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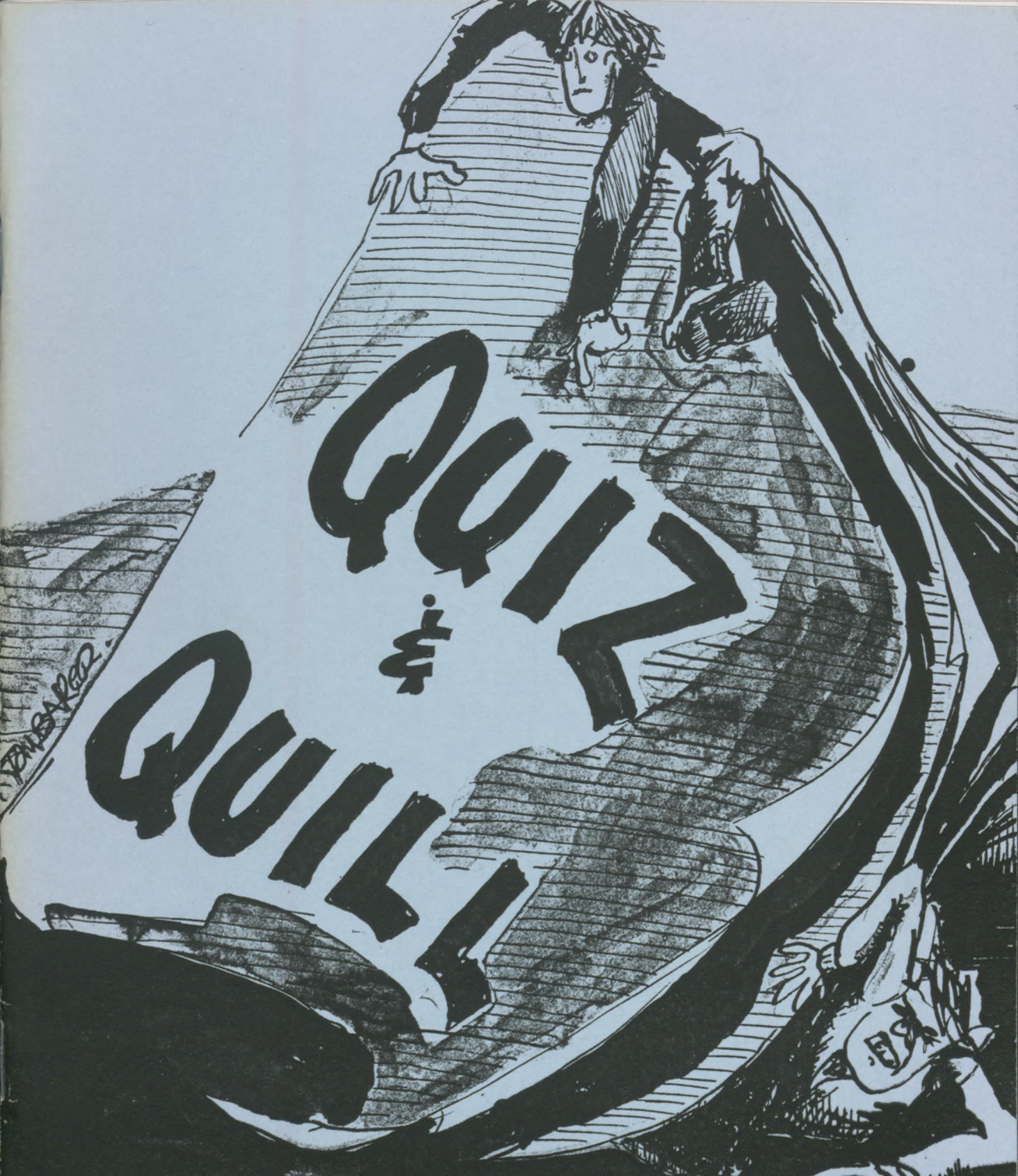


