at the slight spill her involuntary twitch had caused. She apologized and hastily wiped away the splattered tea with a tattered towel she kept hanging from her apron.

"Addie!" her boss barked from behind the bar counter. She cringed before making her way over to him. Surely he hadn't seen her mistake from there!

"Yes, Mr. Brunner?"

"Why don't you go home? You've been here since dawn." She regarded him strangely. If Mr Brunner had a friendly part to his personality, he rarely gave it permission to speak, let alone act. "Go. Before I change my mind!"

Without another word, Addie slipped into the kitchen and neatly hung her apron on her hook. Just as well really... the lunch hour was long over and dinner service was still hours away. The only people wandering into the dingy café were men desperate to forget their troubles in a mug of beer or women needing a cup of hot tea to warm up after a long day of shopping on a meagre budget.

She opened the front door and was instantly assaulted by the frigid February wind. It burned her throat and lungs every time she inhaled. Grasping at her shawl, she pulled it tighter around herself. The ragged cloth did very little to keep her warm. It was full of pulled threads, holes and worn spots about to become holes. If only she could afford a new one. What little her family had was earmarked for food.

Briefly, Addie wondered what her grandmother would think of her. Dressed in the clothes of a pauper, working in a less than reputable restaurant, saving up just enough money every week to buy food for her family and maybe pay a few bills.

Perhaps that was the reason her parents had named her Addie. She shared many of her grandmother's physical traits, but in personality, Addie could never be compared to the great matriarch of her family. She was a miniature at best. The amount of power she was capable of wielding reflected that reality.

Addie was once more presented with her powerlessness when a woman jumped in front of her in line at the corner grocery store and snatched up the last of the butter. Part of Addie wanted to lash out, the other part of her, the more dominant part, was too tired to be bothered. So her family wouldn't have butter for a bit, it was money that stayed in her pocket. At least until the next day. Besides, she did manage to pick up enough potatoes and bread to last them well into the next week.

"Is that everything Madam?" the shopkeeper asked her.

"Yes, thank you. When this war ends, I don't think I'll ever eat another potato," she murmured to herself. She was sick of potatoes but they were cheap enough and easy to get. The shopkeeper smiled slightly. She was positive that he understood.

"It will have to end some time," he told her as he took her carefully counted money in exchange for her purchases.

"I hope so. Good day."

Her apartment was only another three blocks away. She was almost home. She'd be able to change out of her work clothes that reeked of cigarettes. She'd be able to sit down for the first time since four o'clock that morning. Of course Charlotte would be practically bouncing to tell her what she'd learned that day. Her husband would watch and when their daughter finished her soliloquy, fill her in on the day's events. Some times she knew the headlines before he could tell her, but he always had more details to share. Addie was grateful for the newspaper. If it wasn't for those few printed pages, she didn't know what she and Emmett would talk about.

"Pardon Miss," a gentle male voice said. She looked up, snapped out of her thoughts. Two soldiers were smiling at her, politely standing aside to let her pass. Addie smiled back as best she could.

It was too easy for her. Blonde hair, blue eyes, she could go just about anywhere she pleased without excessive harassment. She was thankful Emmett wasn't with her. Addie glanced behind her, watching as the soldiers' telltale black overcoats swished in the wind. A sense of relief washed over her when they finally rounded the corner. That small bit of relief wasn't sufficient to keep her from walking a little faster all the way to her apartment. She took the steps two at a time, tearing up each flight faster than the next. She didn't like seeing soldiers around her home. Her mind wouldn't stop racing until she was safely behind her front door, with a nine year old attached to her waist and a husband sitting across the room, fully engrossed in a newspaper or radio report. Addie almost never panicked for herself anymore. The second she saw those men, those coats, her mind had leapt to her family.

At last she arrived on the fourth floor. Nothing seemed out of place. It was still eerily quiet. The door to the second apartment was still hanging sadly from a single hinge. She looked inside and felt more knots forming in her stomach. Most of the Edelmans' possessions had been stolen or vandalized over the course of the week. She hated to think it but she doubted they would ever be coming back to claim their property. As she walked on, she saw a light on in what had formerly been the Fuchs' apartment. Who was living there now she couldn't say. Finally at her door, she took a deep breath knowing that all of her panic would come to an end. Once more she would see that she was being silly and that everything was fine.

