

PULSE



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PULSE

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Composition II

Melanie Almufti, "The Flower That Never
Blooms"

Alaniz Vásquez, "Discovering the Dance in
Faulkner's 'A Rose for Emily'"

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MEGAN CROSBY

Seventeen and Crazy (A Monologue for Clarisse of Fahrenheit 451)

I watch the people pass and hear
a quiet hum of cardboard voices and
the dull, synchronous beat of steps with feet
whose arches ache. They walk in circles, walk
in circles, walk in circles, 'til they die.
I fear my body was not made for such
definite paths. I'll leave it up to them.
My body tends to bend and float without
the stars ahead. I know they never scream.
They never sing. They never taste the rain.
They never listen, and they only speak
of charts, and graphs, and job security.
They live in inches, and they die in miles.
They birth their dreams then steal their breaths.
I'll let the secret rest between my palms
like violets pressed among the pages
of the ashen, withered books concealed in dust.
These wraiths will pause and will not think to breathe.
While they are glued to parlor walls, the moon
and I shall sing dandelion hymns.

After Nearly Twenty Years of Tight-Lipped Girl-Next-Door-ness an Appreciation for the F-word

God, it feels good
to say it to someone
who really deserves it
while using that
slamming door,
shattered china
against a wall,
slap to the face,
sound of it.

Oh my,
to throw it out
of your pink-lipsticked,
bubble gum mouth
in such an ominous manner
that the bar soap little old lady
has to remind you
of your demeanor.
She will say
"Sweetness,
you're such a darling girl,
you don't need to have
such a filthy mouth."

Hey, be a Lady.
You are much prettier
when you keep quiet,
and if you speak
at all, do it
in giggles,
nods, and
pouts.

Blanket Songs

My plan for calm-

-to be utterly
enveloped
in warmth
during the bleakest
winter of the century
-in an oversized flannel shirt
and a black lace slip
tangled in morning blankets
until the whimpers
of world's end
are heard

-translating
the movements
and the murmurs
tossed from your
sleep into songs
worthy of
evening birds

Swallowed by Foam and Jade

We are making up
for quiet youths
spent in
good girl
saddle shoes
over compensating
for the girls we
were with nervous
fingers clenching
quilted blankets
up over our chins

Then we held each
breath and waited
until the moment
passed us by
while dandelions
trembled
in the damp and
loamy earth

But now we live
for the hope
that we will drown
that our washed-out
faces will be
lost in seas
of undulating
foam and
Jade

A Window upon Staring out the Window

You may see a light
glowing beneath the door.
Dimly not too bright,
You may see a light,
Turn your back upon the sight,
And collapse onto the floor.
You may see a light
glowing beneath the door.

The night comes and goes.
The hour shall cause a pain.
Silent and still, She knows,
the night comes and goes.
The footsteps, the voice she chose
are vapor leaving the train.
The night come and goes.
The hour shall cause a pain.

A Certain Serenity

Rain-moist pebble paths
Stretching seamlessly into
Orange horizons.

Strewn about are the
Morning's new-fallen petals –
Honeysuckle air.

We walk with bared soles,
Inebriated by the
Mist upon our cheeks.

At home, a fire burns.
The smoke trails above the trees
Into the new day,

But the last cricket
Gives a soft soliloquy,
And we take our time.

Identifying with Alan Dugan

Upon my drive home from Jasper,
I spied a portalet standing lonely
in an unmanned construction zone.
My laughter drowned out the
oldies station more so than had
a truck gone by labeled proudly
with "Lubricants" on either side
in all capital letters.
Not quite placing my finger
on why I'd erupted thusly,
it came to mind that
Alan Dugan had made of himself
a sarcophagus of sorts
in a burial chamber such as this,
and then it hit me –
this latrine wasn't Egypt,
and that's what was so funny, you see:
Mel Brooks.

Nirvana

Sing for me, O crickets,
from the nocturnal hymnal.
Serenade the spheres,
if only for another night,
that I might know what sends
the fireflies to dancing
upon fields of moon-drenched green,
and though I share not
in their radiant ball,
I am with them.

They are as numerous
as the bodies in heaven,
and their million lights
grant me a gentle understanding
of the celestial melody
playing far off, just so
I might say that
I am among the stars,
even as the stars are among me,
and maybe, in this awareness,
I can comprehend a paradise
in this place,
at this time.

Smoking

If the very idea didn't repulse me,
I think I would take up smoking
just so that on sleepless nights
beneath the heavens, I might venture
into the crisp winter air, and prop myself
in a carefully casual position against
a tree, either rather tall or rather thick,
and raise the lit length of the thing
to my mouth.

Only one foot would be planted on the grass;
the other would rest, as nonchalantly
as I could muster, against the trunk,
and the fuming tube would rest snugly
between my right index and middle fingers.
I would, of course, turn my eyes above
to see each exhalation of smoke and vapor
disperse like a wave into clear seas,
assimilating into everything around me –
every one a billowy dream lost in the night,
with only the promise that I might dream
so long as the flame should hold.

Yin, Yang

Do you recall the Chaos?
I think we were all present
when the gods brought in an order
and called the new thing Cosmos.
They separated what was and wasn't,
and somewhere in there, yin and yang.
Ten thousand yin, ten thousand yang.
The former had an ether to it;
it rose until it became a sky.
Everything else was base, and so
became the earth, and here we are.
But bits of the latter pierced into heaven,
and winds whispers through valleys.
It seems that the elements of Cosmos
could not abide in separation,
and again – here we are. Man and woman.
A single yin, a single yang,
and all the things implied
by the universe composed of us.

ASHLYNN IVY

The Old Singer

My grandmother's arms hung in thick loose folds
as she fed the sewing machine squares
of seersucker and paisley fabric. "Keep a steady eye,"
she said, sweat glistening on the back of her neck,
her broad shoulders huddled over the quick hum,
click, and clatter of the old sewing machine.
Gifts of both love and thrift, quilts made from the ghosts
of worn sheets, handkerchiefs, and
stained aprons littered the tabletops and shelves.
There were ghosts between us too, their soft song
looming somewhere above the drone of needle and
thread.
Generations of grandmothers and their grand-daughters,
sitting close, their breaths becoming one in another,
turning the circle, the story, the quilt.

The Back Porch Blues

The audience, a damp newspaper
and a matted mop,
lean beside a pile of rotting wood
and an empty bird feeder
that have settled against the back porch steps
to watch the old musician hum
as he stretches, plunks, and plops
at a custom made, hollow-bodied guitar,
keeping time and meter
with the rise and fall of his bare foot.
"Straight from the Gulf Coast," he brags
in between cigarettes and sips of black coffee,
then stops and tips his feathered hat to the trees,
the cypress and the cedar.
He grins wide and long, taking a deep breath
and with the chords he strums,
he fills the air with his final boast.

Empress of the Blues *To Bessie Smith*

Her voice, birdsong dipped in Gin,
orbited those stages in Chattanooga,
where she kindled the air like a moon
until it was warm, full, and drunk with each note.

Back stage, somewhere on the vaudeville circuit,
I'm sure you could hear her honeyed croon
while she decked herself in feathers, tucked
a blue tinged bird of paradise behind her ear.

And so, she sang the *Downhearted Blues*,
tipped the tumblers back, warbling
through the twenties until tastes changed
and hard liquor settled in her throat.

