

PULSE

2024

# PULSE



**The Literary Magazine of  
Lamar University**



**Department of English And  
Modern Languages**

# Acknowledgments

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## Awards

Eleanor Poetry Award:

*Grandfather's Boat Wake*  
Skyler Williams

Barnes Poetry Award:

*Unachievable*  
Kaleigh Galindo

De Schweinitz Poetry Award:

*Shoreline Devotional*  
Casey Ford

Rowe Poetry Award:

*Sanctuary*  
Casey Ford

Undergraduate Pulse Fiction Award:

*The Lonely People*  
Heather Polanco

Graduate Pulse Fiction Award:

*Go Your Own Way*  
Casey Ford

Rowe Analytical Essay Award:

*Pronouns in Prufrock*  
Casey Meyers

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## Kevin Clay

### That Thing Dad Always Said

Llano Estacado lay three miles ahead,  
rust colored plateaus  
meeting the Earth like bricks against an old wrinkled tarp.  
I notice the slight rise on the bridge of your nose and think  
of the way that it was a feature shared by our Dad,  
and again of the Stalked Plain, where we had spent childhood.  
my lips curve and catch tears;  
I taste their salt  
and wipe them into my sleeve,  
laughing, faced pressed against forearm.  
I remember what Dad always said to cheer us up:  
"The world will keep spinning!  
She's just a big old dancing woman -  
doesn't know that she should have got tired a long time ago."  
And then we are both laughing,  
our laughter an echo of our father  
who would traveled with us  
and spoke wisdoms,  
his beard spindly and hair wild as the passing yucca plants.  
His last luggage tag in the form of a plaque  
pressed on a gilded urn;  
"Beloved father, brother, husband, and friend".



## Viana Hammon

### Pretty Things

Remember that day when we were thirty,  
but acted about fifteen after you begged me  
to strip down butt naked and jump in the lake  
about a quarter of a mile back behind your house,  
and how you told me to leave my slippers  
on the front porch, because you said  
we wouldn't be gone but a couple minutes  
and that they'd get muddy,  
and pretty things don't deserve to get muddy.

Well, we went down to the lake,  
and yes, I did strip down  
and your eyes popped because you didn't know  
cancer ate my tits off  
and I didn't get them replaced either.  
And you just left me there,  
to button up my own blouse  
while waiting for my sister  
to come pick me up and ask  
about my filthy feet.



## Rehan Quaishi

### Faithfulness

Pale Japanese men  
cower in canoes,  
tossed about by  
massive waves that  
reach out with claws of froth  
to pull them into the depths.

The men bow in awe,  
bald heads like  
eggs in a carton

Their backs are turned toward  
Mount Fuji, which they once  
worshipped. It resembles  
a wave in the distance,  
with its blue slopes and  
powdered top.



## John Rutherford

### Exanguination

Ink flows like blood from my wrist,  
I dip my pen in my vein and draw it across the page,  
Words landing where they may.

They cool on paper cut and wrinkled,  
Bringing life to pulped wood and acid,  
Each word is a drop of life-blood drained away  
It gets harder every year, trying to touch  
From a distance that gapes between  
Such different minds.

How much more can I give?  
How long until I sigh in defeat?  
That resignation passing from my lips  
Spells a death that no coroner can pronounce.



## Skyler Williams

### Grandfather's Boat (Wake of Colleen)

Upon ignition, the bellow of her Buick 8  
would scatter egrets and redfish  
like soap dropped in a greasy skillet.  
An ingenious amalgam of junk-yard scraps,  
spare parts from the Gulfway machine shop-  
she wasn't pretty but, damn! Could she sing!  
Her wooden hull's raucous vibrato  
shattered the Sabine's brackish mirror,  
garnering spiteful stares from fisherman ready to  
blame the day's small catch on *Colleen*.



## Kaleigh Galindo

### Unachievable

Lush long locks  
Acrylic securing synthetic strands  
Too frizzy, too flat, too dull  
Infuse them with, keratin for straightness,  
argan oil for length and shine  
  
Primed, poreless skin  
A daily regimen of salicylic acid exfoliation,  
A burning sensation from citrus acetone,  
Vitamin A to reduce the craters  
Top off with high-performance hydrators to protect and sooth  
  
Aphrodite claims you're created in a perfect image  
She knows nothing about nail bitten fingers  
Skin chaffing, blistering outbreaks  
A seventy inch waist line, a four inch nose  
She will never suffer from Rosacea or a cleft palate  
  
Plaster on the foundations and concealers  
Paint my cheeks with beet juice,  
Pull the lashes from the rim  
Suck out the cellulite  
Swallow the laxatives  
Am I beautiful now?





## Jason Hidahl

### Radio

"Turn off the radio. I've had enough,"  
He said, quite agitated. "If it's not  
An advertisement selling lousy stuff  
For which I have no use or pleasant thought  
Or any interest, then it's a load  
Of mass-appealing lame-stream pop manure!"  
And at the moment from the speakers flowed  
The number by the superstar du jour,  
About the boy and girl who met one night  
Together in a sweaty club and found  
A love so true they danced and did ignite  
Their jeans together as they bumped and ground.  
"Enough!" he shouted at her, but instead  
She turned it up. She smiled and bopped her head.



## Rehan Quaishi

### Sadism

Ah, freshly cut grass  
everywhere. What a sweet  
scent, their desperate screams.



## Whytnee Shattuck

### I dare you

I dare you to dare me for daring's sake.  
Have me push through the fog and be lucid.  
Slip past each blunder and every mistake.  
Cause my life to shift into translucence.

Love me until I can barely take breaths.  
Explain kindness and how it's accepted.  
Prove you are the one who knows me the best.  
Make all parts of my life be affected.

Write memories on paper then burn them to ash.  
Say what is in the past cannot hurt me.  
Tell pain comes in instances but cease a flash.  
Show that adoration can run freely.

Help me learn that I'll never live without you.  
Create a life that's worth remembering.  
Convince me that a real love can be true.  
Catch me when I start surrendering.



## Skyler Williams

### Proposal on the Pier: A Terse Verse

He smiled.  
She frowned.  
He pushed.  
She drowned



# Kevin Clay

## Summer Home

You ever built a frame for something and then realized what you went in for had become something else? A building with the windows on the outside, now all the windows are ten feet tall and stained glass, and the summer house you planned for the last five to ten years looks like a temple to the gods that rule your misdirection? Vaulted ceilings that amount to you never being able to reach that one spot that always seems to have a spider web in it, and doors that are impossible to close gently?

The summer home of Elisa Bridges, "bold and inventive", most magazines called it. The sharp geometric edges were mirrors of her personality and the safest place to be within it all was the bathroom, believe it or not. That was the only place that Elisa herself was able to think anymore. Every object in it was round. Nothing like Elisa, Elisa's Summer home, or the world around her.

Miss Bridges, the new design wonder of West Macon, had built her empire on jagged corners and clean lines. And yet the longer she stayed in her Summer home, the longer she spent in the bathroom. Of all places. The roundness of it all. The bathtub so welcoming. Miss Bridges didn't realize that she would never be clean, no matter how long of a time she spent in the sanctuary that was the Summer house bathroom.

Conveniently enough for Design-pro Elisa, who was billed as the next greatest thing in the entire industry she chose to crawl around in, within the trash piles painted solid gold, Miss Bridges' bathroom was looked over by even the loftiest publications. Bathrooms just didn't work well on a cover of a magazine called Fine Living, or SHARP. They wanted living rooms, living-dead rooms, where everything white was never to be touched, or sat on, or lived near. No dust. Contrasting colors. But it all had to be just right. It had to lie and make you feel at home. But no one wanted to be in this room. No one wanted to be in the center-fold feature master bed-room with it's fine Egyptian Linen bed sheets where you could see the ghost in the corner.

To a camera lens, to a fine print magazine, that's all that was needed. That new clean fresh look. Not a sense of welcome. And pound pound pound, they would come and pound at the front door to Miss Bridges' new castle and tell her "We'd like to take pictures of your house for our magazine. It's a prestigious design magazine printed monthly on the blood money of those who will never set foot in a house like yours." Maybe not exactly like that.. But, you know how it is. One big Telephone-Game. Things change up in the process.

And when Elisa Bridges was found in her bathtub, tired as can be, so tired she might want to take a nap for a long long while, they took pictures for another reason. Expose' photos with the central idea of causing a stir. "Who Was the Troubled Elisa Bridges?" And, well, "What were the signs that she was troubled in the first place?"

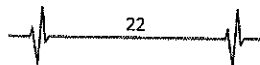
"She was just always in the bathroom. She designed this fine house, and well, she didn't seem to like any room besides the bathroom. So that's where she almost always was." Mostly that from those who knew her. As they saw her from over the hedges

being trimmed with dulling shears.

Quotes and comments popped up everywhere. As the years went on and dust crept up next to the once shining Summer home of Miss Bridges', her prize work, Elisa Bridges' fine fine Summer home appeared on publications such as PARANORMAL and Haunted Homes.

The only place anyone ever wanted to be was the bathroom.

The round-edge sanctuary with no corners to find ghosts in.



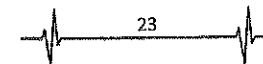
## Steven Gonzales

### Flowers for Delilah

Sunlight coasted along blades of grass that wafted about one another as gusts of wind tore through the country side on this particularly bright Tuesday morning. Glowing yellow tulips rustled against grey planks falling from what use to be a fence that surrounded a small one story navy blue house lined with a peeling white boarder. Two disregarded flower gardens sat opposite the stairs leading into the little disgruntled house, and on those steps sat a large hulk of a man, with his arms on his knees, a crumpled envelope in hand, and a blank look upon his square tanned face. He brushed his thick dark hair out of his eyes, his fingers brushing away a few stray tears and continued to stare past the gate and the tulips. The tears clung to the tips of the man's dirty fingers and rolled down creating small veins along the dry dirt that covered his skin.

A large truck, emboldened with bright yellows, reds, and greens bordered by a base white on the sides, rolled along far down the dirt road that led to his little house. The man stood and stuffed the envelope in his front shirt pocket. The truck came to a stop at the front gate, waiting for the owner to meet him. The driver stuck his head out of the window when the truck got closer to the house's owner and asked, "You just want me to pull em over to the front near those flowerbeds?"