The door was unlocked. That was not normal but Emmett didn't always have the best memory. Inside, everything appeared to be in order. She dropped her groceries on the kitchen table, kicked off her boots and hung up her coat. "Charlotte?" No answer. "Emmett?" Again no answer. Addie knew that neither of them would leave. It wasn't safe for Emmett. He was barely on the sidewalk three seconds before someone was accosting him for being Jewish. Unlike her, Emmett had very few Aryan features. He very much took after his Jewish grandparents and father. As for Charlotte, she knew Emmett would never risk her safety. If they were both gone, something had happened.

Addie quickly inspected their home, looking for signs, perhaps a note, anything that might explain away their disappearance. There was nothing. After pacing before the phone for several moments, Addie dialled her mother. Her mother knew everything. And if she didn't, then her father most likely knew. Addie felt like she was constantly taking advantage of her parents. They already covered nearly half of her expenses, their prominent position in German society before the war was the principal reason she and Emmett had been virtually untouched in spite of the Anti-Semitic legislature. Now she was asking them to use their connections to find her illegal husband and child? She asked a lot. She worried that one day she would ask too much.

"Mother, it's Ada," she said all in a rush. "Emmett and Charlotte are missing. They're both missing."

"Ada, stay calm. What do you mean missing?" her mother's cool aristocratic voice replied. It annoyed Addie to no end.

"Mother it's been four years since this war started. And let's not forget what happened in the years before. You know what missing means! Don't you dare tell me not to panic!"

"Alright. I'm sorry. I haven't heard anything about this Dear. I'll check with your father and call back soon."

The line disconnected.

This was her punishment. This was her punishment for marrying a Jewish man and bearing his child. Waiting. She waited by the phone, the idea of making dinner completely forgotten. They'd been so stupid.

They'd both known all those years ago that getting married was dangerous. Since their marriage in 1932, they'd seen their money evaporate, they'd eventually been forced to leave their home, Emmett was removed from his position at the university.

They'd been forced to move again, this time for financial reasons. Having Charlotte had been an ordeal, seeing Charlotte off to school where she was treated differently, poorly, ate away at them. They had to fight to remain married. The year before, Charlotte had been tossed out of school. Taking them away entirely was the final blow. How could it get any worse? She'd been waiting for this to happen. She'd been waiting every day for years. Waiting for the phone to ring, waiting to hear if they were alright, waiting to hear what had happened, that was a hell she'd never anticipated.

Her brother didn't have these problems, she thought jealously. No, her brother, her saint-like brother had married a beautiful, intelligent, kind, full-blooded German. He still had most of his money. He still had his home. His perfect children were still in school. His wife still kept their wonderful home. They were all safe. Lorenz had been the only one to caution her about marrying Emmett. She'd been so angry with him. Maybe he'd been right. She couldn't help wondering if he was right. Charlotte was only nine years old. What would the Nazis need her for? It made her sick to think of her daughter never being born, but it also made her sick to think of her daughter suffering a horrible existence filled with abuse and humiliation before finally dying alone.

The phone rang. Addie couldn't understand how it sounded far away and ominously loud at the same time. She picked it up and held it to her ear. She didn't say a word.

"Ada?" Her mother asked. Connections weren't always reliable. It was possible she'd been put through to the wrong person. "Ada? Is that you? Addie?"

"What do you know?" Addie asked. Her voice was barely above a whisper.

"It took some doing... your father had to make some calls. They have been taken Ada. They've been taken to Rosenstrasse 2-4. There's a community center there." Suddenly all Addie could think about were trains and plumes of dark, foul smelling smoke. "Addie, from the sound of things, they're trying to make Berlin Juden Frei."

"What do I do?" she asked.

"Nothing. I can't lose my daughter too. Maybe things will work out."

"Oh Mother, when has anything like this worked out," Addie cried. "Thank you, and thank Father for me would you?"

"Addie, please don't do anything stupid!"

The line went dead.

Reviews: Book Reviews**Reading “Lolita in Tehran” in North Bay
by Christine Clarke**

Reading *Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* by Azar Nafisi is a timely work that anyone interested in literature, history, women’s rights, human rights or the Middle East, should read. Nafisi, a professor of English Literature, is documenting her experience of living in Iran during the authoritarian rule of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iran/Iraq War. During this period, one of political turmoil, violence, and censorship, Nafisi decided to start a private literature class in her living room. She had been expelled from several universities for refusing to wear a hijab, but her desire to teach outweighed the challenges she faced. She therefore recruited her best female students (a mixed gender class would have been too risky given the political climate) in order to discuss great works of Western literature such as *Lolita*, *Pride and Prejudice*, and *The Great Gatsby*.