Hard to think of that end, a car crash
near the crossroads where Johnson
sold his soul. Here, where her pulse stilled,
and the song was bled dry.

On the Eighth Day of Creation

Is God merely out
for a smoke break,
crafting gray clouds
from the fallen ash,

the end of his cigarette
dangling with pride
from the tips of his
yellowed fingers?

With might he yawns,
and the wise roots
of ancient trees know
to tremble and clutch

at the dirt beneath them
as the wind moves.
Even the proud flowers
give a slight bend

of their necks as he
sighs gently over them,
and in admiration he lifts
his magnificent chin.

T J GEIGER, II

The Fire this Time

With their beautiful brown
and sable faces
everyday they meet
and curse me.

Children, but not children,
they wade in the water
of a country drowning—
or is it the fire this time?

I see no rainbow
save the one my students
form slowly streaming
through the halls
from room to room.

The children gonna
trouble the teacher
just before they
explode.

To Pundits

Pontificating pundits
Spewing spittle with their babble
About much of which
They know little.

Leaving no listener informed
About the not so special interests
They represent.

Loving America, but
Hating Americans,
That's their game.

Flags unfurled, but not
Understood, like Mao's
Little Red Book in China:
Everywhere on display
And unread.

LIONEL MITCHELL

Grandmama's Hands

Her veins are prouder than mine,
Swollen like my Mother's chest the night of graduation.
It would take me hours to number all the calluses
Clinging to her fingers,
All the unresolved splinters buried beneath the skirt
Of her cotton roughened skin.
She used to weave rainbows to wrap all around us
When Winter settled like dust
And soaked itself into the riddled boards of what passed
for a house,
Laying those hands against our foreheads each night to
gauge
The temperature of our blood,
Adjusting our rainbows in kind to keep "the monia"
From taking residence in our paper thin lungs.
21 children reared by those hands,
Kneaded like gingerbread dough,
Cradled like dead birds, and porcelain,
Protected by a grip that bent mountains
Just to hold on to us.

Regretfully

We were both children,
Lost in the haze of lives stretched too thin
between the pegs of birth and mortality,
wings outstretched, spinning like hummingbirds.

Why?

Because there was nothing else to do
inside the woods we called a jungle,
brimming with so much life that the trees moved.
We chased the invisible squirrels and purple toads
we knew had to be there.

We spun because we liked how the trees
Swirled, even when our bodies stalled.
The blending of the colors Nature
painted the world with
was a rainbow we could recreate and chase daily.

Now,

I regret each grain of sand slipped through fingers
wet with the river's blood.
Each tick of the clock that didn't stop to warn us
of its passing.
Each sunset that crept by us while we were busy
spinning like toy tops and hummingbirds.

I still remember you,
in all your glory

streamers and pixy sticks dangling from your fingertips.
With a dirt smudged face your Mother would curse you
for,

As wild as the hummingbirds I spun just to keep sight of,
As wild as the invisible squirrels and
Purple toads we never could quite catch,
I remember that I never could quite catch you.

KELLY H. TIBBETTS

Boys on Graves

Will stepped out of the blinding summer heat and into
the cool air of the Super Stop gas station on 34th and Ma-
jor. Ahead of him were his older brother Mike and best
friend Sean. The bell atop the glass door jingled as they
entered.

"Remember," Mike started, "we only have a few
bucks, so don't get much."

"But I'm hungry. Can I get a bag of chips and maybe
a slurpee?" Will asked his brother.

Mike was already walking in the direction of the candy.
He did not turn around, but rather muttered, "No."

Mike and Will's father had earlier that day given them
five dollars before dropping them off at Sean's house for
the afternoon. Their father worked the graveyard shift at
the refinery and slept during the day, so the two boys usu-
ally spent their days with Sean.

"Don't worry about it, Will," Sean leaned over to his
friend. "I swiped ten dollars from my mom's purse before
we left. She'll never know. Besides, I want something
special today."

"What?" Will asked.

"I'm not worried about candy and all that crap," Sean
explained. "I'm gonna get one of those magazines." Sean
pointed to the little section of magazines below the front
windows of the Super Stop. "That's what I want."

Will's eyes widened as he began to grasp what Sean
meant by wanting a magazine. He and his brother had
only recently discovered a small stack of pornographic
magazines under their father's bed. They had spent hours
going through each one, sometimes laughing at the pic-
tures, sometimes admiring them. As children, Will at nine
and Mike at twelve, the experience was something of a

profound and comedic revelation.

Sean left Will and stepped over to the magazines. Will walked behind him.

"You boys aren't supposed to be over there," the clerk, a young Indian man with a sparsely grown-in moustache, called out.

Mike, hearing the clerk, walked quickly over to where the other two boys were standing. "What the hell are you two clowns doing?"

"Nothing," Sean said.

"Sean wants a dirty magazine," Will whispered.

The clerk raised his voice this time, "Hey! Get away from there, I said!"

"Thanks a lot, Will." Sean scowled.

"Well, if you're gonna get it, you're gonna have to steal it. Don't you know anything? You're too young to just walk up to the man and buy that kinda stuff." Mike added.

Mike had already picked out his snacks. He got a cream-soda and a what-cha-ma-call-it chocolate bar. What-cha-ma-call-its were his favorite. "Get your snacks so we can get outta here," he said.

Sean looked angrily at the other two. "I wanna god-damn magazine."

"I already told you. They won't let us buy it." Mike told him again.

"Can you take it for us?" Will asked his brother.

"Maybe he's chicken." Sean challenged.

Mike hesitated for a moment, then growled, "Gimme the stupid thing."

Sean quickly took up a magazine wrapped in plastic and handed it to Mike.

"Here," Sean said. "This looks like a good one."

When the boys got to the counter the clerk looked at them sternly. "I told you boys to stay away from the magazines. I should call the cops."

"Sorry, mister" Mike mumbled. Only a few moments before, Mike had stuffed the magazine discretely into the front of his pants.

"It's okay. Just stay away from there next time, please."

Mike paid for his candy and drink. They were heading out the door when Sean turned around and shouted, "Screw you, Abu!"

The three took off running down the street. They ran laughing and shouting through a busy four-way stop and across the street until they had made it to a residential neighborhood. Here they crossed onto Graves, which would lead them the one mile back to Sean's house. Their lungs were burning, and their sides ached. They stopped running and decided to walk the remaining distance.

Mike was the first to speak again. "That was funny!" he laughed.

"Yeah," Will added. "Abu! Classic."

"My dad hates those people," Sean explained, gloating. "He gives 'em hell every time we have to go in one of those damn places. Says they smell like week-old shit."

The boys laughed again, in short, tired breaths. Will's wavy brown hair stuck to his forehead. His face had turned pink in the sun, and he was sweating through his over-sized t-shirt. In the excitement over the magazine, he had forgotten his hunger and chose no snack. He walked with his hands empty. Sean had freckles, which became more prominent in the sun. They spread sporadically across the bridge of his nose and below his squinty blue eyes.

Mike led the boys down the street. He walked with a swagger, even at twelve years old. His blonde hair was perfect, and it seemed as though he never broke a sweat. He wore his baggy Silvertabs just off his hips, sagging just enough to show the tops of his boxer-shorts, a fashion statement his brother attempted, but failed, to emulate.