"Actually, back it up to the right side of the house over there. I want them in the



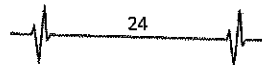
back," the hulking man answered.

The driver did as the man asked and pulled the truck around to the side of the house. He stopped backing up near the edge of a drop-off, the top of a hill he assumed. He parked and walked around to the back of the truck ready to unlatch the lock and take out his cargo. As he neared the back of his truck, he stood and his eyes widened at the sight of the yard behind the large man's home. He realized that the house did sit at the top of a hill, and down that hill, a vast expanse of a valley loomed in its shadow. Holes covered the valley, piles of dirt, and an assortment of thousands of flowers surrounding one central area: Azaleas, Roses, Tulips, Chrysanthemums, Carnations, Lilies, Orchids, Poinsettias, and dozens of others of all various colors. The field stretched over at least two-hundred yards and neared about half that number in width. As many flowers as there were, there was still a large amount of space that lacked any color other than brown where holes had been dug up for new sets of flowers and other parts of the ground tilled for new seeds.

"Well, now I know what the large order was for. I had thought I was goin' to end up at a florist's shop Mister, uh..." the driver fumbled with his clipboard searching for the man's name before he was cut off.

"Not quite, and you can just call me James," the large man stated in a deep calming voice, pat the driver on the shoulder and unlatched the back of the truck.

The two men began unloading the crates of seeds and flowers and stacking them in separate piles near the edge of the massive garden. Neither of them spoke. It was a calm moment, the wind began to shift again and the scent of the nearby ocean drifted



through the air and left itself in the two men's nostrils. It took the entire morning and most of the afternoon for the two of them to plant and arrange the flowers in their proper places. When they completed their task, a set of dark clouds had concealed the sun, and lightning had begun dancing around in the sky.

Finally the worker stood at the end of a patch of chrysanthemums and asked, "So, what's the story behind all these flowers?"

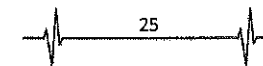
"It was for my wife," James said softly after a long pause, "This was her final wish. To be buried out here in this valley surrounded by a garden of infinite flowers," James lifted an arm slowly after having stood back from placing a set of flowers in a fresh hole, and began to point to places around the edges of the garden, "and there, along the outer rings, I've tilled the land where I stopped planting and arranged for a crop-dusting plane to come through and drop more seeds for me."

"This is amazing."

"Would you like to meet her?" James asked cheerfully.

After a moment of silence the driver spoke again, "Yeah, sure," he muttered staring at the grand allotment.

The men walked along the singular path that led from the back porch and traced through the multitude of colorful flowers. The sun broke through cracks in the clouds in the afternoon sky and gleamed off of every petal of the man-made garden. Organisms from every corner of the Earth lay here in the pool of leaves and petals by the seacoast in the middle of nowhere in a small crater of their enormous planet. It was such an unfathomable feat of dedication that the delivery man didn't want to blink, lest everything



before his eyes disappear.

The two men stopped at the middle in front of a large triangular stone perched at an angle on the ground so that one could read clearly, "HERE LIES DELILAH CLARK, BELOVED WIFE," scrawled across the slab's face.

The driver looked behind the stone, noticing something very strange. He saw another tomb stone that stood behind Delilah's, and an open grave with an empty casket lying at the bottom. Before the flower deliverer could say a word, he looked over to see a glare of metal flash in front of James. He was pointing a gun at the delivery man.

"Wha...what's goin' on man?!"

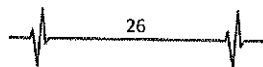
"Don't freak out, I don't plan on killing you, friend. But it would be nice if you would walk around to the other side of the grave. Stand a few feet in front of it, would you?"

The delivery man complied fearfully and staggered over to the end of the grave. He turned around waiting for the man to give him another order, only to see him directly behind him at the edge of the hole, thoughtfully staring down into it.

"Please don't kill me!"

"Like I said, I don't plan on it. However, I will, if you don't kill me, but that is the point after all."

"Wha..." he was cut off as a gun smacked him in the chest. A .45 Colt revolver landed in his hands. James had taken the gun from his inner pocket and tossed it at the man. It was a nice gun.



James walked over, still pointing his own gun at the delivery man and stuffed the envelope that he had put into his pocket earlier into his free hand.

"Now, here, one of us will die and I hope that it will be me. But to give you incentive, I'll hold your life in my hands as well. I know you're confused, but you must understand my friend, I have lived so long without my love. Nearly a decade of planning and self-delegation has brought me to this decision. I want to die, and this is how I want to die."

"Please, no, don't...don't make me do this--"

"I do apologize, but you must," he raised his gun higher, pointing it at the man's face. "One..."

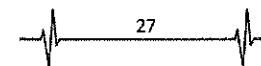
"Stop it!"

"Two..."

"I said stop!"

"Thr--"

The first bullet pierced his chest and made him stagger backwards, the second one nailed him in the left lung and the third ripped through somewhere above his heart. A long moment of disbelief passed. James smiled, dropped his gun and made a final motion to fall and drug himself into the coffin he had placed within his own grave. It must have looked so strange for a man to crawl into his own grave willingly and although he was in terrible pain, the real pain finally began to subside and drift away as the darkness crept over his vision and breath left his one functioning lung for the final time and his body, bloody and torn, lay still.

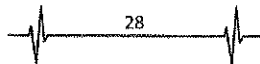


The delivery man dropped the Colt, fell to his knees and tried to stifle the bile that was rising from his stomach. It was hard to believe that he had just killed a man. He lay on his side, staring at a bright set of tulips near his face, wide-eyed and detaching his mind from the world. He moved a few times to roll over and stare at James' grave. He read the headstone a thousand times, sometimes out loud, hysterically and calmly. He could not, however, understand the last part of what he read, it was some kind of verse, but he did repeat it, over and over, methodically and without hesitation.

A few hours passed before the storm had truly began. The man finally lifted himself and managed to drag his numb body onto the back porch to get out of the pounding rain. The water danced across the flowers and dashed the dirt around creating puddles of murky water and clumps of mud.

The numbness began to fade. The man realized that he was still clinging to the envelope that had been stuffed in his hand. He stared at it for a long time before he broke the seal and shakily withdrew two pieces of paper. He noticed that the first was a copy of an original. At the top of this page, a line was written, "THE LAST WILL AND TESTIMENT OF JAMES CHESTER CLARK." There was a brief paragraph that spoke of James' wife, devoting all his love to her, etc. and then the listing of several dollar amounts to various family members. The last name, however, shocked him. His name was typed near the bottom in the same sentence leaving him several hundred thousand dollars. His mouth fell open in disbelief.

*How did he know my name?! ...I can't believe he'd leave me so much money...I killed a man...and he leaves me money?*

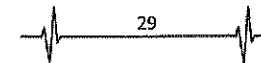


He overcame his shock and ran to his truck, struggling with the key and throwing himself inside and out of the harshening weather. He drove away from the house for several miles down the country dirt road until he remembered the other paper and pulled over on the side of the long country road leading away from the house. He pulled out the second piece of paper stuffed in the envelope and read what was written on it. It only contained a few lines that he recognized from an old poem he had read in school, something by Robert Frost. Only the last two stanzas were legible and beneath them in what most likely was James' handwriting read a line.

*Those miles have passed, and now I sleep.*

"That's what his headstone meant..." he sighed and he sat listening to the rain drop against the metal of the truck for hours.

After such a long day, it was a nice rest, he thought.





# Daishia Hare

## As She Slept

*It was a secret ritual of sorts*

Every night while she slept he watched over her. Sometimes he'd stroke her hair or whisper in her ear. Often he'd just stare in amazement at the beauty that lay tangled, yet comfortable in his king sized sheets. He never understood how or why a woman, as mesmerizing as she, dealt with such bone deep insecurities. Until she came along he'd never entertained the notion of being a one-woman man. Never dreamed he'd get down on one knee and ask any woman to take his last name.

*But then she appeared && changed everything.*

Before her, he never understood what it meant to reassure a woman that she was all he'd want or ever need. Every other woman he'd encountered assumed entitlement from intimacy and candle light romancing, but not her. She was different.

It wasn't until she walked before him bare; her fragile soul fully exposed, that he met the little girl with the ravaged encaged heart, whom lived deep within her spirit. The one who spent years trying to pretend that the absence of a mother and a father didn't matter; and it didn't...

*As long as she pretended they never existed.*

But a little girl never forgets. The disappearance of a mother made her seek shelter from a cruel, lonely world. Inside of a notebook; where only the ink of her pen met the traces of tears, which would overflow like the Mississippi Delta during hurricane Katrina. Until her, he never understood what it felt like to hate as much, a man he never met. How dare he leave his innocent sheep in a dark forest of wolves to be slaughtered?! Daddy's little girl is all she ever wanted to be, but after years of broken promises and deflated dreams, she simply stopped trying. She moved on, outgrew such frivolous things.

*But the heart wants what it wants and the pain of a child can never truly be ignored.*

Quietly he sat and listened to her snores. He felt at peace now, knowing his presence helped diminish her suffering. Slowly she'd begin to overcome those demons, and inner beauty was restored. The image of herself cradled in the arms of the Prince of Peace released her from peasantry and allowed her to embrace everything which made her a Queen. No longer was she abandoning bliss and sabotaging her blessings. Instead she lowered her guard and gave Him the master key to free her heart, keeping only for herself, a copy. In Him she found strength, courage, a friend; He in return gave her a man, to which she could depend. So she allowed Him to nourish her, while he helped her grow.

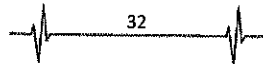
*With time, the little abandoned girl died and a strong secure woman was reborn.*

As he watched her sleep, he silently recited a prayer that God, never again allowed her to bear a hurt that deep. And that their future child should never have to listen



to her cry herself to sleep; because he would always be there by her side. Together. Connected from where Adam, there became Eve. He'd endure all darkness to keep light shining through her eyes. This woman, whom he adored with the rarest desire, only she could make him feel so emotionally weak, while still helping him stand as a King. He thanked God for this mission in life, resting assured they'd forever be safe. Knowing once he drifted off to sleep, His promise would forever remain true;

*Never to leave them nor forsake them, but guide them, the whole night through.*



## Heather Polanco

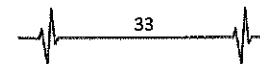
### Lonely People

#### I

The white rice, having mercifully spared the pew seats, left the church aisles and altar covered in a blanket of white speckles. *Crunch, crunch* – echoed through the empty chapel as old Eleanor Rigby's tattered shoes stepped heavily on the rice grains. A wedding had taken place earlier that evening and had made Eleanor's nightly clean-up more difficult than usual. She never understood the idea of throwing rice at newlyweds, but she still had to clean up afterwards. Shaking her head, she realized she would be working late for the sake of a nuptial tradition.