Throughout, Nafisi focuses on one particular theme; that literature and imagination could act as a means of bridging the gap that should exist between the personal and the political. Nafisi uses the works of fiction she is studying in an attempt to relate to the ever-changing and increasingly hostile world of Tehran. When teaching at the university, Nafisi’s decision to teach *The Great Gatsby* was questioned. The charge was indecency and immorality. The exercise allowed her students to engage with the work as well as the values of their society. Later, while studying *Pride and Prejudice* with her clandestine class, Nafisi’s students refashioned Austen’s iconic first sentence: “It is a truth universally acknowledged that a Muslim man, regardless of his fortune, must be in want of a nine-year-old virgin wife,” to which another of her students replied: “Or is it a truth universally acknowledged that a Muslim man must be in want not just of one but of many wives?” (257). Such statements are used to analyse and comment on social restrictions. Nafisi goes on to explain that new marriage laws had been adopted, returning the minimum age of marriage to nine years of age. She also informs readers that laws permitting men to keep more than one wife were approved.

Numerous critics have attacked Nafisi’s work for reasons ranging from style, to the content being offensive and inflammatory to those living in the Middle East. The book is powerful in many respects, but

personally, I did not find it inflammatory. I think living under Khomeini's rule would have been terrifying, but I did not put the book down cursing Iran or Islam. I found that Nafisi's work challenged many western stereotypes of the Middle East. The women she engages with are not completely helpless and reliant on men. Neither are men portrayed as superior, wife-beaters. As a westerner living in Northern Ontario, where there are no mosques and few visible minorities, Nafisi's book made me think. Prior to reading *Reading Lolita*, I did not have opinions on topics such as veiling. I knew the Middle East could be violent but I never considered why or what was happening. I never would have thought of *Pride and Prejudice* as being particularly revolutionary. Now I have a new perspective and way of seeing classic texts that I have read and reread. I would however caution readers to recognize and remember that Nafisi is writing about a historical period dating back thirty years and that she presents her own story, not the story of Islam or Iran.

If not for reading pleasure or curiosity, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* is a great educational tool. Aside from being helpful in contextualising what I have been learning in class, it is a well written, multi-layered, thought provoking read. *Reading Lolita* is easily my favourite book this academic year.

Reviews: Movie Reviews

The King's Speech and I by Amanda Moss

After all the Oscar nominations were granted to the 2010 film *The King's Speech*, I decided I could no longer wait to see what left audiences so impressed. The film depicts the struggle of King George VI with a speech impediment as he accepts his responsibilities as King of England after the passing of his father since his brother refuses to step up to the plate. As the title suggests, the film's climax is the war-time speech of the King during the beginning of the Second World War in which he must conquer his stammer and try to inspire courage in his people.

It is no wonder that Colin Firth received the Oscar for Best Actor for this performance. To see the usually charming and eloquent Firth choke on his words before he can emit a sound manages to squeeze out your sympathy completes the verisimilitude of his depiction of the King. Though Firth is flawless in this film, I believe the gem of *The King's Speech* is Geoffrey Rush who plays Lionel Logue, a speech therapist

whose unconventional methods and informal conduct has the King struggling to trust his new tutor. The comedic scenes between Rush and Firth lighten the serious mood of the King's frustrations, emphasizing the importance of encouragement and camaraderie when facing seemingly impossible obstacles. Rush delivers pointed remarks about the uselessness of political figures that cannot help but make you smile, while the scene in which he encourages Firth to spit out all the filthiest curse words he can think of is absolutely brilliant.

The pace of the film kept me interested, though the relationship between the King and Logue is probably one of the most entertaining dynamics. I found myself anticipating these scenes more than others. For those who are not interested in historical films, scenes about the duties of a member of the royal family, the dangers Hitler poses to England, and the changing of prime ministers may seem dry; however, for these individuals, the film is called "The KING's Speech," so you were fairly forewarned on the content. Beautiful shots of misty England streets and impeccable wardrobe choices added to my enjoyment of the film. By the end, I had fallen in love with the storyline and the relationship between Logue and King George VI. The film is a must-see for history buffs, language lovers, or even those who just find Colin Firth wonderfully dreamy.