"I can't wait to get home and check out our magazine," Will said.

"Why wait?" Sean responded. "Let's break it out now."

Mike stopped walking and pulled the magazine out of his pants. "Alright. Let's see what we've got here." He quickly tore the plastic off the cover. On the cover were two blondes, mouths slightly opened, locked in an embrace. The boys turned the pages quickly, craning their necks to see more closely. Mike licked his lips, his grin broadening as each new girl revealed herself.

"Where do girls like that come from?" Will asked.

"I don't know," Sean said.

"Yeah, and if you did know," Mike began, "they wouldn't have anything to do with you."

And the boys laughed again, even Will.

For the next block and a half the boys continued to gape at the pages of the magazine. To free his hands, Mike had thrown away his cream soda. His candy bar he stuffed into his jeans pocket.

In the next moment, Will noticed something moving in the grass just up the street. It was just enough to distract his attention from the magazine. Mike noticed it next.

"Hey. What is that up there?" Will asked his brother.

"Dunno."

"Oh, it's nothin'," Sean said quickly, hardly glancing up to see.

They were getting nearer to whatever it was that was moving. Will could tell that it was small and moving slowly away from the edge of the sidewalk. Feeling a sudden tug of anxiety, he jogged ahead to satisfy his curiosity and was shocked when he came to the thing. A small grey squirrel with half its body crushed was dragging itself off the road and into the grass.

As Will was making his discovery, the other two

scrambled to his side and made their own. There was only the harshed sound of the squirrel laboring on the ground. Will was the first to speak. "Oh, my God."

The boys kneeled closer to the injured animal. They could tell that the squirrel had only been recently run over, through not the entire body of the animal, just the hind legs and tail.

"We've got to help him," Will said.

"What'll we do?" Sean asked, growing excited. Sean and Will each turned to Mike for answers. After all, Mike was the oldest and had been man enough to steal a magazine.

Mike thought for a moment and quickly came up with a plan. He turned to his little brother. "Will, I want you to gather some nuts and acorns and stuff. Anything like that you can find. Sean, help me get him over there by that tree."

While Will sprinted around the neighboring yards looking for acorns, Mike and Sean worked to slip the magazine under the squirrel. They were able to transport the squirrel to the foot of a large oak tree in the nearest yard. Will arrived moments later with a handful of small green acorns.

In Will's mind there was no doubt they would be able to mend the squirrel's back and restore it health. He would then take it home and keep the grateful thing as his pet. But the squirrel seemed all the more horrified by their presence. Blood was smeared across the magazine on which the animal continued to writhe and shift.

"See if it wants your what-cha-ma-call-it." Sean asked Mike.

Mike took the chocolate bar out of his pocket and felt the softness of the package. The candy bar had melted into a gooey mess. He placed the chocolate on the magazine, hoping the squirrel would eat and restore itself. It would not. The squirrel's cries grew louder as it became

increasingly obvious that the boys would not be able to save it.

"You know what we have to do, don't you?" Mike said softly to his brother. "We need a stick, a sharp one."

Sean looked blankly at Mike for an instant, and the two set off together to find what they needed, and they found just the stick under a row of bushes near the old oak tree. It was about two feet long and slightly crooked. But it had the qualities necessary to the task. It was fairly thick and pointed on one end. With the stick the boys walked quickly back to Will and his dying squirrel.

Will looked up at his brother. He could feel hot tears welling up in his eyes. "Please don't, Mike. Please?"

Mike kept his eyes down, focusing on the squirrel. Will repeated his question again. This time Mike turned to him. "It's gonna die. Look at him. He's in so much pain."

Sean stood by Will. He also could not look away from the animal. "I wish my daddy was here. He'd know." Sean said it as more of a plea than a direct statement. "He'd know."

Mike positioned himself. He took the stick and held the dull end with his right hand and the middle of the stick with his left. Carefully he placed the pointed end on the squirrel's throat, just below the jaws. The squirrel's large black eyes seemed to gaze directly into him, pleading.

Will was now openly crying. Through his blurred vision he could see Mike readying himself. He knew what would come next. He turned away just before Mike thrust his weight down. The squirrel fought back weakly. Will, hearing the unbearable sounds coming from the animal, grabbed violently at his ears. At last he turned back around.

Will saw that Mike had been crying. Tears dripped off Mike's chin as he tore the stick from the squirrel's throat. "It's not sharp enough," he cried. "It's just not sharp enough." He raised the stick high above him, this time

with the blunt end in the air. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry," he whispered repeatedly. Will closed his eyes. He heard a few short, muffled thumps and knew it was over.

Together the boys dug a small hole beneath a clover patch, under a long row of honey-suckle bushes. In it they placed the broken squirrel and the acorns Will had gathered for it. They covered the grave carefully and with their fingers marked a cross in the loose earth. The magazine they left at the foot of the tree, tattered and smeared with dirt and blood. After the burial, the boys ran as fast as they could home, crying in the soft light of the failing sun.

The American Revolution when You're 19

Benjamin Lincoln was in charge
of four-to-five thousand American soldiers
in Charleston, South Carolina. He is
an example of

My head hurts and I couldn't get to sleep
last night until after three
because I just can't turn off

a man with poor decision making skills.
Lincoln is infamous for having
surrendered the largest force
of American soldiers to

my brain and I know she's at least
two weeks late and goddamn it I'm
too young to get married and change

the British during the war. He
listened to politicians instead of Washington
and thus gave up a major
American city to

diapers because I have this exam and no
money and my mother beat me and
I know I'll beat

the enemy. George Germaine
coordinated the war effort on the
part of the British. He is historical in
that he was the head of

my children too and they'll hate
me like I hate her and it's just
how I hate and I'm so tired of

the war
of the British; however, he is often
criticized for his performance and poor decision
making skills during the war

the British and the war
and the British. With all the same
things and what does the American Revolution mean

when my life is falling apart?

Dumb Creatures

Before this gets any more serious, I think you should
know
How much of a bastard I am.
Last summer I spent three weeks vacationing in England,
All at my mother's expense.
I toured Westminster Abbey and
Touched the resting places of giants in Poet's Corner.
I visited Shakespeare in Stratford
And read the curse upon his grave.
And when I got back home I threatened to
"Knock the fucking teeth" out of my mother's head.

That's only a recent example.

At nineteen I impregnated my sixteen year-old girlfriend
And refused to pay her good Catholic family
A penny of the four-hundred dollars they demanded
For the abortion, even though Daddy Green threatened
charges.

She wanted to be captain of the drill-team.
What she did not want was the big tummy and saggy
mom-tits.

After all, it was just tissue.

Tissue.

But I have almost convinced you.
My tiny white Pomeranian loves me because
I feed her cheap food
And then rub her face in shit when that same cheap food
Comes out on my cheap carpet.
But that's the kind of love I need.
The love of dumb creatures.
Because they cannot indict me eloquently; The truth is
this:
That I am loved by the mother I openly despise,
That I am secretly relieved the "tissue" was extracted and
burned in a jar

Alongside half-a-dozen other bits of tissue in half-a-dozen
similar jars,
That the dog I abuse loves me far more than I deserve.
I must be a genius.
I condemn myself without hesitation.