The rice had managed to dive under every pew and hide in clusters. She slowly got down to brush them into the open. A twinge of pain surged through her old knees as she landed on the sharp grains. It reminded her of St. Anne's Catholic School where she had attended lessons as a child. As punishment for any small offence, the nuns required her and her classmates to kneel on rice until their knees numbed from the pain and backs ached.

She forced the unhappy memory from her mind and slipped back into her thoughts of the wedding earlier. She never had a wedding of her own and most likely never would. Eleanor was nearly seventy years old. For as long as she could remember, she loved watching the weddings from the back of the church and always felt a secret



joy in imagining what her own wedding would have been like.

Fifty years ago she had been engaged to a young law student named Roel. They became engaged shortly after Roel began attending law school. But a devastating event prevented her beloved from making it to the altar. Eleanor Rigby had spent many decades of her life alone.

Close to midnight, the old woman finished polishing the last bit of wood on the last pew at the end of the church. She gathered her things and slowly closed the oak doors behind her, leaving the church empty and dark.

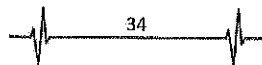
## II

If a passer-by glanced into the window of Father McKenzie's small, austere chamber it would appear as though the old priest sat stooped over his wooden desk, diligently working on his sermon.

"What a Godly, devoted man," the passer-by would say to himself with confidence in the chosen hands that willingly do God's work.

But the passer-by would be mistaken. For Father McKenzie, although stooped over his desk with pen in hand, was actually napping. He had grown accustomed to napping in awkward, upright positions such as the one he was in at that moment. He had married a young couple only a few hours before and had much to do for mass the next day. But Father McKenzie's busy agenda did not keep him from dozing off in the solitude of his chamber.

As the night grew darker, he woke suddenly – startled by a nightmare that often infected his mind. It was always the same. Perhaps it would be more appropriate to call it a memory – a fifty-year-old memory.



The actual incident had shaped his life thereafter, and was the most prevalent reason he joined the priesthood. As a boy he had wanted to be a lawyer like his father. He had wanted to get married, retire, and travel the world. Fate tends to re-route a man's life, forcing him into the strangest and most unfortunate situations.

Upon realizing his terror was only from a dream, he stared down at his writing, feeling defeated. It was difficult for him to care about his work. Father McKenzie believed that people only came to mass because it was expected of them. The lonely people only tried to feel a sense of belonging in a life filled with God's expectations by taking the body and blood of Christ in hopes of avoiding the wrath of a neglected God. He believed that they were all just like he was.

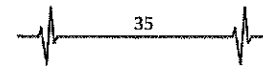
With that thought, the old priest turned off his desk lamp and lay on his bed in the darkness, just under the dusty crucifix that hung on his wall.

## III

Eleanor Rigby, with a face slathered in cold cream, stared out her bedroom window. For decades, she had applied the cold cream every morning in an attempt to fight off the greedy fingers of age in which every woman falls victim. The cream never helped and never would, but perhaps it was just a difficult habit for her to break.

Time, fate's vindictive but loyal partner, had ensured that Eleanor's delicate face drooped more with the passing of each lonely year. The drooping was a kept promise of loneliness as her face repelled any man who came her way. The round and pink cheeks she wore in her youth were now sunken and hollow. Time had given her skin the appearance of thin, gray paper loosely wrapped over the bones of her face.

On that morning, Eleanor watched the churchgoers slowly make their way along.



Women wore their best dresses; men donned black ties. Children trailed behind their parents with no knowledge or care of where they were going or why.

She would not be attending mass that morning. Fatigue had taken her over after waking, and she felt ill. She longed to hear Father McKenzie's sermon but simply could not work up the energy to leave.

She momentarily gave up on her thoughts of mass and focused on memories of Roel. At first, she felt comfort in the thought of him, but soon she remembered that she would never again see him in this lifetime.

Wiping a tear from her pasty cheek, Eleanor's thoughts wandered back to the throng of Catholic churchgoers pacing down the street to St. Thomas'. Their saddened faces made it seem as if they were proceeding to a funeral instead of Sunday mass. A chill crept up her bones, and she pulled her shawl close to her body before returning to bed.

#### IV

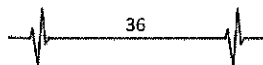
Eleanor Rigby died at her home that Sunday. They buried her along with her maiden name, and nobody came to her funeral. No one ever asked about her death.

Father McKenzie wiped his hands as he walked from the fresh grave. The thick skin of his neck sweated profusely from under the wrappings of his white collar.

He shook his head to break free from the memory that swept through his mind – the memory that invaded his dreams – the memory of that pivotal moment when fate had lashed out at him, changing the course of his and Eleanor Rigby's lives.

"No one was saved," he said to himself. "Not even myself."

The graveyard before him began to swim as his eyes filled with tears. He could



no longer fight. He remembered that day, so long ago.

Fifty years ago, he awoke to the taste of blood on his tongue. His face must have hit the back of the driver's seat. His vision blurry and head pounding, he crawled out of the open window and stumbled through the mud to the other side of the road. He could smell gas leaking from the vehicle. McKenzie could barely hear the cries of one of the other young law students who had been in the car with him. He didn't know any of them personally – only their names: George, James, and Roel. Each was trapped, two were unconscious – possibly dead – and one was calling for help. Through the smoke he could see the terrified, bloody face the young man in the car. His legs were trapped.

*Help him! McKenzie thought. He's alive!*

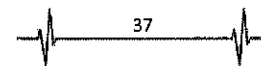
Standing motionless and watching, he saw Roel screaming, twisting, and turning while trying to maneuver out of the car. Everything caught fire suddenly. Roel was still trapped and screaming.

McKenzie, overwhelmed with the gut-wrenching guilt of his cowardice, knew he could have saved him. But he never knew why he had not tried.

The young McKenzie went back to his hometown, quit law school, and began his studies at a seminary. He promised to work for God his entire life in hopes of being forgiven. After joining the priesthood, he returned to the hometown of the youth he had allowed to die and established himself in the only Catholic Church in the town.

#### V

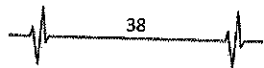
The priest opened his teary eyes and found himself clinging to the grave marker of the lonely woman he had just buried. Looking over the cemetery, he studied the rows of grave markers. Each one cold, hard, and still – a terrible representation of the people



who rested beneath them.

"Look at all the lonely people," he whispered to himself.

He removed the rosary from his pocket and unclasped his white collar. After gently placing both of the items on Eleanor Rigby's grave marker, he walked slowly in the opposite direction of the church. After fifty years he realized it was a mistake to make a promise he knew he could not keep.



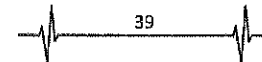
## Megan White



### I'll Wait here

Deep in the drawer in your room, in the place the light rarely reaches, I dwell; a tiny plastic rooster with my own patch of green grass and chipped paint. My room is full of a somewhat musty smell. Occasional piles of crafting glitter spilled many years ago, glisten like starlight to me. How lovely they are, if only you saw them more! I am the remainder of a happy time in your childhood. Though, not the only remainder.

My company is vast, I am not alone! My next door neighbors are the three baby teeth you lost when you were eight years old. Do you remember that? Of course you do! You were so very proud. The Tooth Fairy left you ten whole dollars! They travelled here in her custody and were tucked in safely that night. One day you'll take them out and happily look upon them. Then, there are the dominoes, five of them to be exact. Somewhere, the rest of their family has been separated. But these five dominoes have been saved for a rainy day, stashed here safely with me! They often like to talk of numbers with your old day planner. The one with the picture of the Grand Canyon on the front! Oh, I don't have to remind you. You remember I'm sure! You marked your wedding day in it one day and your sister's! Then your daughters! And the day your granddaughter was to be born! Though, she missed the mark by a week. You put the planner in here with us so you wouldn't lose track of it. I sure hope you can keep up with your busy life without it though! It must be so hard!

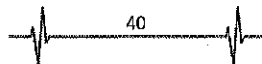


The marbles are so lively! They roll around sometimes, making us all laugh! They can't wait until the next marble tournament. It's okay that it has been awhile, they understand you only want to put them in the best tournaments! They wear their cracks and chips proudly like battle scars.

My best friend is Charlie. But I don't have to tell you that. You were the reason we met! He came with your "Super Farm" play set. He is a little plastic chestnut-colored race horse, always poised as if he is ready to race with world champions! His back left hoof is missing, but it's okay because he's still the fastest! He always won. That's how he broke his hoof, you remember! He had just won a race against two of your friends' plastic race horses and his hoof went flying off! You were so sad, but you could never be mad at Charlie! You put him with me so he'd have time to heal for his next race! I can't forget the earrings! The pearl earring was a gift from your husband. She said her sister had fallen down the drain. She was placed here under our watch so she would not have the same fate. She's rather shy, but she's the leader of the earrings. There are six others, all various colors of rhinestones. None of them match, but they fit in with us. One day you'll find a match for each of them.

There is also the pair of reading glasses. They're so wise, always telling us of their travels and adventures. Although... they're a little negative sometimes. They say none of us will ever leave the drawer as we once did. They say you've forgotten. You haven't though. I tried to tell them.

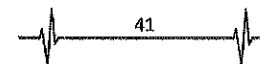
There are also a good many buttons and safety pins. They usually group together in the corners of the drawer. They don't interact much. They seem a little sad. But they shouldn't be! They have so much use to you!



The coins are some interesting folks! The quarter says that he has been all the way to Washington D.C. and back, twice! The seven dimes each talk of long journeys through retail stores, travelling in pockets, and being lost and found upon rainy sidewalks or subway stations. The twenty-one pennies and sixteen nickels often have big arguments with each other about who has had the most rigorous journeys. Personally, I side with one particular wheat penny who said he had been to every state in the United States and even went to London once where he fell on the ground and was picked up four weeks later by a man from France on his way to Canada. In Canada he was exchanged at a gas station and exchanged again, ending up in the hand of a woman who was from the United States on vacation with her husband and three daughters. You were one of the daughters. We've had years and years to hear their stories, I've memorized them all.