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EMBAKER

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QUIZ AND QUILL WINTER 1986

PUBLISHED BY OTTERBEIN COLLEGE
WESTERVILLE, OHIO

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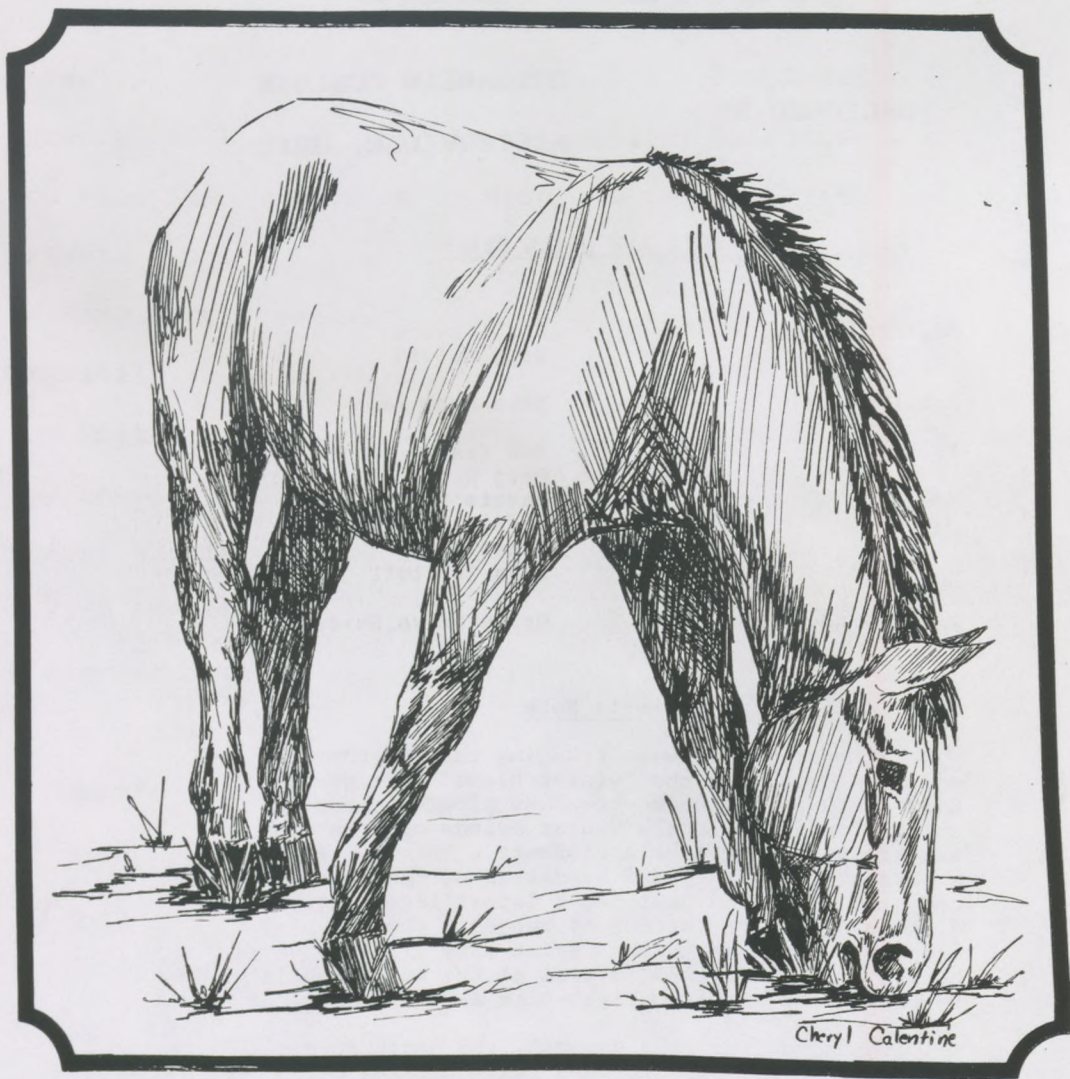
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Editor's Note

As most people were trudging through the snow and trying to beat the "winter blahs" this quarter, Quiz and Quill members were busy plowing through submissions. Obviously winter brings out the writer in many Otterbein students. There were essays on the beauty and headaches of the season, poems mourning and praising a latest love, artwork displaying a wide variety of subjects and talents, and much more. We couldn't print them all, but we're happy to announce that several of the works published in this issue are from first-time submitters.

Thank you for your support, and don't forget to mark your calendar for the next Quiz and Quill student poetry reading on February 20, at 7:30 p.m. in the Philomathean Room.



YOU KNOW YOU'RE GROWING UP WHEN . . .

As I get older, winter gets colder.

Not that the winter of 1986 has been especially colder than those before it (in fact, it's been a little warmer), but I seem more sensitive to the cold with every new year. Only as a college student do I appreciate hats, gloves, and boots.

This is a big change for me. As a child, I was like most other kids; winter was a time for rolling around in the snow, sledding, and snowball fights, usually with no hat on my head and my coat unzipped. I simply didn't feel cold back then; now, cold weather is a real pain. When I walk out the door and feel my first brisk gust of twenty-below with wind chill, I don't think about building a snowman any more. I'd prefer to stay indoors, drink coffee, and play Trivial Pursuit; however, Otterbein doesn't care about my preferences, so I get out a pair of thick gloves and put a hood up over my head. Then I venture out into Antarctica.

Waking up at sunrise to get to a 7:30 jogging class with the wind whistling across my sweatpants as I walk to the Rike Center probably would not have inspired songs like "Winter Wonderland"; battling the elements all day makes me glad to get inside and start working; and the loneliest experience imaginable is walking back from the late night study at two a.m. in such frigid temperature.