For Money, in the Sun

I don't know how long she's
Been doing this,
But she's figured out that
The spot along the Queen's Walk
Just outside the new Globe theatre
Is a great spot for
A street musician to flirt and make money.
She wears a black v-neck blouse,
Black skirt, and black shoes with
Little black ribbons.
And every now and then
She looks up at me from her music
And smiles.
I don't know the songs,
And she's really not very good,
But that's not the point.
I'm a tourist and right now she is London.
And I'd love to have sex with her.
But after this next song
I'll get up, drop a pound into
The violin case at her feet, and smile that
If I weren't chicken shit, I'd ask you out smile
Before I walk away
Having never said a single word.

Smoking Buddy

There is something exclusive about
smoking a nice, stinking cigar.
I have one here.
It's a big mother.
Wrapper says,
Volcano Cigars
Vanilla Mac Nut Flavor.
And in smaller print:
Visit our web site and enter to win.
I wonder what I could win.
A new volcano, maybe.
And I really want to smoke the damn thing,
I just can't,
because I lost my smoking buddy who recently
found God and became one
of those programmed bastards who
speak in tongues and falls down a lot.
Now we can't be friends because
people who use words like *shit, fuck, ass*
and who don't fall down a lot
go to hell,
especially those who smoke *Volcano Cigars*
Vanilla Mac Nut Flavor.
I don't know.
Maybe I should give up this anger and resistance thing,
put down my cigar
and pick up a Bible.
That way I could get my friend back
and save my lost soul
from eternal damnation.
Maybe.
And maybe Eleanor Roosevelt was a beauty queen.

The Hollow Man Revisited: Narrator Jim Burden in My Ántonia

Willa Cather's Jim Burden is intrinsically complicated simply because not much is ever revealed about him. Cather gives scant information to fill in the blanks as to Jim's background, beliefs, and even his life after Ántonia. Jim Burden is as much an "outcast" as anyone in the story — he begins as an uprooted orphan, and ends as an uprooted lawyer. The adult Jim also seems disconnected from his childhood: he has no longing to return to life on the farm or to Ántonia until the close of the book, when he is trapped in a very probable loveless and sexless marriage and in a job that keeps him constantly uprooted. Burden continually detaches himself from his surroundings and his peers for the sake of propriety. This voluntary disconnection and general lack of development of the narrative character may be explained by one of several factors. The fact Cather, a lesbian, chose to write from a man's perspective presents immediate problems. Cather wrote *My Ántonia* at a time in her life when women had disappointed her and thus, Jim keeps his distance from the opposite sex, and perhaps, Cather intended Jim's life to seem hollow to offset the fullness of Ántonia's.

Jim may lack background and depth simply because Willa Cather's experience with men was limited. She had two brothers, and had a good relationship with her father, Charles Cather. Woodress states that "Charles and Willa had always been very close" (24). However, it seems she never formed a romantic attachment to a man. Writing from the perspective of the opposite sex is difficult enough, but Cather was a lesbian, a lifestyle that can severely limit insight onto the opposite sex and sex itself. Cather did not participate in heterosexual sex, and it

seems neither does Jim. Burden's sexless and loveless marriage adds to the feeling that he is essentially a flat character. Even in his younger years, before his marriage, Jim is unable or unwilling to form any sort of romantic relationship with Lena, even though he states that he was "in love with Lena" (Cather 227). Instead of deepening the relationship with a woman he is supposedly in love with, he chooses to leave, saying "I'll never settle down and grind if I stay here. You know that" (Cather 230). So, ultimately, love and sex seem to be distractions throughout Jim's life. He suppresses love and desire and reverts to his bland world of propriety and work.

Cather's men in general seem to be all work and no play. Jim's grandfather only reserves time for prayer and Bible readings. There is no show of affection between Jim's grandfather and grandmother at all. This temperament may be a reflection of her grandfather's disposition: an "inflexible will and evangelical zeal" (Woodress 22). Perhaps it is also a reflection of how marriages were formed at the time—usually more of a business merger than a matter of love or affection. Otto and Jake seem to be a sort of male couple who have no interest in anything but work and, after the family moves to town, adventure on the western frontier. Anything more between them is as forbidden in the contemporary social world as is Cather's own sexuality. Mr. Shimerda obviously finds little joy in his daughters or his wife since he commits suicide and leaves them to the care of Ambrosch.

Perhaps Cather simply did not have enough observation and certainly little experience with heterosexual relationships to create a male character that interacts normally with women. One of the only male characters to have "relationships" with women, Wick Cutter, is a despicable character. The adulterous relationships Cutter has with women always end in shame and ruin for the female characters. Women are tainted by mere association with

him, like Antonia. The general opinion in Black Hawk is "if you go to work for the Cutters, you're likely to have a fling that you won't get up from in a hurry" (Cather 166). Even the more respectable characters have dysfunctional relationships with women. Mr. Harling seems oppressive. When he is home, he keeps his wife locked up with him, and his children are expected to be silent and unseen. These strained relationships seem to be a theme throughout Cather's fiction. This could be a failed attempt to "[transform] her emotional life and experiences into acceptable, heterosexual forms and guises" (Lambert 120). Gelfant agrees: "Though the tenor of her writing is normality, normal sex stands barred from her fictional world" (80).

Jim also seems to act artificially in some situations. He doesn't seem to act like a young man might in the company of girls like Lena and Antonia. He does, briefly, succumb to enjoying the presence of the opposite sex when he attends the firemen's hall dances. However, the loss of his grandmother's high opinion is all it takes for Jim to withdraw from the girls again and throw himself into his studies. Jim seems easily deterred from girls, and likewise, easily engaged in studying, two things which are not typical behavior for a young man. Jim's marriage is never mentioned in the book proper, but the introduction mentions that "his career was suddenly advanced by a brilliant marriage" (Cather 2). Cather seems to suggest that this marriage came about only because the woman had been slighted by a better suitor, and felt like doing something spiteful (2). His marriage is not a relationship of love, but a vehicle to advance his career. Yet, the speaker in the introduction says Jim has a "naturally romantic and ardent disposition" (Cather 2-3). This seems contradictory. A "romantic" and "ardent" man would presumably have married for love, not to climb another rung on the career ladder. These vague and contradictory

behaviors from Jim are quite possibly a result of Cather's small range of experience with the opposite sex.

Also, Cather's experience with women at the time she wrote *My Antonia* had disappointed her. Stephanie Vaughn states in her introduction that the woman that Cather had probably been much in love with, and spent a great deal of time with, Isabelle McClung, married a man (xxx). Cather had obviously expected more of Isabelle than Isabelle herself intended to give. This very great disappointment coupled with the illness of her mother came just before Cather began *My Antonia*. In a letter to Dorothy Canfield Fisher, Cather writes, "Loss of Isabelle is a severe one" (56). Later on in the year, Cather wrote Elizabeth Sergeant, "Isabelle's marriage still hard to accept" (58). Clearly, Cather was deeply affected by the event. "By the time she went back to New York in the autumn, [1916] she had written several chapters of *My Antonia*. So, though it draws deeply on the material of her childhood, it was strongly coloured too by these recent feelings: her desolation at Isabelle's betrayal" (Lee 136). This may have given Jim his lackluster stance on love and women. Jim never mentions his marriage, we only learn that he is really married from the introduction, so he does not seem to be "happily" married. Lee sums it up, calling his marriage "an offstage failure" (154). The evidence in Cather's introduction suggests that Jim and his wife rarely see each other, and she is an unpleasant woman with a disposition very different from his own (2). Jim's "quiet tastes irritate" his wife, and her flagrant behavior must irritate him. Cather's speaker in the introduction even goes so far as to suggest Jim's marriage is a "disappointment," though not severe enough to "chill his naturally romantic . . . disposition" (2). Perhaps Cather was writing a warning on what was to come for Isabelle, or perhaps she was bitter and broken up over Isabelle's marriage, and so her narrator, Burden, rejects marriage and women thus.