Lastly, in our drawer there are the photos. They never speak... not one word. They remain, ever in somber silence. Some of them are polaroids of you and your sisters. The looks on your young faces scrunched with the silly joy of saying "Cheese!" You are in front of your old house, the one your family moved away from when you were seven. Behind it is a lovely meadow with tall grass that leans to the left. It must have been windy that day. The dresses of your sisters also flow to the left. Not you though, you're wearing overalls. When you were a kid, you hated dresses.

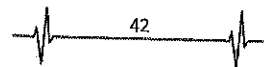
The next photo is also a polaroid. It is an older one of when you were first born. You are tiny and your mother holds you sweetly. Your father stands behind her with a grin. Such a proud photo, yet it never talks. Then there is the photo of you at your first



high school prom with your boyfriend at the time. You wore a pink dress. I remember, Oh, how you changed in those years.

The next seven photos are of your family vacation to Canada. You and your mother sit in front of various sights. Some have your sisters and you having snowball fights, white flurry blurring the photo quality. Then, there is one of your whole family in front of a trail sign. A friendly stranger offered to take it for you. How fond you must hold that memory. I wish it would speak more. The photos are a doorway to your life, yet they remain so silent. They just wait here. Wait! The drawer shakes! You've sat down in front of us! Open the drawer! Please! Tell us how much you've missed us! No... you've walked away again.

I'll wait here too.

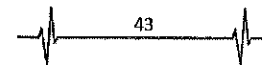


## Casey Meyers

### Pronouns in "Prufrock"

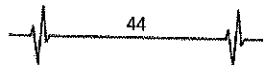
The theme of isolation in T.S. Eliot's poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" is evident throughout. In almost every symbol and description the narrator distances himself from those around him, at times describing himself as a bug "pinned and wriggling on the wall" and at other times showing his insecurities with descriptions of his appearance (58). However, dispersed throughout the poem are phrases and groupings of pronouns that place the narrator with a companion. By examining the placement of such phrases and seeing how they correspond with the sense of solitude in the surrounding lines, one can draw conclusions about the narrator and his frame of mind in regards to his loneliness.

Before speaking about Prufrock's mysterious companion (or companions), I must give attention to the pronoun the narrator employs most in this poem: "I." Just short of forty times, the pronoun "I" increases in use throughout the poem in reference to the narrator. Often, Prufrock uses this pronoun to describe his state of indecision. He asks questions such as "how should *I* presume" and "how should *I* begin" that seem to indicate that the source of his indecision is feelings of inferiority (68-69 emphasis added). He acts as though if he were to make his questions or opinions known, he would be regarded as speaking out of turn or out of place. Prufrock also uses the pronoun "I"



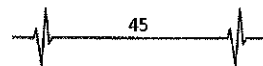
when describing himself, often as being something gross or undesirable, such as the two points in the poem where he uses bug imagery. However, there are also points in the poem where Prufrock uses the pronoun "I" to indicate his superiority. He claims that "I have...known them all" and also toys with the idea of comparing himself to Lazarus, a figure from the Bible that is raised from the dead (55). These moments in which Prufrock claims higher knowledge or status are brief, and he soon returns to his previous feelings of inferiority, such as when he makes the statement "I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be" (111). Whether he places himself above or below his social group is not of great importance. It is paramount, however, to note that he is alone and separate from the rest of the group in both of these categories.

Prufrock's primary usage of the pronoun "I," makes the lines in which he does not use it both noticeable and strange. The first stanza places Prufrock with an unnamed companion, saying, "Let *us* go then, *you and I*" and acknowledges the presence of the second person again at the end of the stanza when he says "Let *us* go and make *our* visit" (1, 12 emphasis added). The setting in this portion of the poem may be important in determining whom Prufrock is referring to. This first section of the poem is a rather dismal description that focuses on the less desirable portions of city. As Prufrock walks through the "half-deserted streets" he recognizes the contrast between this scene and the scene in the parlor he later accompanies (4). In the parlor he is surrounded by fine food and utensils as well as well-dressed women with perfume and flowing dresses. It can be conjectured that Prufrock feels alone in his observations of lower class conditions and desires to point out to the party their lack of knowledge. Prufrock shows indecision in bringing this up, asking himself "Do I dare" (38). If in fact Prufrock had been with a



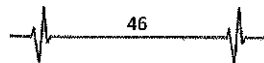
companion who shared his observations of the city, his reluctance would be odd. Surely it would be much easier for him to bring up the subject if he was not alone. His reluctance, therefore, to refer to these observations potentially indicates that Prufrock is not referring to a real-life companion, but to the reader of the poem when he uses the pronoun "us" in the first stanza. As he ends the stanza by saying "Let us go and make our visit," Prufrock invites his reader to come and experience his situation through reading his thoughts (12). Prufrock's description of lonely scenes in the city, such as the "one-night cheap hotels," would perhaps not be used if he had a literal companion (6). His focus on the filthy and the deserted indicates that he is most likely physically alone. Therefore, his use of the pronoun "us" shows that he is seeking to find a companion to share his thoughts with, even if that companion is as removed from the scene as the reader.

The second instance in which Prufrock indicates that he is interacting with another person is in the middle of the poem. Prufrock identifies this unknown person with the phrase "you and me" in the 78<sup>th</sup> and 89<sup>th</sup> lines. The "you" in this situation seems to be a different "you" than from the beginning of the poem for a couple of different reasons. When it is used in the 78<sup>th</sup> line—"Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me"—it is clear that Prufrock is referring to someone who is in the same location or situation as he, which makes it seem unlikely that he is referring to the reader. This sentence also creates an image of physical closeness that Prufrock could not possibly have with the reader. It is made increasingly unlikely that Prufrock is referring to the reader, as in the 89<sup>th</sup> line he and the other person are a topic of gossip for the other members of the party. For them to be the focus of a conversation, it is necessary for this person to be



a physical presence in the room. A few lines below the 89<sup>th</sup> line, in the same stanza, Prufrock refers to "her"—possibly the "you" he is referring to in this section of the poem. This possibility is accentuated by the fact that Prufrock and this other person are a topic of gossip, as relationships between men and women often are. It is also evident that Prufrock has a question to ask this person that causes him extreme anxiety. He uses exaggeration to describe his fear, saying that to ask the question would be like "squeeze[ing] the universe into a ball" (92). These instances in the text sound as though Prufrock desires to make known his hidden affections to a woman whom he is either close to or attracted to. It is clear, however, that Prufrock's fear is that his advances will not only be rejected, but rejected in a patronizingly polite way. He imagines "her" telling him "that is not what I mean at all," as though she were embarrassed that he thought he had a chance with her (97). This reveals another level of Prufrock's insecurity. As seen in the previous paragraph, Prufrock is searching for companionship, but he cannot seem to make contact with anyone on a close, personal level. He remains on the outskirts of the party, unwilling to ever speak of the questions that trouble his mind, piling up regrets and unanswered questions.

In the closing lines of the poem, Prufrock once again refers to a companion, this time one who shares in his own sensations. At the end of the poem, Prufrock creates a scene wherein a group of mermaids, likely sirens, are singing out across the waves. In Greek mythology, sirens are creatures that sing songs to mesmerize sailors out on the waters, causing their ships to crash upon the rocks. It is odd, therefore, that Prufrock insists that he "do[es] not think they will sing to [him];" instead, Prufrock believes that it is "human voices" that will cause him to drown (125, 131). Even more curious is that



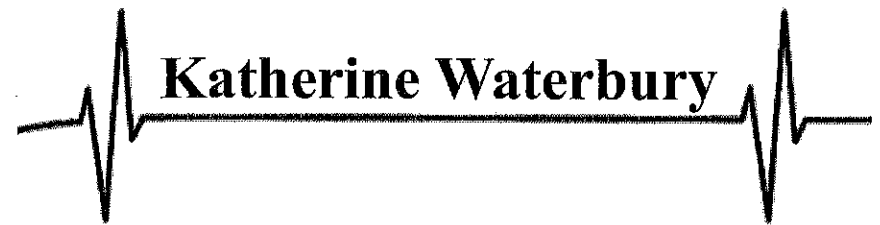
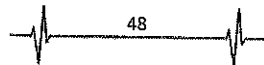
Prufrock does not consider himself to be alone in this situation. In the last stanza of the poem Prufrock says "*We* have lingered..." and "human voices wake *us* and *we* drown" (129, 131 emphasis added). From this image we see that Prufrock pictures himself drowning in the raging storm of reality in the company of another. It is possible that Prufrock is once again creating a sense of unity with the reader. When he speaks to the reader at the beginning of the poem, he seems to be explaining or attempting to show the reader his feelings of isolation. In contrast, the companion at the end of the poem is placed alongside Prufrock, experiencing the same sensation of loneliness. Although it seems strange that Prufrock is both explaining himself and comparing himself to the reader, there is the possibility that Prufrock recognizes the familiar paradox that he is not alone in his feelings of loneliness. Prufrock's ending statement could very well be the recognition that there are others who feel as though they are drowning in the deep seas of difficult social interaction.

Considering the "stream-of-consciousness" technique, this theory is not far-fetched. Eliot's narrator, Prufrock, pulls the reader into the poem continually with chunks and snippets of details. Rather than a smooth, collective narrative, "The Love Song of Alfred J. Prufrock" is a series of impressions, emotions, and insights. The narrator is not making abundantly clear what he wants the reader to get out of reading this; he is simply laying out his train of thought for their consideration. As the reader is dragged through the confusing and disorienting poem, the outcome is that traces of the organic, honest display of emotion cling to and find companionship with the experiences of the reader. These details, coupled with Prufrock's various dealings with pronouns and unnamed companions, intensify the reader's perception of Prufrock's aloneness.





His apostrophic reference to the reader at the beginning of the poem, his reluctance to speak to a female in the middle of the poem, and his recognition of other lonely figures at the end of the poem show not only the depth of his loneliness, but somewhat of a progression. Comparing the beginning and middle of the poem to the end, though Prufrock is certainly not becoming more optimistic about his position, he does seem to acknowledge that there are others who are facing the same fate as he. He realizes that, though he is drowning, he is not drowning alone. It is a cold and selfish comfort, but comfort nonetheless.