I remember how I used to laugh at my parents when they complained about yet another Ohio winter. Again, I didn't mind the weather; I eagerly awaited the list of school closings in the hope of hearing "South-Western City Schools." I attempted to repeat this scenario in college. My freshman year, I blew off studying for two nights in a row when the weather was especially bad in hope for a closing. Little did I know that this old reliable college hasn't cancelled classes since Kennedy was assassinated. Not that Otterbein should cancel classes; after all, snow is something people must learn to deal with. Since I know that, why do I dislike winter so much?

Maybe it shows I'm not a kid any more.

Bob Fritz



MY MANY LANGUAGES

Yes, I have only one tongue, one pair of lips, and one set of vocal cords, but I am a gifted tri-linguist. Although I am working to refine my French, the three languages that I speak well are all variations of my mother tongue--American English. Each of these languages presents itself at necessary times according to whom I am speaking to, or how intimidated I feel. I speak fluent "Authority-Figure Diction," I speak "Fitting-in," and I speak "Reserved-for-Women Only."

Authority-Figure Diction is reserved for conversation with professors, interviews with prospective employers, and dialogue with elders, or anyone else toward whom I feel a certain inferiority complex. This manner of speech is usually accompanied by a certain amount of perspiration, especially during a tête-à-tête in which a police officer or other law enforcement agent is the other party. Compound-complex sentences with assorted restrictive clauses and pretentious adjectives signal an oncoming Authority-Figure Diction mood. For example, I might say to a professor, "The denouement of the primary act manifests a certain air of incredulity, but the resolution, however, of the subsequent act owes a certain degree of its credibility to the blatancy of the verbal restriction of its anti-climax," or I might say to a police officer, "How presumptuous of me to assume the risks of such a haughty collaboration to be so minimal! I feel I have honored the penal code by admitting my ill-conceived intention." I am always glad to get out of such a conversation.

Fitting-in is my most common language; I use it on the basketball court, in the weight room, at dinner, and in the library. 'Fitting-in' refers to making myself a part of my peer group. When we are together, this language is common. Our conversation consists of common sentence fragments, "ain't," loosely placed relative pronouns, and even a profane statement or two:

"Went to the store. Saw your dog with Steve. He bought a loaf of bread. I ain't telling a
----- lie!"

Fitting-in comes easiest to me. I find it easier to blurt out words than to construct intelligent sentences, and best of all, no perspiration is necessary.

Reserved-for-Women-Only is named for its restricted function; this manner of speech is used only with women. Men are rarely present when I talk this way to females. Of my three languages, this one has been the most difficult to perfect because it is a combination of Authority-Figure Diction and Fitting-in. The most common atmosphere for this usage is in the library. I see a nice looking girl (and the library type are usually bright, too), and I saunter to her table. I strike up a conversation. My Authority-Figure Diction makes its way to my lips because I do not want to sound like an imbecile. My Fitting-in speech appears in order to counter-balance the Authority-Figure Diction so I do not seem to be trying to impress this young woman (though I probably am trying), but the usual result is a scramble of compound-complex sentences with "ain't" or something else, and I end up with a compound-complex profanity:

"I intended to make my presence known to you, and I could not help noticing your contentment in this solitary cubicle, so I ain't--did I say "ain't"? Damn! Nice to meet you."

Perspiration follows this directive, and so I retreat back to my table with my tail between my legs. This manner of speech, however complex it may be, does not ensure positive results, as one should well be able to see.

Authority-Figure Diction, Fitting-in, and Reserved-for-Women-Only are the three oral methods by which I communicate. Each serves its purposes, to whatever extent, and allows me a certain flexibility of self-presentation (or self-preservation, with the law). Maybe I should work on my French.

Ted Paxton

EX NIHILO

In the beginning
All was void.
All was nothing.
Zippo.
Zilch.
Blankola.

Words from everywhere
Spoken in nothing
Form shape.
Photons cling to sound waves.

There is light!

Greg Grant

THE WRITER

She wrote a smut book like frustrated housewives buy;
It was over 500 pages long, full of incest
And forbidden romance.
The truth is revealed only after the hero and heroine
Suffer years of needless agony.

She mentioned it casually in Senior English
One afternoon.
I about had a cow.
She was the quiet type who
Sat in class,
Got good grades,
And generally went unnoticed by the
"beautiful people" who were too busy
being beautiful to care.
I never would have guessed she had
500 pages in her.

My goodness, I thought, if she can do that,
certainly I can do something important,
maybe write a novel or play, and say
meaningful things.

It was a hot August afternoon as I
Stood in line at K-Mart to buy a birthday card.
She came up behind me and said,
"Hi, rememeber me?"
I couldn't,
She had to tell me who she was.