Jim is likewise disappointed in Antonia in several instances in the novel and withdraws from her. After her father's suicide, and Antonia works in the fields like a man, Jim is disappointed not to see her but also that she will stoop to such work voluntarily. Antonia seems to prefer this sort of work to learning and housework, saying "I can work like mans now. . . . School is all right for little boys" (Cather 100). Later she says "Oh, better I like to work out-of-doors than in a house! . . . I not care that your grandmother say it makes me like a man. I like to be like a man" (Cather 111). Chapter 18 contains the episode with Ambrosch and Jake over the horse collar, in which Jim withdraws even further from Antonia due to her spiteful jeers and taunts. Now Jim is distanced from Antonia not because he has no chance to see her but because he has no *wish* to see her. Jim is offended by Antonia's taunts, and she instantly is no longer a friend, but an ungrateful Czech. Jim feels that her behavior is as bad as Ambrosch's. It is Jim's grandfather who ends the frigid spell between them by riding over to invite Antonia to come and work in the Burden house helping in the kitchen.

Jim's biggest disappointment in Antonia is later, after the Burdens move to Black Hawk and Antonia is working next door at the Harlings'. Antonia's refusal to stop going to the dances and decision instead to go work for Wick Cutter shames her in Jim's eyes. Her defiance is as shameful to Jim as the Cutters' reputation. Perhaps Cather is using Jim to represent the present society and its ideals, and using Antonia to express a progressive idea of women. Antonia is not bothered by propriety, as perhaps Cather wishes she were free to express herself. Jim clings to the established social mode because Cather herself does.

Still, Jim agrees to tend Cutter's house. It is after Cutter has beaten him on Antonia's account that Jim with-

draws completely to the university and his studies. At this point, Antonia seems to disappear from the novel. Jim is let down even by Lena's mentions of Antonia. Lena tells Jim that Antonia is engaged to Larry Donovan, and Jim responds "I think I'd better go home and look after Antonia," but he never does (Cather 211). Jim does not seem as concerned for Antonia's well-being as he might've before the Cutter episode. The incident at Wick Cutter's house that night seems to have been the breaking point in their "relationship," as Isabelle's marriage was in Cather's life. Though Cather continued to visit Isabelle until she died, things would never be the same between them.

Jim withdraws from not only Antonia, but all the "hired girls" for the sake of propriety. Though he "hoped ~~that~~ Sylvester would marry Lena, and thus give all the country girls a better position in town," Jim himself would never think of marrying one of the hired girls, no matter how attached he might become to Antonia or later, Lena (Cather 163). This may be a reflection of Cather's own withdrawal from women at the time. In her youth, Cather kept her hair short, dressed unconventionally, and sometimes signed her name as "William" rather than "Willa." Vaughn suggests in her introduction that once Cather realized she was to have a career as a writer, she began wearing silk dresses, let her hair grow out, and changed her name back to "Willa" (ix-x). Jim undergoes a ~~similar~~ almost slavish return to propriety when he stops attending the Firemen's Hall dances. In doing so, he cuts off his closest contact with women since he played with Antonia on the farm. He has one more brush with Lena before he plunges into studies, profession, and a loveless marriage. Though Cather put up her façade of propriety, she used Jim as a tool to express her feelings as she felt unable to do in reality.

Cather was unwilling or unable to express her homosexuality freely. "In her society it was difficult to be a

woman and achieve professionally, and she certainly could not be a woman who loved women," and as a result of this, Lambert says, "she began to deny or distort the sexuality of her principal characters" (120). Jim is not alone in this, indeed he "belongs to a remarkable gallery of characters for whom Cather constantly invalidates sex" (Gelfant 80). She "denies Jim's erotic impulses and Antonia's sexuality as well; and she retreats into the safety of convention by ensconcing Antonia in marriage and rendering her apotheosis as earth mother" (Lambert 126). Cather's inability or unwillingness to express her own sexuality colors all her characters with a similar lack of contact with the sexual world. Cather's characters may marry and bear children, but sex and love are rarely present on any other terms, and thus the marriages do not seem fulfilling or healthy. This seems to be one of Cather's greatest failings: because she was unable to freely love in her society, her characters constantly find themselves in the same situation. Cather seems unable to write about love or sex, and so her characters suffer a lack of development and depth without it.

Jim also could be little more than a literary foil to Antonia. Where Jim's life is hollow, Antonia's seems that much fuller. Jim is childless, lives without a meaningful relationship, and is often away from home, uprooted. Antonia, in the final chapters, has a loving husband, sons, daughters, and a prosperous farm which has become her real home. Of course, neither Jim nor Antonia seems to have a real sex life, but when compared to Jim, Antonia certainly seems to have lived a fuller life. In the end, Antonia has become a flat-chested, toothless, rough and brown-skinned woman, which seems a terrible change from her beautiful youth. However, when we compare her to Jim, who in the introduction is said to still appear young, her condition seems trivial in light of the fact that her life is full and happy (Cather 3). Jim is such a near

perfect foil to Antonia in the end that it is hard to imagine that it was not at least partially intentional. Thus, perhaps, Cather considered it necessary for Jim Burden to be a flat character to give Antonia the roundness she needed. Without the example of Jim's sexless marriage and rootless existence, Antonia's cozy farm life might not seem as inviting. Though the farm is prosperous, the Cuzak family is still at poverty level because of the sheer number of children they have. Jim obviously enjoys a comfortable lifestyle and makes enough not to feel the pangs of poverty, but this does not give him half the enjoyment in life that Antonia has from her home and family. Indeed, in the end, after meeting Antonia's boys, Jim vows to make time to go hunting with them soon. Jim makes time not for his wife, or to be home, but to cling to the feeling of Antonia's happiness. Jim's lack thereof brings out just how much family and home mean in the novel. "Whatever Antonia may have lost, it does not define the person she has become. Jim, however, is defined, sadly, by unfulfillment, a longing to belong" (Kvasnicka 106). This absence of home and family in Cather's fiction results often in "alienation, loss of identity, or spiritual paralysis" (Kvasnicka 103). Antonia, although she has constantly rejected social rules and mores, leads a full and happy life (except for the absence of sex that affects all of Cather's characters). Thus, perhaps it is Cather's understated point that in rejecting society's strict confines, Antonia has enabled herself to enjoy life in a way that Jim simply cannot.