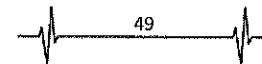


## Katherine Waterbury

### *Sons of Anarchy: A Showing of True Colors*

The majority of American's stick with a moral code in adherence to the standards of society. A man who sits behind a federal agent, gives her a kiss on the back of the head, then point blank shoots a sub machine gun into it would be deemed cold blooded or evil. One would typically be looked down upon for bashing in the skull of a corrections officer, with a snow globe, repeatedly, after breaking into his house, and shooting his wife. We would consider it taboo to hand a friend a gun, tell him to shoot a mutual business partner, then frame our step-father for the crime in order to ensure his brutal rape and death in prison. All of the above being true statements, what cultural phenomenon is leaving millions of people cheering these behaviors on and leaving us screaming for more? I argue that Kurt Sutter's use of internal dialogue in the development of J.T. Teller and Jackson Teller's characters establish a sympathetic bond with viewing public, allowing not only the acceptance, but also the approval for the violent nature of the series.

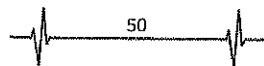
Within the five and a half seasons the series has been on the air there have been wives murdered, a teenage girl violated and beaten, the brutal rape of the club's matriarch, kidnappings of club member's children and old ladies, and countless prison rapes. Sheriffs, Federal agents, and correctional officers have been murdered, some in very creative ways. Sadly, we have lost quite a few patched (fully initiated) members of the



club as well. In order to understand the dynamic of the series, some introduction into the plot must be explained. Set in fictitious Charming, California, an outlaw motorcycle gang, the Sons of Anarchy (SAMCRO, SOA), controls the population, regulates the business, deals automatic weapons for the IRA (Irish Republic Army), and transports heroine for the Mexican Cartel, all while trying to maintain families, run a business, and stay out of prison. It is a daunting task, and there are casualties along the way.

Kurt Sutter, the creator, director, and lead writer of the series has publicly stated that he writes the show in a specific way in order to accomplish certain tasks which he believes are most important to the success of the series. He has also never shied away from addressing the fantastical, imagined reality of the series. In an article written by Sutter, he states, "I write a brutal show about guns, death and violence. Because of that, I have to take stock of my responsibility as an artist and understand my impact on the viewers"(Voices). The goal of the series is not to somehow instill upon the viewing public the idea that leading an outlaw lifestyle is to be admired or respected.

Rather, its purpose seems to be to enlighten the viewers to the belief system and life events which allow the characters to behave in the manner in which they do. This goal is ultimately achieved in three ways. First, by introducing the viewers to the journal left to Jackson "Jax" Teller by his deceased father, John Teller (JT). Second, to allow the viewer to hear the internal dialogue Jax has with his own children through a manifesto which he is continuously "writing" throughout the series. Third, to create emotional, complex, and loving relationships within the members' personal lives. Any of these creative tactics used singularly would not likely create the desired affect Sutter has for his audience, but together, they work to make John Q. Viewer an advocate of every ac-



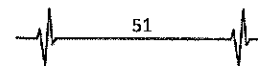
tion the Sons take.

Beginning with JT's journal, the viewer is given information from one of the founding members of the club. We are aware that Teller died when Jax was very young, in a motorcycle accident. From its inception, the purpose of Sons of Anarchy was a way for nine Vietnam Veterans to live a life of freedom. It was a simple, idealistic dream, doomed from day one. JT had a clear vision and we are told,

The concept was pure, simple, true, it inspired me, led a rebellious fire, but ultimately I learned the lesson that Goldman, Prudot and the others learned. That true freedom requires sacrifice and pain. Most human beings only think they want freedom. In truth they yearn for the bondage of social order, rigid laws, materialism, the only freedom man really wants, is the freedom to become comfortable. ("Patch Over")

From this, we begin to understand that, in its infancy, this club was just a way for war-torn young men to find their place back in an American society which they felt alienated from upon their return from the unspeakable atrocities they were forced to endure during war. This begins the viewer's journey into the mind of the outlaw. Sutter relies on the nature of American's to sympathize with returning veterans. It is a brilliant writing tactic which seeks to manipulate the emotion of the viewer. Sutter accomplishes creating a bond between viewer and a character, who we never actually meet. By establishing this connection early on, and with it showing the original concept of SAMCRO, we begin to prepare ourselves for what may come, because we know a shift in mentality is inevitable.

JT continues to give bits of insight into his disenchantment with where his club

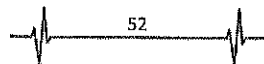


was heading and the brutality which was occurring. He tries to explain and justify his behaviors, while also explaining how wrong those behaviors were. He tells us in "Seeds",

Most of us were not violent by nature. We all had our problems with authority, but none of us were sociopaths. We came to realize that when you move your life off the social grid you give up the safety that society provides. On the fringe, blood and bullets are the rule of law and if you're a man with convictions violence is inevitable.

JT acknowledges the fact that by choosing a free life, the members of the club have also chosen a life which has no other option than to become violent in its nature. One cannot walk into anarchy without accepting the actions of an anarchist. Even in this statement, Sutter, through the voice of JT, is telling the audience that the violent nature of the club was not an intentional choice, rather, it was an evolutionary adaptation necessary for the survival of the members of SOA.

This dialogue comes at a point in the series when the viewer is beginning to see the mentality of the Sons of Anarchy as truly violent. We have, at this point, already seen members of the club use a blow torch to burn the tattoo which signifies membership to the Sons off of an ex-members back. We are watching as Clay, the president, and Tig, his Sergeant at Arms, are plotting the death of Jax's best friend and fellow member, Opie. Viewers are still trying to understand what motivates these men into the lifestyle which they have chosen. We have a need to understand where the violence is coming from, and because of the bonds already being formed, we are trying to find a way to justify it. Sutter is helping the viewers of the series at this point by letting us know that

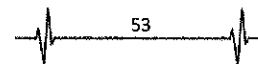


violence was not always prevalent in the heart of these men, but that, inevitably, a lifestyle beyond the rules of society has no other choice than to become kill or be killed.

JT goes on to discuss the mentality of brotherhood and loyalty within the walls of the club. He paints a picture of order and a distinct ethical code among the members. Moments later he discusses the inevitable outcome of such a mentality. John Teller has come to understand that when one masters the art of lying to protect one's own self-interests, the entire world becomes unworthy of the truth. He understands at this point that even in brotherhood, truth becomes an illusion, an interpretation of a lie. He warns his son that, eventually, half-truths become a way of life, and, in order to survive one's own guilt, a man's lies have to become his truths. JT explains,

Inside the club, there had to be truth. Our word was our honor. But outside, it was all about deception. Lies were our defense, our default. To survive, you had to master the art of perjury. The lie and the truth had to feel the same. But once you learned that skill, nobody knows the truth in or outside the club; especially you. ("Old Bones")

At this point in the series, the lies which are beginning to unravel the club are becoming overwhelming. We have watched as lies within this club have led to the death of Opie's wife, the rape of another Gemma Teller, and the kidnapping of Jax's son. As viewers, we are struggling to understand the need for all of the deception which is taking place within this brotherhood of men. Although Sutter has drawn us into the lifestyle, we are struggling to understand the mentality. Sutter used J.T.'s words to explain that lying which starts as a snowball outside the walls of the club lead to an avalanche which buries it.

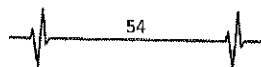


The last piece of insight given to Jax by his father does not come from JT's journal. When the opportunity arises for Maureen Ashby, John Teller's long time girl-friend, to inform Jax, not only of JT's fear for his own safety, but also of the hopes he had for his son, she seizes it. In that moment, the direction of the series is forever altered. From a letter written by JT, Jax learns,

Every day it becomes more clear that I don't belong here. I'm certain now that Clay and Gemma are together. They barely try to hide it from me. Gemma hates my apathy. She hates all of me. Her chill is terrifying. I know my days are numbered Mo, and when these letters stop you can be certain my death will come at the hands of my wife and best friend. At least my sweet Thomas will never suffer my life. I miss him so much. I only pray that Jackson finds a different path. He already reminds me so much of myself. ("NS")

With this information, we become aware of the fact that Jax has been betrayed by not only his step-father, who has raised him since the age of 14, but also by his mother. The realization that JT's death was not a simple accident, but a thought out plan between his "father" and wife. Also, the audience, along with Jax, begin to recognize Jax's fate can go only 1 of 2 ways. Either, he will begin to implode from the SAMCRO life, or he will have to change his own destiny by creating a change which his father began, but only he can finish.

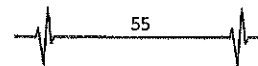
As stated before, without the dialogue of JT's journal, the viewer would not be able to understand the inner struggle which Jax faces in the series. JT's words to Jax are portrayed as a message from beyond the grave. They are presented as words of wisdom



from a man long gone, but in reality, they are actually the conscience which begins to be born in Jax within the first three seasons of the series. These voice overs coincide with major events in Jax's life. They explain what Jax is feeling, the realities of club life which he is beginning to see, and show him what his own future can become if something drastic does not happen.