A look in her eyes told me she was tired.
A look down told me she was pregnant.
She tried to sound like all was well
but her voice had the edge of someone who knows
she's putting up a front and doesn't like it.

She asked me how I was and what I was doing
so I told her, but I paid the cashier
and made an excuse to leave
before I had to ask about her.
I didn't want to know how
Her dreams died.
And, as she waddled away,
she took some of my hopes with her.

Greg Grant

FOR THE LOVE OF JOURNALISM

Journalism -- some say you just have to have it in your blood. When I try to put my finger on just what it is that I love about the process of telling people what's news, I'm stumped.

I know it's not the praise that makes journalism so special to me, because being a journalist is a thankless job. You can spend hours on the phone, perspire over the "perfect" composition, and literally run yourself ragged trying to meet your deadline -- only to have your editor say, "I've decided this isn't newsworthy right now. Maybe we'll use your story next week." When people read a newspaper article, seldom do they consider how a reporter has slaved over accuracy, organization, and style. People just want to know what's going on in the world and couldn't care less that you've racked your brain to come up with an especially well-flowing sentence. The only time you will receive feedback on what you've written is when you've fouled up. While stingy with their compliments, your readership will without hesitation jump down your throat about a misspelled word. And, if they are perturbed enough, your faithful subscribers will slap a lawsuit on you quicker than you can turn off your typewriter.

I know it's not dealing with the public that endears the journalism profession to me. Journalists are achingly dependent upon the public for their livelihood, and the public knows this. Therefore, it is an unwritten law that journalists

must sacrifice to accommodate their sources. Journalists will drive for miles, break appointments, and even drag themselves out of their sickbeds just on the strength of a rumor that an interviewee might have some important information. Once contact is made, it is not uncommon for the interviewee to remember he has a mandatory meeting to attend in 15 minutes. Should the interviewee have the time to spare, he usually doesn't have the facts: he's not sure, he forgets, or he never knew to begin with. Should the interviewee have the facts, you must play Twenty Questions with him to obtain even the most meager detail.

I know it's not the glamour that has given me my affinity for journalism. I would like to meet the person who labeled journalism a "glamorous profession" and shake some sense into him. Journalism is eye strain, erratic hours, and missed meals. It's almost lopping your finger off with the Exacto knife, getting rubber cement in your hair, and having printer's ink permanently imbedded in your clothing. I have also discovered that a rather large percentage of the population has a very low opinion of journalists. The stereotypic journalist is ruthless, aggressive, back-stabbing, and without scruples. I will never forget the time I gleefully gushed to my parents that I was studying to become a journalist. They furrowed their brows and shook their heads sadly, as if I had just announced I was dedicating my life to organized crime.

I don't know the reason why I love journalism. I guess I just have it in my blood.

Missy Marsh

THE WINTER WARRIOR

The advancing front of arctic air moves into position, determined to make a stand. It dulls my senses, numbs my flesh, challenges this winter warrior to a skirmish with her conscience. The nagging pull of ingrained duty arouses some untapped resource, wraps me in protective covering, and thrusts me into the frostiness that waits beyond my door. I go, not to fulfill another's expectations, but to satisfy an obligation to myself. My dependable four-wheeled charger stands glistening in the morning sun, patterned in white crystals of intricate design that bring to mind my mother's antique lace. Reluctant to stir from its designated post, it sputters and spits--as disinclined as I to engage in an encounter with the elements. At last, the stuttering sounds become a rhythmic hum, and I attack the icy formations, which--left as they are--will surely obscure my view of any rear-end assault or impending broadside. No longer attached to the mental images of Mother and her threadwork, I apply the merciless blade of my plastic scraper to the glacial etchings, making latticework tracings over the surface; and then I use the rubber edge to clear away the icy debris. So, with a reasonably unrestricted view, my trustworthy companion and I shift into action. By the time we reach the main road, the frigid fog that accompanies me like an extra passenger is lifting in concert with a rise in the interior temperature--a meteoric ascent from quick-freeze to defrost. As we jockey for our place in formation, we carefully avoid engaging our forward defense with someone else's rear guard. Potholes appear at random, forming a course of obstacles that would test the most agile of infantrymen. Despite the distractions, we cover the distance without causing mayhem or encountering mishap. And mile by mile, we thaw to our purpose; and by journey's end, we have only just begun.

Marilyn Brown



A KIND OF ARTIST

He sat
Deep in concentration
As the whole world bustled about him

He studied
With an eyebrow lifted in intense meditation
The diamond ring he held in his fingers

He worked
Deftly using his tools
To refine the precious stone

He contemplated
Every line of his face focused in absorption
On the sparkling gem before him

I stared
Enchanted with the man
Whose own fascination was his work

He felt my gaze
And looked up and smiled at me
The diamond reflected in his eyes.