However, placing Jim as Antonia's foil does not make all the pieces fall into place. If Jim is simply a literary device, then why does Cather choose to use him rather than focusing on Antonia? "It is . . . difficult to determine who is the novel's central character. If it is Antonia . . . why does she entirely disappear from two of the novel's five books? If . . . we decide that Jim Burden, the narrator, is

the central figure, we find that the novel explores neither his consciousness or his development" (Lambert 119). Hermione Lee suggests that Jim allows Cather "to speak from her own sexual identity and express her own emotions for women" (153). Obviously, Cather felt unable to love women openly, so she may not have been comfortable attempting to express herself through a female character. Jim allows her a mask of normalcy with which she is more free to express appreciation and admiration of women, though she is still unable to express any sexual or romantic feelings.

Thus, though there is little background on Jim, he is still a complex character. To understand why he behaves as he does, it is imperative to look at Cather herself. Cather's limited experience with men and her devastating break with Isabelle McClung certainly could account for Jim's seeming lack of complexity, inability to deal with women, and disappointment and withdrawal from the opposite sex. Or perhaps Jim is simply intended to foil Antonia in order to make her life seem fuller. Whatever the case, to gain an understanding of Jim Burden, it is important to first look at Cather's treatment of him. When looking at Cather's life at the time *My Antonia* was written, some of Jim's inexplicable behaviors begin to possibly make sense, and from this knowledge, we can begin to fully understand the "hollow man" that Jim Burden seems.

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In Crayon

O, to be taken by an artist.
To drape my shining body
In his skilled fingers;
Let him contemplate
The shadows of my skin,
The curve of my spine,
The burning color in my cheeks.

Not always the metrical approach
Of the engineer:
Kisses placed in this quadrant,
Force per square inch must equal
This number to achieve desired yield;
*If my calculations are correct, she will arc
At exactly this degree.*

There is just something more endearing
About being immortalized in a nude sketch
Scrawled in conté crayon
Than in a collection of scribbled bits of Euclid
Or Newton's laws
Done in mechanical pencil
On a post-it note.

the logic of seafood

that consider
ew. blackout its pearl
its just a shell
eats its own muscle
color will care
about pear shapes
our spheres
our funny flaws
our black white peach
just that

there's something to fill the space

Mourning Morning

Coffee and the ballet of merging lanes,
a delicate *chassé* between a beaten-up Olds
and a diesel rumbling like an asthmatic lion.
The pavement stretches out like a river,
glistening in the morning light, gold tinting
the windows of the Honda ahead who stands
like a rock in the flow of traffic.
We divide and flow around it.
No time to look at the glittering frosted grass,
or the round disk of the sun emblazoned
on the blue canvas of sky,
only tailpipes breathing steam.
The daily routine has become a matter
of caffeine and commute, of wheels
and gasoline, pop music on the radio,
so that there is no quiet moment
to soothe the spirit in the renewing ritual.

chassé – a ballet term; a gliding step to either side.

nachtmusik

outside the breath of stars
shakes the trees for tears of leaf
in summer somnolence

whispering in the heat
the secret of coming rain
to ears that would hear
nothing less

a poem for wanda

the last time I saw you,
your linen kerchief white as
the cold fluorescence drifting
down from the ceiling,

your hair was gone and
your skin was stretched over
your brittle bones, to me
you looked like pictures plastered

on the chalkboard in history class
of jews behind boxcar windows
strung with barbed wire
and I wished I hadn't come to visit.

but I was there
that morning we laid you down,
the cedar trees with prickly green
swaying in a cemetery wind.

we ambled among the graves
trying to find the oldest.
then we went to fill your house with food and voices
so no one would feel the empty rooms.

AMANDA SEAMAN

One of a Kind

My relationship with Bruce Brown, otherwise known as Paw Paw Brown, began in 1995. Through the eyes of an innocent six-year old, the tall rugged man intrigued me. One Sunday morning as my family left church, I noticed an American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) sticker on the back of an old blue Chevrolet truck. My family also belonged to the AQHA. As new members of the church, we knew no one. Noticing something familiar excited us because this man could be a potential friend. Following church that Sunday, we ate lunch at Casa Ole, and the same old blue Chevrolet truck was parked outside the restaurant. I wanted to know who owned this vehicle. My eyes quickly scanned the patrons table by table until I saw the tall rugged cowboy. A free window sticker initiated a common bond that would last for years between an old man and a young girl. I came to know him as Paw Paw. Because of Bruce Brown's faith in God, strength to overcome challenges, and passion for living, a simple rancher became my hero.

Although Bruce Brown's deeds will never be portrayed on the big screen, his friends and family saw his faith in God lived out on a daily basis. There is a difference between acknowledging God and believing by faith that Jesus Christ is one's Savior. Bruce Brown believed faith. His faith was not just the Sunday kind of faith; he lived it every day I knew him. God sometimes tests our faith in big and small ways. Soon after I met Paw Paw he received a dreaded phone call informing him that his grandson at twenty-five years of age was killed in a car accident. Similarly, I will never forget the day Paw Paw found out his son, Craig, had cancer. Instead of turning his back on God through these circumstances like some

might, he prayed faithfully. He allowed these trials to make his faith stronger. He also used these events to share his faith with others. Whether working cattle on a ranch or at a team penning event, anyone who was around Paw Paw Brown saw faith in God demonstrated through his words and actions.

Many times faith and challenge go hand in hand. The most significant moments in a person's life can be marked by whether or not one has the strength to overcome challenges. Born in 1926, Paw Paw Brown lived through the brunt of the depression. As a young boy, Bruce worked to help provide for his family. During his childhood, the values of hard work and family were instilled in him and became evident to others throughout his life. As the United States of America entered World War II, Brown chose to join the Maritime Navy. The separation from his family caused Bruce anxiety and loneliness. Not knowing if he would ever return home to his family caused him difficulty. After World War II, Bruce tried various jobs, including carpentry and body shop work, but ended up choosing ranch management as his vocation. The career path of ranch life that he chose offered a whole new set of challenges. Learning the different breeds of cattle, type of forage, and weather situations were a few of the challenges he faced managing ranches in Mississippi, Arkansas, Kansas, and Texas. Through perseverance and faith, the challenges he faced helped shape the man he became.

Challenges in life hone a person and allow him to appreciate the simple things in life. Bruce instilled a passion for life and for people. Paw Paw Brown woke up every morning with a zeal for his ranch. One of his favorite pastimes included training his Catahoula Cur dogs to work cattle and hunt. He woke up to the sound of the precious yelping of his dogs and treated them like his children. The passion for his ranch was contagious. I remember waking up early on Saturday mornings, driving

out to his ranch, and feeling the excitement radiating from him to me. This same passion was evident in many areas of his life. One morning after a terrible storm Paw Paw Brown received a phone call about some cattle being loose. The person thought they were his because of the huge ranch he owned. After checking out the animals, he found that they belonged to his friend. His friend had a problem catching the bull that stood in the middle of Interstate-10, so Paw Paw Brown got on his horse and roped the bull. He safely put the bull in his pen and the whole affair turned out fine. Paw Paw Brown did little things like that to help people. Instead of thinking of these tasks as burdensome, he thought of them as opportunities to help others. It was this same passion that allowed him to treat me with such kindness. He treated me as one of his own. He never thought once about the fact that I was not a blood relative, but he made sure that I was treated the same way as his own children and grandchildren. There were many instances when Paw Paw Brown's family would have a crawfish boil, and he would include me without thinking twice. Paw Paw Brown's passion for life influences my life and my life choices to this day. He taught me to stand up for what I believe. Along with this life lesson came a myriad of unspoken truths, quietly lived out through a cowboy's seventy-three years of existence.