Moving on from J.T.'s cryptic words from beyond the grave, we, as viewers, are also allowed a few brief insights into the mind of Jackson Teller. Jax is struggling through his life from day one of the series. Being a Son was his birthright; it was never a possibility for Jax to ever live any other type of life. Just as it was his father's destiny to die by the hand of a Son, it is Jax's destiny to be an outlaw. Jax never considered his life being meant for anything other than holding the gavel at the head of table and leading the Sons of Anarchy. This is Jax's first love. Sutter uses Jax's manifesto, his legacy for his two sons, Abel and Thomas, to begin showing the viewer the mindset of the outlaw biker trying to run a major criminal force while attempting to be a family man in his spare time. While we have become accustomed to hearing J.T.'s words, we are now beginning to hear Jax's. Jax tells his boys,

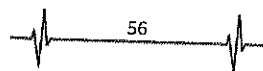
Something happens at around 92 miles an hour - thunder-headers drown out all sound, engine vibrations travel at a heart's rate, field of vision funnels into the immediate and suddenly you're not on the road, you're in it. A part of it. Traffic, scenery, cops - just cardboard cutouts blowing over as you pass. Sometimes I forget the rush of that. That's why I love these long runs. All your problems, all the noise, gone. Nothing else to worry about except what's right in front of you. Maybe that's the lesson



for me today, to hold on to these simple moments. Appreciate them a little more - there's not many of them left. I don't ever want that for you. Finding things that make you happy shouldn't be so hard. I know you'll face pain, suffering, hard choices, but you can't let the weight of it choke the joy out of your life. No matter what, you have to find the things that love you. Run to them. There's an old saying, 'That what doesn't kill you, makes you stronger' I don't believe that. I think the things that try to kill you make you angry and sad. Strength comes from the good things - your family, your friends, the satisfaction of hard work. Those are the things that'll keep you whole. Those are the things to hold on to when you're broken. (*Sovereign*)

Even while trying to tell his children to find the beautiful things in their life- love, hope, family- he adorns the statement with imagery of how beautiful life looks from the back of Harley. Jax shows himself as loving the road. He gives the illusion that all of the problems of life can be overcome if they just ride hard and fast enough. He admits in this passage that joy for himself is almost impossible to find. Viewers begin to see here that Jax is profoundly aware of the chaos which is beginning to overwhelm his life. Jax is saying this at the beginning of Season Five. He has now become President of the Sons of Anarchy. He has just saved his wife from being murdered at the orders of his step-father, who also killed his father. He has had to murder the man who led a gang rape against his mother, he has saved his son from a kidnapping orchestrated by the IRA, and he has watched the club destroy Opie's life.

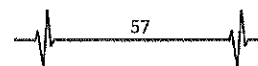
We begin, also, to see the correlations between Jax's manifesto and JT's. Jax's



love for his life and hatred of his lifestyle are becoming overwhelming in his own mind. It is at this point in the series that Sutter begins to use these internal dialogues to make the viewer begin to fear that the legacy of JT will lead Jackson to his grave as well, leaving only a cryptic hand-written journal for Abel and Thomas to use to shape their destinies. It is also at this point that the viewer, being privy to Jax's thoughts, begin to justify his actions. We want Jax to settle scores, bring JT's killer to justice and right the wrongs of the past. We no longer see the violence as violence, rather, it is becoming a means to an end, a way to save the life, and soul, of a character we are truly being to understand in a multidimensional way.

Continuing to ignite the viewers' fears about Jackson, Sutter uses the following passage of Jax's journal to his boys to again show the pressures weighing on the young man's heart. In order to exemplify the writing techniques which Sutter uses to draw the viewing public into the world of these outlaws, I will break the next piece of dialogue into two parts. Jax says:

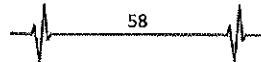
It's hard not to hate. People, things, institutions, when they break your spirit and take pleasure in watching you bleed, hate is the only feeling that makes sense. But I know what hate does to a man, tears him apart, turn him into something he's not, something he promised himself that he'd never become. That's what I need to tell you to let you know how hard I am trying not to cave under the weight of all the awful things I feel in my heart. Sometimes my life feels like a deadly balancing act, when I feel slamming up against what I should do, impulsive reactions racing to solutions miles ahead of my brain. When I look at my day, I realize that



most of it was spend cleaning up the damage of the day before. In that life I don't have a future, all I have is distraction and remorse. (*Orca Shrugged*)

Sutter is again using this internal dialogue to cue the viewer into how much the violence and chaos of the club is eating at this character's soul. Sutter is showing that regardless of Jax's stoic behavior in front of his club, the young outlaw is beginning to crumble under the weight of the damage being done. He is still echoing his father's mentality. He is beginning to realize that no matter how hard he tries to take the club in a legitimate direction, the outlaw mentality inside of him always rears its head. Jackson is self-aware enough to realize that his behavior is leading him to destruction. He understands that his impetuous behavior, his need to retaliate with violence when the Sons are hurt, is only making the transition to a good life more and more impossible. The first half of this quote draws the viewer into Jax's character. We empathize. Sutter plays on the fact that the majority of the people sitting at home have been in this mind set at some point. Sutter understands that most people set out to do the right thing in life, even when the outcome is horrible. As a viewer, hearing these words come out of Jax's mouth, we want him to change. We want him to do the right thing, to take his wife and children and leave Charming, leave the Sons, make a better life for his boys, one that will never put them into a world so destructive and painful.

Then, in another stroke of writing brilliance, Sutter gives the viewers the second half of this quote. Jax ends this particular journal entry for his boys by saying, "I buried my best friend three days ago. As cliché as this sounds I left part of me in that box. A part I barely knew, a part I never saw again. Everyday is a new box boys, you

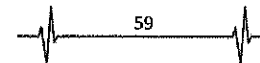


open it and take a look at what's inside. You're the one who determine if it's a gift or a coffin." (*Orca Shrugged*)

This quote is taken from the episode immediately following Opie's death. Opie, like Jax, was born into the club, his father having been J.T.'s best friend and a member of the First 9. We have watched Opie suffer through this entire series. He served five years in prison for the club. His wife was murdered, by the club, when they were attempting to kill Opie. His father was murdered by Clay and Opie found his body. He was stopped from avenging his father's death by Jax, an act which Opie could not understand. As viewers, we ached for Opie. The fans of the Sons of Anarchy hope for his character to finally be able to find some peace. But, in typical Kurt Sutter fashion, be careful what you wish for.

We were thrilled when Opie showed up at the last minute, punched a Sherriff and ended up in jail with Jax and two other members on a charge that was bogus. We knew it signaled Opie's return to Jax's side, an ushering in of new leadership and the beginning of a happier chapter for the character. Sutter, however, wrote it somewhat differently. Audiences wept when Opie knowingly stepped into Jax's spot while in county lock up to die. We watched in horror as Opie's skull was bashed in with a metal pipe by four other prisoners, while the correctional officers took bets on how long he would last.

With the last line of Jax's quote, we, the heartbroken viewers, immediately demanded Opie's death be vindicated. The viewing public would stand for nothing less. A member of our club was hurt, and someone needed to pay. It was what was right, it was what had to be done. There was no other option. All other club business could wait. Going into legitimate business was nowhere near as important as bringing the man



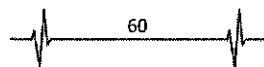
responsible for killing Opie down. We were screaming for blood, and Kurt Sutter gave it to us.

American viewer's cheered as Jax walked into the home of the correctional officer who shoved Opie into the room where four men beat him to death, picked up a snow globe, and beat the man to death. We didn't even get upset when Tig shot the man's wife. This was for Opie, and it had to happen by whatever means necessary.

Why? What can make a huge portion of the American population become so willing to watch a character die? Why can demand it, be excited for it? The answer is simple: we were witness to great writing. Kurt Sutter's ability to draw the average person into a world which they have never experienced, into a lifestyle they would abhor in the real world, is a phenomenon which has led to one of the highest rated cable television shows in history. Its fans are loyal and die-hard. We feel as though we a part of a family which doesn't even exist. Kurt Sutter has achieved a perfection in his craft that regardless of anyone's personal feelings about the show, cannot be denied.

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- "Orca Shrugged." *Sons of Anarchy*. FX. Dallas. 09 Oct 2013. Television.
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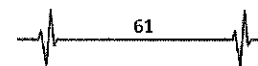
## Lanna Eaves

### Atropos

One cut to feel alive  
One cut to tear, to cry

One fissure of a high  
One massive gash, a sigh

One person-oh-too late  
One cut snipped by Fate.





## Casey Ford

### Shoreline Devotional

In silt and tar,  
On sticky brown waves,  
knobbly, pungent  
mounds of sargassum,  
dense air salty, thick;  
a future we claimed so resolutely  
is not the one we got.

I'm standing in it, on the shore of it,  
in shifting sand and saline wind,  
certain I've found the spot—  
the very ridge in the dunes  
where the world opened wide  
from the back of your F-150,  
our rust-ravaged marriage bed,  
legs tangled in your mother's blankets,  
wild hair, electric skin, frenetic hearts—  
Twenty years gone,  
treading this gray Gulf strand,  
digging in with my toes,  
I unearth repressed ache

For those kids  
that night  
on this beach  
and tonight  
at water's edge  
accompanied by moonless stars,  
sighing waves and sleeping gulls,  
I sing, for everything unborn,  
an appeal to the hosts.



## Brittany Wood

### My Version of Tattoos

Pierce the flesh.  
Pain below.  
Scars hold faint  
Memories.  
Blood dries slow.

Face the blade.  
Reflect dreams.  
Broken hopes.  
Silent screams.

Seeing black.  
Gather waste.  
Waiting now.  
Skin not chaste.

Craving hope.  
Rip the soul.  
Bleeding out.  
Grave: my goal.

Bandage skin.  
Relief flew.  
Memories  
Never fade.  
My Version  
Of Tattoos.





## Casey Ford

### Sanctuary

If prayers hide in walls, then these must be  
crowded under the plaster and the paint,  
diplomas, posters, photos of the dogs—  
the wood of every picture frame is sagging.  
What motivates, what sets my dumb tongue free,  
is not this hackneyed junk, however quaint,  
but secrets in the walls. The epilogues  
of truth and revelation, unloosed feelings—  
mysteries, and the soft things soak them in.  
The sofa, where we've lain instead of kneeling.  
The rug, in spots, worn by the pace of worry.  
An empty tissue box absolves each sin.  
Hallowed sofa pillows tell no tales,  
nor leather chair arms picked by restless nails.



## Casey Ford

### Go Your Own Way

"I can't ride horsies in this!" Tara shakes her yellow cotton romper at me. She tosses it on the floor and goes to the drawer that holds her blue jeans. "Where's my cowgirl boots?"

"It's too hot for jeans, and no cowgirl boots. Yours got way too small; your toes were squishing out the sides. I gave them away, and besides, you won't be riding horses. You'll only be at Aunt Finn's for two weeks, and your horse is having a baby. She can't carry you."

I don't know whether that last bit was true—a pregnant horse might be able to ride just fine—but I've already told Finn to keep the girls off the horses for this visit. I don't like them to ride if I'm not there with them. Not that Finn isn't vigilant—on the contrary, I trusty sister above all others with the girls. This trip, though, I can't come running if something bad happens. "Come on, let's finish packing. Bring me that romper. Come on."