Mara Matteson

TITLE TRACK

Poetry should be you
Flattened out on a page

Subtracting one of your dimensions
May prove painful, but how beautiful

You would look! Soft arms thin as paper
Locks of hair falling straight up

And down at the review: "ah yes a truly wonderful
piece suitable for, say

Paper airplanes" Thank God.
For a moment i thought i might be jealous

Jonathan A. Veley

A WOMAN'S PLACE

Society: Hey you. Woman. Get in your place.

Woman: But I'm standing in my place.

Society: No, not there. Over there.
Stand over there.

Throughout history, society has told woman where to stand, and for too many years she's listened. Assigned her social role based on gender rather than talent, woman has baked society's bread, cleaned its children's bottoms, mended its family hurts, adhered to its patterns, ignored her own talents and inclinations. While Randall Jarrell, in "Next Day"; Kate Chopin, in "The Story of an Hour"; Virginia Woolf, in To the Lighthouse; and Tillie Olsen, in "I Stand Here Ironing," explore women's needs, and the truths and consequences of female sex roles, Adrienne Rich's poem "Diving Into the Wreck" more broadly examines human needs. Readers discover the needs are the same. But while the diver freely explores the sea of humanity for a sense of her own identity, many of the females in the other works flounder on dry land, desperately searching for a sense of themselves. Some fear looking deep inside for meaning and purpose. All the works pit woman against tradition; all portray woman's essential need for personal development.

Both Jarrell and Chopin depict their female protagonists as traditionalists, as pawns in the game of sex-typed gender roles. In "Next Day" Jarrell paints a verbal portrait of an aging woman caught in the trap of her female existence. Having spent her youth wrapped in the roles of good wife and virtuous mother, the shopper is now middle-aged and groping for a sense of truth and purpose. She's bought the societal dream for women: "husband, house, and children" (Jarrell 329-330); and now the aging woman is bewildered by the staleness of her days, surprised at being a stagnant soul pushing a shopping cart. While Jarrell presents the picture of a woman struggling for self-identity in a blind world, where even the handsome young grocery boy doesn't "see" her, his message is one of self-realization. Having thus far been defined by her role, the shopper is looking deep, like Rich's diver, and is dismayed at the truths she discovers: "What I've become / Troubles me even if I

shut my eyes" (Jarrell, ll. 11-12). The grocery boy, the husband, the maid--none is responsible for the woman's life or happiness. She is adrift in the sea of life alone, responsible for her own dreams and visions.

The shopper's strength lies in her fears. Fears of growing old, of unvarying days, of death, push her toward introspection and toward a new definition of self. Having been confined to her wife/mother role, the shopper has lived life void of reflection, has overlooked instead of delved into matters of individual female self. Now she is balancing on a precipice. Duped by male-soaked visions of successful female, "good enough to eat" (Jarrell, l. 21), yet being now "plain, lined" (l. 46), and no longer the belle of the world's ball, she is spiritually bereft. The shopper's female mind is confronting truths. Like the diver, she searches, feels, sees, has "dived into the wreck."

Jarrell is respectful of the shopper's character, is sympathetic to her plight. Because a woman must first recognize the social and biological lie: HUMANS WITH WOMBES MUST SPEND THEIR LIVES WANDERING THROUGH AISLES DECKED WITH DETERGENTS AND DIAPERS before coming to terms with her individual desires, Jarrell leaves readers with a sense of discovery and hope. Thwarted by her youthful dreams, the shopper is not a loser. She thumbs her nose in life's mocking face by coming to terms with its truths--"no one is exceptional" (Jarrell, l. 57), and is actually less confused than she thinks. Out of her ability to confront can come the strength to make new choices, to restructure her life based on inner truths.

Like the middle-aged shopper, Mrs. Mallard in Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" has the ability to reflect, and like the shopper she has been molded and formed by social conformity. Fulfilling societal expectations for females in the 1800's, Mrs. Mallard stays put in a marriage that prohibits self-exploration and self-assertion, even though self-assertion is "the strongest impulse of her being" (Chopin 12). Having skirted the issue of self-definition, Mrs. Mallard is as spiritually bereft as the shopper. She is a woman living in the prison of a relationship, a woman without a voice, numbed by life; it's no wonder she becomes "afflicted with a heart trouble" (11). But while the shopper finally looks life in the face, fills her head and shopping cart with its truths, Mrs. Mallard's new-found strength lasts only an hour--she caves in at the sight of her enemy.

Mrs. Mallard reacts instantly to the news of her husband's death, weeping "with sudden, wild abandonment" (Chopin 11), and

readers sense more joy than grief. "Free! Body and soul free!" (12), but it is fate, not Mrs. Mallard breaking down the walls of her prison. She becomes "a goddess of Victory" (13), but her freedom, being imposed rather than chosen, is only tentative. If Mrs. Mallard could have swum against the tides of society, if she could have contemplated the matter of "me" versus "us" in her marital relationship, she'd have been spared dying "of joy that kills" (13).