Through Bruce Brown's faith in God, he knew that both his challenges and passion for life were temporary. In one evening my life was changed. In June of 2000, my parents rushed my younger sisters and me to my grandparents' house with no explanation. The next morning when I awoke, I learned that the man that touched my heart for the last five years was dead. He suffered a massive heart attack. Although Paw Paw Brown is not with me physically today, I can feel him in my heart every day. Heroes come in all shapes and sizes: a friend, a mentor, a rancher, and a Paw Paw.

The Flower That Never Blooms

In "The Chrysanthemums" by John Steinbeck, many descriptions often involve contrast and contradiction. The story depicts the air as "cold and tender" and the sunshine as "pale and cold" (Steinbeck 246). The chrysanthemum itself also possesses contradictory characteristics. Its stalk stands masculine, hearty and strong, while its bloom reveals an exquisitely feminine flower. Steinbeck brilliantly uses this flower because of its unusual mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics as well as contradictory needs. The main character, Elisa, is an excellent gardener who understands her flowers will not produce magnificent blooms without first having these contrasting needs met. Elisa longs to personify her flowers, yearning to have her own needs fulfilled and finding that perfect balance between masculine and feminine. In the story "The Chrysanthemums," John Steinbeck uses the flower's contrasting needs of temperature, light, room, and pruning to symbolize Elisa's struggle with her own contradicting existence.

In order for the chrysanthemum to bloom, it needs the right balance of temperature. Although a fall flower requiring cooler weather to bloom, it will not survive in a harshly cold environment. Elisa has just that, a cold marriage. Her impersonal conversation with her husband indicates that distance present in their marriage. He uncomfortably tells her of his plans for simply going out to dinner (247). As Marilyn Mitchell suggests, "a gulf of misunderstanding exists between the marriage partners which creates verbal as well as sexual blocks to communication" (92). Henry, although a decent man, neglects to notice that Elisa needs more from him. He only acknowledges her masculine qualities without appreciating her

feminine ones. How can he possibly fulfill her and give her the warmth she desperately needs if he has difficulty with her femininity and mere conversation? But when a handyman comes along and cunningly focuses on her passion for flowers, she easily interacts with him. Whereas Henry "praises [the flowers'] size [. . .] in the most prosaic terms," the handyman poetically describes them (McMahan 455). He says everything she wants to hear, literally unleashing her femininity. She reveals to him her feminine, sensual side simply because he taps into her need for warmth through simple interaction with one who can understand her yearning for fulfillment. John Ditsky describes her "[opening] herself to a stranger and [showing] him a part of herself which presumably no one has seen before." This interaction brings out her awareness of that warmth missing from her own marriage. She remarks during the handyman's departure of a "glowing there" (252), and now having felt that warmth of the glow, she yearns to acquire it from her husband in order to contrast the coolness of this marriage. By obtaining the warmth, she believes only then she will thrive just as her chrysanthemums.

Along with the right contrast of warmth and coolness, the chrysanthemum also requires both full sunlight and a certain amount of darkness to bloom. Just as her flowers need full sunlight to grow, Elisa reveals her eagerness to "shine" and fit in a man's world in her remarks to her husband. Henry jokingly suggests she "work out in the orchard and raise some apples that big" (247). But Henry quickly replies that her talent works well with flowers which reveals his feelings that her ability should stay in the garden. Ironically, the name Henry means "ruler of home or enclosure" (Renner 307). In Elisa's marriage, she remains in Henry's shadow. But in her conversation with the handyman, there is a different Elisa. "Elisa's latent yearnings are awakened for the larger life that men

enjoy of significant work" (306). She explains to the handyman how he might have some competition from her someday. She believes in her capability while still believing there is something more out there for her. "Elisa may know nothing of the world beyond her valley, but she believes in her talents and in the possibility of a life more rewarding than her own" (Mitchell 96). Through her conversation with the handyman, she senses the balance of sunshine and darkness possible. The chrysanthemum's needs symbolize Elisa's longings. With chrysanthemums, the longer, darker nights of fall signal these flowers to bloom, "about the last of September" (250). Elisa knows that to bloom, her flowers need full sunlight as well as a certain amount of darkness. She herself lies dormant for a long time, having her share of these long, dark nights but lacking the full sunlight she needs to "bloom." The experience with this handyman makes her feel feminine and allows her a taste of that sunshine. Full of optimism, she anticipates the evening with her husband. This exchange with the handyman gives her hope of attaining that light required to balance the darkness so that she too might blossom just as her precious flowers.

This marriage not only blocks her light but leaves her longing for adventure. Chrysanthemums need room to grow and will not bloom if crowded. Elisa explains this to the handyman as she tells him how to care for the new seedlings, to "set them out, about a foot apart" (250). Although it flourishes with other plants, the chrysanthemum will not bloom if it must compete for space. She herself longs for adventure and room to grow, but the handyman reminds her that this is no life for a woman. Closed off "from the rest of the world," she lives her life as if in a "closed pot" (246), void of adventure and validation. But this handyman "clearly represents an independent and partially poetic life that Elisa yearns for. (Marcus 55). Through their encounter, she realizes what she is missing.

Through him, figuratively and literally, she sets part of herself free to experience the adventure as she gives him the cuttings, placing them "gently in his arms" (251). They are everything she longs to be, a piece of herself. With this act, she has a renewed hope and seizes Henry's invitation to an evening out as a beginning in their marriage: to still have Henry close but also have that adventure she longs for.

To ensure these blossoms, Elisa recognizes one of the most drastic needs for the chrysanthemums. The flowers must be cut back, severely stripping away that masculine part of themselves in order to bloom. Ironically, through a wanderer with a "triumphantly definitive "Fixed"" (248) painted on his wagon, Elisa acknowledges the same requirement must be fulfilled for herself. In her directions to the handyman, she stresses this particular part "to cut them down, about eight inches from the ground: (250). In their conversation, she explains to him how to care for the flowers, especially the buds that will result from this extreme pruning. She realizes the proper fulfillment of her own needs will allow her to become that feminine, alluring bloom, so she tries to "cut back" her masculine exterior and uncover what lies underneath. When taking her bath, she strips herself down by scrubbing away anything masculine, focusing on her feminine parts, and admiring them as she finishes. "Elisa's actions are also clearly narcissistic, her self-admiration clearly premised on a sense of having finally achieved, at her life's mid-point, some kind of summit of self-worth" (Ditsky). She now has confidence that she can strike that balance. Before, she "never knew how strong" (253) she was and hopes this strength, balanced by her new femininity, can help make her marriage work. As she awaits Henry, she sits "primly and stiffly" with all of her new found feminine beauty, which is just as her flowers stand with their perfect mixture of stalk and blossom (252). She now believes she

strikes that perfect balance of masculine and feminine just as her flowers do. Even when Henry remarks on her appearance for the evening as "strong and happy" (252) and utterly fails to recognize her feminine qualities, she does not give up hope. Through her encounter with the handyman, "she feels renewed confidence in her spiritual strength and in her physical attractiveness" (Mitchell 95). She has done everything to strip away the masculine side, even making Henry wait for her as she takes an extra long time to primp. All these things are feminine ways of acting. Her husband invites her to come out from behind her fence and partake in an evening out of the town, and after her encounter with the handyman, she thinks she now knows how to achieve that balance of her contrasting needs. Possibly, now she can get from her husband what she gets from this total stranger. Or so she hopes. But dashing all hopes, she sees her precious flowers, a piece of herself, cast away on the side of the road. She realizes the man has used her to satisfy his needs. Elisa comes to the conclusion that in her world, only the pot has something of value, not her dear flowers that represent that contrasting balance she longs to have. Feeling of no value and unappreciated, she also presumes Henry will never validate her femininity and sexuality. "Her feminine self, her capacity for fructification and childbearing, the very offspring and representative of her body, have been thoughtlessly tossed aside, (just as they probably have been unrecognized by the man at her side)" (Marcus 57). Henry's blindness to her needs leaves him unable to console her or even recognize the problem. In defense of Henry, he does invite her to come out from behind her fence thus perhaps symbolically asking her to stop what she is doing in the garden, growing plants from cuttings which require no fertilization.