Tara, in her fashion, informs me—hand on hip—that if she 'cain't ride Parker Posey, she ain't goin' anywhere'. I tell her that's fine; she can just stay home by herself, but that it gets very dark and quiet at night. Reconsidering, Tara hands over the romper. She despises the dark above all other despicable things. She only sounds like one of the Designing Women when she speaks; in reality, she's a pretty normal three-

pretty much everything else.

Tobi is already packed. A bit too much the organizational specialist for a five-year old, her bags have been neatly exhibited near the front door since yesterday afternoon. Holding my mobile phone, she comes into Tara's room. "Mom, do you need some help?"

"I think we're just about done here. You could do me one favor; those bags of groceries by the door, can you put them in the back of the Jeep? Just the ones you can carry; I'll get the others. And don't do your suitcase. It's too heavy."

She hands me the phone. "Aunt Finn called you."

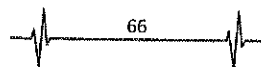
"You're just taking off for two weeks. Just taking off. Just like that."

"No, Finn. Not just like that. I've been saying I need to get out of here. And yes. I need to clear my head. I'm always irritated with the girls, I'm furious with Tim, I'm even mad at Mother."

"You have to stop saying that. It's been a year."

"That doesn't change how I feel."

Abuse, divorce, poverty, single-parenthood, arthritis...nothing ever seemed to drag our mother down or stop her from being a steady and omniscient presence in our lives for thirty-five years. Last year, Momma finally met up with the thing that could tear her away from us, and before it took her, it made her small and weak. I cannot reconcile that tiny, fragile person with the woman who single-handedly repaired toilets, put together bicycles, sailed catamarans with her saltwater brunette hair flying behind her in the wind.



"Tobi has two doctors' appointments next week, and Tara will freak out after a day or two without seeing you."

Thank you for taking care of my girls. Tobi will be fine, and if you can just redirect Tara, so will she. She'll forget I'm gone after a day in the pool with Maddie."

My sister's adopted daughter just made her school swim team. She'd swim all day if my daughters wanted her to.

Finn says, "Can you tell me about when you'll be back?"

"I don't know," I say. "When I don't dread the idea of coming home, I guess."

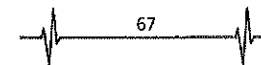
"By then the damage may be done," Finn says.

"It's already done," I say.

As I drive the girls out to Finn's, I decide to go past our old house on Wilson Street. We lived there with Momma from the time I was five until I was ten. It's been spruced up over the years—coats of paint, new shutters, and the old concrete steps have been replaced with a little wooden porch—but it still looks very much the same, except that each year I grow older, the house looks that much smaller.

There was no daddy in this house for quite a few years. It was just Momma, always Momma. She cooked everything we ate, cleaned everything we dirtied, fixed everything we broke, paid for everything we needed. Finn and I started school on this street, lost our first teeth in that front bedroom, learned to ride bikes in this yard, waited for the bus on this corner.

All the places we lived before, with my father, they were not home. My earliest visions of hell had something to do with the little townhouse we lived in when my par-



ents split up. It was new construction, near a field, so there was a rat problem, or a field mouse problem, or something. I remember coming home one day to little piles of chewed carpet and bald patches all over the floor. They chewed perfect squares. I remember my father bringing home an ice chest of skinned rabbits and insisting that I look inside, and that my screams made him laugh. I remember their last big fight, the one that taught me the truth about my father—what I somehow did not learn before then, even when he made me look at the rabbits. After that fight, we moved, just Momma and Finn and me. And this little house on Wilson Street—well, not the house, but its belonging to us—saved us all.

As we drive past, the girls twist in their seats to get a good look. Tobi points. "Is that the swing set you jumped off of in your Wonder Woman Underoos?"

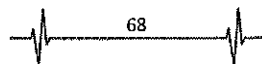
"Not that one, but it looked a lot like that."

"There's no back yard," Tara says.

She's right. There once was a sprawling couple of acres between our little house and the houses on the street behind us; now there are six duplexes.

We drive on; seeing the house has made me feel extremely heavy.

Fran marveled at the spectacle she'd made of her bathroom in the last three hours. She had single-handedly managed to remove her toilet from its usual position and set it inside the bathtub. She'd had no choice but to figure it out on her own, and fast. She shared this bathroom with two little girls, and while Fran was in the laundry room unraveling the mystery that was crayon melted in a tiny cotton pocket, one of them, with a mere ten minutes to herself, had managed to wholly decommission their only toilet.

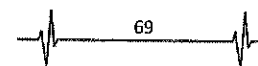


Fran had plunged and fiddled around inside the tank and stuck a wire coat hanger as far down the hole as it would go when she realized she would have to resort to drastic measures. She called Marty and he told her how to get started. She cut off the water, then she flushed the commode. Removing the bolts was tougher than actually picking up the toilet. She had to put the toilet inside the bathtub because the room was so small.

The worst part of all was that as soon as the toilet came up, sewer gas came in. Fighting her gag reflex, she was rewarded with the knowledge that she'd done the right thing and saved herself a huge plumbing expense. Atop a gob of toilet paper and she-wished-she-didn't-know-what, staring frantically up at her from the hole in her bathroom floor, was a knob from Finn's brand-new Etch-a-Sketch and one filthy, wild-eyed Barbie head with a doll-sized comb in its hair.

She scooped the pipe clean and re-situated the commode—no mean feat, what with replacing the wax seal and re-bolting the fixture to the floor, carefully tightening the bolts, but not so tightly as to crack the porcelain—then Fran went down the hall to check on the girls. She'd sent them to their separate rooms as punishment for—what? She thought, for doll torture, for now. Both girls, defiant of her orders, were passed out in Cecile's bed. Cecile was seven, and she always slept on her stomach. Finn was five, and she slept with her entire body pressed into the rib cage of whomever she slept next to. She also snored like an eighty year-old man. Those adenoids are coming out this year, Fran thought. She leaned against the door frame and distinguished the rhythms of their breathing.

Fran had been the one to name her daughters. When she chose the names of saints, Daniel, who was very Catholic on paper, was satisfied well enough. She named

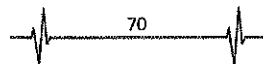


their older child Cecile, for the blind patron saint of music, and even though their second child was also a daughter, Fran named her for Saint Finnian the Ecclesiast. Finn was petite and had the sweetest little nose—so unlike her French forbears. Her hair was short—not because she wanted it to be, or even that Fran wanted it to be, but because Finn was famous for falling asleep with gum in her mouth. Fran tried to patrol, tried to check the kid's mouth before bedtime, tried to outlaw gum altogether; Finn always managed to sneak it. It was a wonder she didn't choke on the stuff. After three ruined pillow cases and three haircuts, a pixie cut seemed like the best option, and luckily, it suited her.

Cecile's hair, fanned across her pillow, was long and satiny, the color of sand on the gulf shore. In certain slants of light, it seemed gray. She was a big girl—tall and athletic, and she got the French nose. By the time she was three she could read several of her books to Fran. She entertained on car trips, singing along to the radio with abandon. Cecile learned, at the age of two, how to work the eight-track player so she could listen to Bob Seger and Fleetwood Mac. She knew every word, pitch-perfect, of "Old Time Rock and Roll" and "Go Your Own Way."

In spite of her every wrong choice and regardless of the destructive little plans of her children, Fran smiled in the doorway and thought, It's true. I would lay down in traffic for these little people. She was struck by the quiet in their little gray house. It had been a long time since Fran felt quiet. She decided to let them nap a little longer.

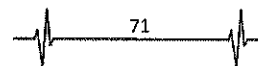
She made herself a glass of sweet, cold tea. Daniel couldn't have fixed that toilet, she thought, sighing and perching on the edge of a dining room chair so she wouldn't sweat all over the living room furniture. She'd taught herself to change the oil in the car, too, to cook outside, and to mow the grass. Under the tutelage of her friend Marty,



she'd even learned to sail a catamaran. Each time she mastered something new, even something as minor as grilling chicken over charcoal, she took three giant steps away from the smallness she'd allowed to settle on her life.

Sometime this week, she thought, I have to tackle our windows. She remembered how palatial the little gray house had seemed when they moved in. They were accustomed to apartment life before now—counting Daniel, they'd had to jam four people into a two-bedroom—but now she and the girls each had a room to herself. Fruitful pecan trees and deep-rooted oaks shaded the yards, front and back, and the streets of their neighborhood were only locally trafficked—safe enough for twilight bicycle rides and trick-or-treating. At \$250 a month for the next two years, it was their castle. And really, Fran didn't mind the house's idiosyncrasies. Being old and having a pier foundation, the house had settled crookedly, so the floor inclined from the living room into the dining room. The laundry space was in a back corner of the kitchen-dining room combo, and when it hit the spin cycle, the washer would rock gently back and forth. The spring on the screen door creaked long and low when it swung. Fran found these mannerisms intimate. She found charming the front sidewalk that had been cracked and raised in two places by oak roots.

There were charms and idiosyncrasies, and then there were aggravations. The windows were single paned and wood-framed. The wood needed replacing. Summer was hot. The girls didn't seem to notice much—they were always playing outside, and glad to come in to the relative cool. Fran, though, grew to despise pajamas, banishing all but the flimsiest to the farthest recesses of her closet, and she eventually bought ceiling fans for every room, installing them herself. Adding those to the struggling Frigidaire



unit in the dining room window, she managed to keep the temperature of their bedrooms around eighty degrees in the evenings. Now, the eve of their first winter in the little gray house was fast approaching. Fran thought it was probably time to pull her pajamas back out, and to try and bulk up the girls' meager winter wardrobes. She said a little prayer of thanks for Liz, who volunteered at The Mission Attic and always grabbed the best stuff and set it aside for the girls. Yes, Fran resolved not to postpone winterizing the windows.

The girls woke up shortly and they were hungry. Fran had them sit at the kitchen table so she could talk to them and get dinner ready at the same time. "Guys, that's our only potty and you broke it. Can you imagine what we would do without a potty?"

"Pee outside," Finn said.

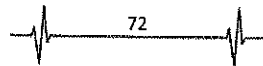
"Gross!" Cecile was mortified. She went to the pantry and pulled out paper plates.

"Oh, good; and poop outside, too?" Fran said. "What would the neighbors say?" She buttered four slices of bread for grilled cheese sandwiches.