Societal rules of order fall apart much sooner for the mother in Tillie Olsen's "I Stand Here Ironing." She slays her societal dragons early. While the institution of marriage retards self-growth for the shopper and Mrs. Mallard, marriage actually facilitates growth for the mother in Olsen's story. Emily's father leaves, "he could no longer endure" (1002), and so any fairy tales the mother may have been fostering concerning love and marriage lie shattered, like Humpty Dumpty's egg. More rules of order fall when the mother tries depending on societal institutions. Each time she turns outside herself for help, the mother learns lessons about propriety. The nursery school, "only parking places for children" (1002); the convalescent home, where individual children become only part of a sterile herd; the school system, where compassion is shown only for the "glib or quick" (1004), all point the mother away from dependence on social systems, toward dependence on self. She's brought quickly to her knees, realizing like the shopper that "no one is exceptional" (Jarrell, 1. 57), and that life ain't-gonna-be-no-picnic.

So the mother plods solidly forward, basing her choices now on logic rather than on false visions. Realizing that love can't put meat and peas on the table, she leaves Emily, her "miracle," downstairs with a woman "to whom she was no miracle at all" (Olsen 1002). As in the story of Mrs. Mallard, fate is the springboard for the mother's reevaluation of personal priorities. But it isn't fate working hard to provide a home for Emily; it is the mother. Realizing that being a mother often means NOT having all the answers ("You think because I am her mother I have a key?" [1001]), that she has no right to control Emily's direction in life, the mother refuses the school's request for help in understanding her complex daughter. And it is clear Emily has inherited some of her mother's strengths. While her mother respectfully allows Emily "to set her seal" (1005), Emily stretches, grows, weighs her own strengths and weaknesses, and sublimates her desires for attention by becoming a comic on stage.

The fluidity of Woolf's entire novel To The Lighthouse is based on the complexity of life and human relationships, including male and female sex roles. Mrs. Ramsay, like the shopper, has bought and been victimized by dreams of "husband, house and children" (Jarrell, 11. 15-16). Like Mrs. Mallard, the wife in Woolf's novel lacks the

strengths to break away from tradition. Unable to "take the dive," unable to peruse the waters of self, Mrs. Ramsay is content to sit on the safe shores of tradition. So caught in her role of wife and mother, Mrs. Ramsay "disliked anything that reminded her that she had been sitting and thinking" (Woolf 104). Horrified at the idea of SELF-definition, she quickly diverts her attention back to matters of safety. Staying inside her role, she continues to talk, to feel, to care, always for others, refusing to center on her own needs.

But Woolf sprinkles her novel with clues of Mrs. Ramsay's true feelings of oppression. Employing a stream of consciousness writing style, Woolf threads her way in and out of Mrs. Ramsay's mind, showing readers that although the virtuous wife/mother outwardly feigns happiness, she has some of the same dragons to slay as Mrs. Mallard. While portrayed as almost magically sensitive to her husband's needs, acting as his bulwark and his link to the real world of family, there are times Mrs. Ramsay worries neither long nor hard over her husband's existence. Walking arm in arm on the lawn with Mr. Ramsay, her mind's eye travels quickly from worry over his inability to grasp the beauty of a flower, to holes in the ground near her primroses. With appropriate trapped-animal imagery, Woolf metaphorically relates visions of Mrs. Ramsay's social role, "Without shooting at rabbits, how was one to keep them down?" (108). If Mrs. Ramsay had only dipped her nose a little deeper down the hole, she might have been surprised to see her own reflection. Continuing with the imagery, Woolf has Mrs. Ramsay focus for a moment on Prue's budding sexuality. Mixed with her wonder and pride are claustrophobic fears, "She was just beginning, just moving, just descending" (164). Down the rabbit hole of sex-typed gender roles? Does she actually want Prue's life to mirror her own? It seems Mrs. Ramsay, like the mother in Olsen's story, is unable to share her inner history with her daughter; but, unlike the mother's, the daughter's quietness results more from self-knowledge than from deliberateness.

Mrs. Ramsay is unlike the mother in Olsen's story in other ways. While Olsen's character has been educated in the school of hard knocks, and develops clear-sighted vision of her world, Mrs. Ramsay's visions are shaped around a core of denial. While she often feels drained by her center-of-the-family-universe role, she quickly flicks the gnats of discontent out of her mind. At dinner she looks around the table and sees not people, but responsibilities. She can hardly bear the thought of her role, being the center of so many people's lives, but swats such thoughts from her mind and JUST CONTINUES TO LADLE THE SOUP. Earlier, she has self-focused for an instant, "What have I done with my life?" (Woolf 125), but caps that introspective thought immediately by focusing on dinner table seatings--"William, sit by me" (125).