"Sorry, momma," Cecile said, placing the paper plates around the table. The elder girl knew what her mother was getting at. "Did it cost money to fix it?"

"It sure did. It would have cost more if I hadn't figured it out. And it took me almost all day, when what I really wanted to do was take you guys to the park. You have to think before you do some crazy thing. I know you're only seven, Cece, but I need you to use your marvelous brain. I noticed an Etch-a-Sketch knob right behind that Barbie head. Finn does what you do. Show her what's right, baby."

Finn's eyes were on Cecile. When the elder set her jaw, so did the younger. "I



just wanted to see if it would fit," Cecile said under her breath.

Three grilled cheese sandwiches, three glasses of grape Kool-Aid, and three handfuls of shoestring potatoes later, they sat and watched Finn's favorite show, The A-Team. The girl had an inexplicable thing for Mr. T. After the show, Fran sent them off for a bath.

Finn was dry and tucked in, and Fran sat on the edge of Cecile's bed gently combing out the girl's wet hair. She watched it wave and dry under the ceiling fan. She leaned over and murmured in her daughter's ear, "I love you, smarty-pants."

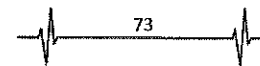
"I love you, momma."

"CC, tell me the truth. Why did you flush that Barbie head?"

Sleepy, Cecile jerked and grimaced as Fran caught a tangle. "I just... wanted to see if it would fit." Fran let it slide. She supposed she could hold the lecture about self-control until CC turned ten.

After the girls were asleep for the night, Fran made her rounds. She checked all the doors, took a palm full of aspirin, and collapsed into her mattresses on the floor. Her last thought before she drifted out of the waking world was that maybe this year she could finally buy a bed. In her first dream, she was sailing her catamaran.

"Hey, there," the driver says to me as I step up into the bus. I decide to sit right behind him. He's older than I am, probably, but handsome enough to seem interesting. He might make conversation if I get bored. For the first hour of the trip, though, it is enough to gaze blankly out the window to my left, compelling my mind to blankness. The melancholy horizon outside my window changes only as the sunken sun disappears



altogether. The wheels of the bus drone beneath us. We pass over the occasional bayou. The effect is cumulatively hypnotic, and the driver startles me when he speaks. "So, what's in Austin?" he asks, out-of-the-blue and half-mumbled, so I'm not sure if he's talking to me or to himself. It's been half a day since I've spoken or been spoken to. I clear my throat.

"Ah. Just visiting a couple of old friends." I realize the lie as I speak it and wonder at myself. What are the girls doing right now? Tara is probably singing herself to sleep, Tobi worrying herself to death about where I've gone. She'd asked me where I was going and all I said was, "To the moon, kiddo. But I'll be back soon."

"Have you been before?" the driver asks. I think his accent might be British. His *been* comes out *bean*.

"Nope. Is that weird? I've lived in Texas my whole life."

"So, you guys are probably, what, headed downtown for some music and cheer?" British, for sure, or a yankee.

"Nope. Just need some new scenery." At least that's the truth. We small-talk until traffic in Houston gets heavy and he has to focus on the road and his radio, then I doze off in earnest. I sleep hard, dreamless, like when I was a kid. When I step off the bus in Austin, groggy and achy from curling up with an armrest for so long, I realize that I feel, sort of, lighter.

Following the directions of a couple I know that lives in the area, I take the metro to a LaQuinta on Interstate 35 and St. John's. The parking lot is about half-full, which makes me feel safe. I'll have some neighbors, and judging by a couple of families I see getting in and out of their cars, maybe they'll be considerate and friendly. I head upstairs

to my room. I dead-bolt the door and open the drapes. I discover quite a large window with a decent view of the university campus and downtown. Past my guilty reflection, I watch a plane fly into the airport and feel lighter still. It's unearthly quiet for an interstate motel, and I listen inside it, wondering what my mother would say about all this.

The room is silent, though, except for the soft hum of the little air conditioner in the window, and I feel deeply grateful for the solitude of this cool, shadowy space.



## Co-Editors

Jessi and Victoria have shared a close friendship fueled by mutual love for all things nerdy for several years. They wrote these biographies for each other.

### Jessi Sanders:

Jessi Sanders graduated with honors from Lamar University in May of 2014 with a B.A. in English and teacher certification. She is currently teaching eighth grade English at Warren Junior High. Jessi's love of literature and her passion for writing poetry was what originally drew her to the position of Pulse co-editor. I was exceedingly honored when she asked me to co-edit Pulse with her, and I would not have been able to complete this project without her. Her talent for art also provided us with a personalized, custom cover for this edition of Pulse.

### Victoria Vandenberg:

Victoria Vandenberg's passion for the written word led her to the Department of English and Modern Languages at Lamar University, where she graduated with honors in December of 2013 with a B.A. in English. She is currently continuing her education at Lamar as she works toward her M.A. in English. Victoria's love of literature enabled her to fulfill the position of Pulse Co-Editor with the enthusiasm only a true student of language possesses. As both her friend and colleague I can say with utmost certainty that the students of Lamar University could not ask for a more devoted person to compile and edit their literary works into this year's edition of Pulse.



## Editorial Staff

### Casey Ford:

Casey Ford is a graduate student of English at Lamar University. She received her B.A. in English in 2013, also from Lamar. During the summer of 2014, Casey attended the West Chester Poetry Conference on scholarship and also completed the Cambridge CELTA certification at UT Austin for teaching ESL. After completing her M.A. in December 2015, she plans to teach language abroad and obtain her M.F.A. in Creative Writing.

### Daishia Hare:

Daishia Hare is a Psychology major in her Senior year. She plans on graduating in the spring of 2016.

### Katherine Waterbury:

Katherine Waterbury is senior working toward her B.A. in English. She expects to graduate in the fall of 2015.



# Jessi Sanders

## Ex Libris

I want you to read me like a book.

I want you to read me like a book that speaks to you  
about all the things that make you ache to be alive.

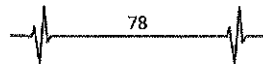
A book you have read a hundred times.

I want you to flip my pages and dog-ear my corners  
and pull up the bits of post-its you stuck on me  
to mark the words that breathe to you  
so you can see the edges of the letters caught underneath.

I want you to underline my words in pencils of a thousand colors  
so that when you hold me  
between your thumb and forefinger and set me into motion,  
I look like sunset and sunrise  
across oceans of black and white.

I want you to hold me close to your chest  
as you live in me and through me.

I want you to open me wide  
until my spine is pressed flat against some random surface,  
and if you have to do it to really understand the truth in me,  
I want you to break my binding.



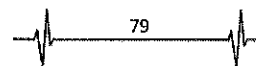
Because it will break someday, by age or by flame,  
and so I want it to be your hands that do the breaking.

I want you not to care that my life does not line up in chapters.  
That I feel like words torn from a thousand other pages  
and stuck in random places.

That I don't come with a glossary or a timeline.  
That my cover art is water-stained and faded.

I want you to see that the letters I carry paint pictures  
of people stretched and stitched together like trees in a forest,  
hands clasped across the breach between car seats,  
grass against toes and waves against waists,  
teeth marks on lips and tears pressed against faces.

I want you to mark your place in me  
with careful fingers,  
running your palms over my ragged gilt edges.  
And I want you to read me.







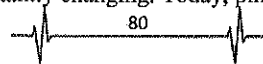
# Victoria Vandenberg

## The Fallacy of Authorial Intent

Stanley Fish made a statement in his essay *Interpreting the Variorum* that illustrated a problem I have noticed in my own writing. He pointed out that it is easy for readers to “surrender to the bias of our critical language and begin to talk as if poems, not readers or interpreters, did things.” This is the exact issue I had with the paper I wrote about *Frankenstein*. I spent the entire paper talking about how the creature felt, and what he thought about. I realize now that this interpretation of the work was erroneous since the creature is a fictional character without the ability to think or feel.

My paper on *Frankenstein* would have been a stronger paper if I had chosen a different way to discuss its meaning. I should have approached the paper by stating how the creature’s actions symbolize some specific aspect of society. This argument would have been more accurate. It is difficult to refrain from assigning agency to fictional characters, particularly when they are well written, but fictional characters cannot think which makes the entire argument invalid. Unfortunately, assigning agency to a character inevitably leads to an authorial intent analysis.

Authorial intent is a form of analysis I have used many times in the past. However, I have come to the belief that it is not a good or logical argument. First of all, I should not presume to know the mind of another person. Whether they are my best friend or a total stranger I am not in their mind so I cannot know their intent. Second, authorial intent is unstable because of historical and social differences. Society is in constant flux so symbols are constantly changing. Today, pink equals girl, in fifty years



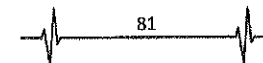
pink might equal monkey. Although, there are historical records modern people can never fully understand past societies and all the complexities. All these problems forces me to ask whether what the author intended even matters at all.

When I read a poem or a story I have an immediate reaction to its meaning. That meaning is subject to my interpretation, which is influenced by many factors. My interpretation of a work will come from my personal experiences as a white twenty-something female college student. Someone with a different background might read the same poem or story and see a completely different meaning. This raises a conundrum of which interpretation is correct. Personally, I think that both interpretations are “correct” because they are correct to the individual reading the work.

Once an author submits their work to the public it is no longer their own. They might retain the legal rights to it but readers who love the work begin to think of it as theirs. This possession of work produces an interpretation of it that is different for every reader. Each individual interpretation is different, even from the author’s original intent, yet none of them are wrong. This is one part of being an English student that I have difficulty with. If everyone has different interpretations of a work how can they all be right? I enjoy taking a piece of literature and dissecting it for meaning and symbols. Yet, when I am faced with someone who has a different interpretation I find myself at a loss. We both have solid arguments and examples from the text to support our case, but we cannot both be right. For the sake of my sanity I have come to the conclusion that in those situations I will simply agree to disagree.

### Work Cited

Leitch, Vincent B. ed. *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*. 2<sup>nd</sup>ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2010. Print



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We don't  
READ & WRITE

Poetry

BECAUSE  
WE THINK IT'S  
CUTE.

We read and write

POETRY because

we are members of the human race

AND THE HUMAN RACE IS

filled with

PASSION

ADAPTED FROM  
A SOCIETY WITH