While sharing Mrs. Mallard's inability to confront, Mrs. Ramsay shares with all the females in the stories a need for self-confirmation. In Rich's poem, that is the reason for the dive. In Jarrell's poem, that is the basis for the shopper's frustrations. Lily Briscoe's strengths to defy tradition stem from her need for self-validation, while the sudden snatching away of the opportunity for personal growth is what causes the death of Mrs. Mallard. Mrs. Ramsay's sense of personal soundness has been gained through her manipulating powers. Even though "there was scarcely a shell of herself left for her to know herself by; all was so lavished and spent" (Woolf 60), Mrs. Ramsay has gained what little sense of self she has by match-making (Lily and Mrs. Bankes, Paul and Minta), by telling others where to sit at dinner, and by quietly insisting Mr. Ramsay lean on her for support. Having people depend on her not only gives Mrs. Ramsay a reason for existing, but also helps etherize the pain of being "a wedge-shaped core of darkness" (Woolf 95). Even though inner peace rears its head only when she is alone, Mrs. Ramsay seldom takes the opportunity for solitude. While sitting alone with her knitting and her own beautiful thoughts, she catches sight of Mr. Ramsay walking near the hedge. Instinctively sensing his need, and knowing he would not interrupt her, Mrs. Ramsay "of her own free will" (Woolf 100), springs up out of her chair and goes to him. Rather than follow any dreams of her own, become acquainted with her own inner drummer, Mrs. Ramsay knits, laughs, and supports others, becomes engulfed by the world around her. Caught in the trap of ROLE, she continues to give, give, give. Each time she goes to Mr. Ramsay, filling his empty brass beaker (Woolf 58-60) of self, she goes deeper down the rabbit hole, never learning, like Rich's diver, "I have to learn alone" (435-437).

But Lily Briscoe learns. Being both drawn and repelled by Mrs. Ramsay's character, Lily is determined not to be caught scrambling her way up and out of any domestic, sex-typed rabbit hole. While Mrs. Ramsay is having children and talking of peeled vegetable skins, Lily works on her art. Having arrived at a clear sense of direction--"she need not marry . . . undergo that degradation . . . that dilution" (Woolf 154)--Lily's value system is shaped around her love for her work, much like those of the men in the novel. Tansley has his dissertation, Bankes his science, Ramsay his philosophy, Carmichael his books, and Lily has her art. Determined not to have her artistic self stifled or reduced in strength by love and marriage, Lily fights her urge to assist Paul in his search for Minta's brooch, focusing her thoughts instead on her canvas, on moving the tree to the middle (154).

Lily's character is the opposite of Mrs. Ramsay's. Always trying to gain focus, always watching, feeling, thinking, questioning, Lily is NOT content to leave the world to "this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence" (Woolf 159). Lily has an unusually strong sense of self. Walking through life to the beat of her own inner music, she remains unmarried in spite of the world's view of single females. She seeks her vision, paints on her canvas, in spite of knowing it might be destroyed or relegated to someone's basement. She paints because her art is what defines her as a woman. Unlike Mrs. Ramsay and Mrs. Mallard, who have built their lives around others, Lily centers her life around her own dreams and visions. The novel ends with Lily, after years of struggle, completing her painting. She has drawn the line not to the right or left, but, as is appropriate for the novel's message to women, down the CENTER--"I have had my vision" (Woolf 310).

Diving into their inner selves took more strength and courage than some of the female characters could muster; tradition carried too heavy a weight. Hope lies, though, in realizing that none were without some degree of personal vision. Olsen's mother "saw," the shopper's sights were clearing, Mrs. Mallard's thoughts penetrated deep (if only for an hour), while even Mrs. Ramsay "peeked" intermittently. At least, readers witness beginnings, no matter how weak.

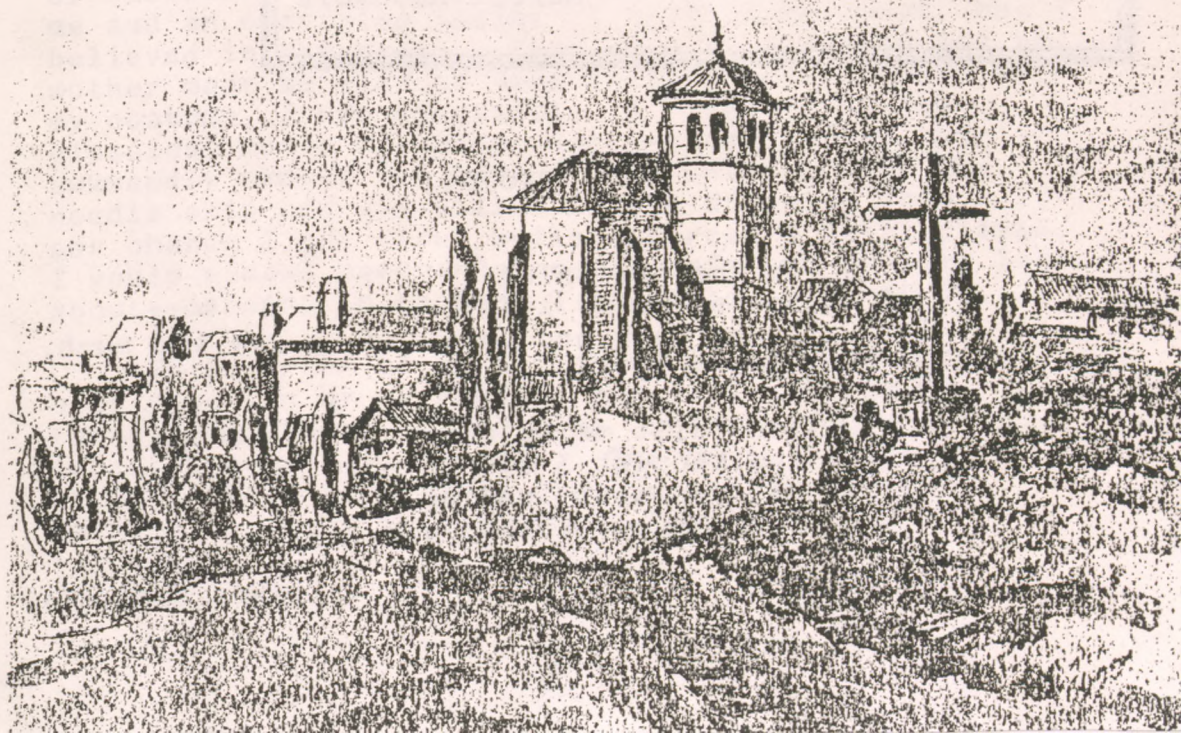
Society: Hey you. Woman! Get in line
with the rest.

Woman: I won't. There's room in that line
for only a body, not a vision. I
won't be a body without a vision.

Candace Hartzler

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I CAN

I can.
I can convince myself
Your love is only words, and
Your tears, just water.
I will tell myself
Our time together
Is temporary.
Just hours
And minutes.
I might believe
Our shooting stars were just airplanes.
But I won't yet
Forget.

Marcie Hochwalt

EXODUS

In the beginning
You saved my life.
I was weak and depended on you too much,
Didn't I?

You built me up and made me strong
And thought I didn't need you.
So, you went looking
For someone vulnerable.

Linda Hardesty

MAGIC

As I sat watching the Alvin Ailey troupe sweat and strain against gravity, I marveled at their skill in an intellectual way; but although I could appreciate with my mind, my heart remained impassive. Watching the strength and muscle, I began to long for froth and pirouettes, for graceful leaps and happy endings.

Perhaps I am lazy. As much as I tell myself not to be narrow-minded, I am always disappointed with modern dance. I don't want to search for a message of alien colonies trying to reproduce. I merely want to be dazzled.

Throughout my childhood I dreamed of being a prima ballerina. When a nearby dance studio went out of business, my grandfather salvaged some tutus for me and an obsession began. I never took dance, but I believed in the magic. Even when it was cold and my mother made me wear an undershirt and knee socks with my costume, I was beautiful. I revelled in the classical music my mother was partial to and twirled awkwardly around the living room until I made the needle skip and was exiled to the dressing room. If per chance I got tired while the record still played, I would sprawl backwards on the sofa and wave my legs about--dancing in repose, I liked to think of it.

This period of my childhood is still remembered with chuckles by my family; and as I outgrew my tutus, I switched to the more mundane occupation of teaching school in my play. The magic lingers, though. Each time I see classic ballet my heart soars and I feel the vicarious thrill of the applause.

But ballerinas never sweat. They don't strain or work. They are all softness and grace. This childish attitude remains in me, this need for glamour in the dance I see. My mind realizes that for weeks before the curtain rises my ballerinas sweat just as much as Alvin Ailey's troupe, but . . . the classic ballerina makes it look so effortless. Last night I saw the effort, saw the work and was disappointed. My childhood illusions were torn away. The magic wasn't there--only skill--rough and glaring.

I went back to my room last night and put on my tape of Tchaikovsky's "Romeo and Juliet" and closed my eyes. To me this was dance. The haunting sweetness filled me and I imagined myself, resplendant in spangled net, swirling.

To me Alvin Ailey's troupe was like myself as a child lying on the sofa waving my legs in the air--no magic.

Meg Williamson

POEM OF WAX

i have made a home
in your soul
with my words

i have yet to live there.

Jonathan A. Veley

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