So, is it due to Henry's lack of attentiveness or Elisa's fence that causes her to feel she will never get the warmth

she needs, the romance of adventure, or the light for her own talents and spirit to shine? Is Henry's blindness to his wife's needs or Elisa's fence keeping her from fulfilling that balance of contrasting needs? Marilyn Mitchell explains by stating that Steinbeck "reveals fundamental differences between the way women see themselves and the way they are viewed by men" (92). Perhaps Steinbeck wrote this story as a message for both men and women. A woman does need others to appreciate her strength yet also embrace her emotional and feminine qualities as well. Without understanding this balance, the relationship between the sexes suffers. But by building a fence that blocks communicating these needs, that balance will never be obtained. This combination of lack of understanding and communication leads Elisa to total resignation. Her last reaction opposes all that she had hoped for. She covers up in her coat instead of blooming.

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*Discovering the Dance in Faulkner's
"A Rose for Emily"*

Down through the decades, the works of William Faulkner have been widely reviewed and interpreted by scholars and critics (Schwab 215). Although popularly known for his longer fictions, such as The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying, Faulkner's short stories have gained much attention in their own right. When focusing on Faulkner's short stories, "A Rose for Emily" stands out as "the most frequently anthologized and analyzed" (Petry 52). In "A Rose for Emily," Faulkner performs a dance, with his writing, that is so intricate and mesmerizing that even an attentive reader risks becoming lost in the narrative's undulations. Faulkner's tale contains an acrobatic chronology spun by a mysterious narrator using suggestive and provocative language to keep the reader guessing until the surprise ending that everyone swears he saw coming but really didn't (Dilworth 251; Moore 195; Petry 52).

The chronology found in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" has drawn a "goodly" amount of interest from critics through the years (Schwab 215). Gene M. Moore writes that "no fewer than eight different chronologies have been proposed for the events occurring in . . . 'A Rose for Emily'" (195). The focus of such interest is a time line that twists and turns back on itself innumerable times, intentionally obscuring facts and dates that would normally lay adjacent (Moore 196). Faulkner himself nods to the importance of a veiled chronology in the story when his narrator speaks of Miss Emily's "invisible watch ticking at the end of [a] gold chain" (29). Miss Emily's conflicts with time, and her efforts to control its progression, are internal cues to Faulkner's external dance.

(Schwab 215-17). Faulkner's brilliant hand guides the story back and forth through the decades in a kind of waltz. Deftly leading the reader first forward then backward around again, always with confidence and precision, he draws the reader to the story's next step or direction.

Faulkner's narrator is a cunning accomplice, an ideal dance partner for Miss Emily in life and death. Thomas Dilworth goes so far as to claim that the narrator "represents the true protagonist of the story" (251). The story begins roughly "in reverse chronological order," starting with Miss Emily's death (Moore 196). Then the narrator proceeds to present a sympathetic view of her eccentricities by displaying a woman neglected and in decline (Faulkner 28-29). By this time, however, the narrator already knows of the crimes and atrocities that Miss Emily has committed (Dilworth 252). In this way, the narrator continues to aid and abet Miss Emily *post mortem* (Dilworth 252). In life, it is the narrator, in the form of the townspeople, who at first protects Miss Emily, then pushes her to separate from a lover of whom the townspeople disapprove (Dilworth 254). Emily succumbs to the pressures of the narrator (the townspeople) and, finding no other choice, kills Homer Barron out of desperation (Schwab 216). After Homer's death, the narrator moves in once again to protect Emily by spreading the lime around Miss Emily's house and ignoring Homer's disappearance (Dilworth 257). Moving in and out like dancers, at first embracing then spinning away, only to come back again, the narrator and Miss Emily are locked in a ghoulish dance.

Above and throughout every happening in the story is Faulkner's careful use of language. Faulkner exposes and obscures the truth in his own time (Dilworth 251-52), performing a strip tease with Miss Emily's life. Upon careful examination, the words that Faulkner uses to bring out the rhythm of the story are deftly placed (Petry 52-54).

Words and omissions are used in the same way that carefully placed veils or feathers are used to obscure the nakedness of a dancer. Alice Petry speaks of "strategically placed" passages alluding to later events in the story (52). Much attention, and even complaining "in strong and vivid language," is directed toward Faulkner's apparent lack of specificity (Moore 195); however, it is precisely the omission of detail that provokes the reader to invest in him or herself in the story. In the beginning of the story, we are provided quick glimpses of Miss Emily; as the story progresses, however, more and more of Miss Emily becomes exposed. Throughout the story's progression, each new fact presented by the narrator removes another veil from Miss Emily's persona. With the discovery of that "long strand of iron gray hair" at the end of the story (Faulkner 35), the last veil is pulled away and Miss Emily is finally laid bare.

Faulkner's manipulation of time, his use of a narrator who is clearly involved, and his dexterous command of language allow him to lead the reader, in a kind of dance, to the very end of the story (Dilworth 251; Moore 195; Petry 52). It is the skill and precision of the author that draws so much attention to this story (Petry 52). Faulkner's willingness to depart from convention has earned him a fair amount of critical attention (Moore 195). Perhaps it is the story's unconventional nature that sets it apart in the minds of so many readers. Whatever the reason, Miss Emily has surely been given a place in history (Petry 52). There she remains, not quite alone in that big empty house, ignoring the passage of years, yet still marking time to the ticking of her invisible watch as she waits for the next generation of readers to show up and ask for a dance.

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COURTNEY L. BOYCE

The God We Trust

Paper bust of a tiny man.
His tight lipped and stares
past me with dead eyes.
His green hue the color
of some success, not of sickness.

Smelling of a thousand strange hands.
Creased, torn, weathered, and worn:
the signs of success.
No one wants to hear it...
clinks and jingles give way to folds.

Doctors, trash men, lawyers, and crooks...
used by all – owned by none.
To hold up the globe
it's counted on daily.
And so, no one lives without it.

A Picture within a Picture

Tossed in among the clutter,
a box of odds and ends here.
A piece of paper, there, with
an important number –
covered in dust.

Sitting angled atop the box,
nothing really obstructing its view,
the 8x10 image of my grandmother.
Her black and white graduation photo
fails to do justice to those braided ponytails
glinting three shades of brown.

In her frame she leans,
not hangs, and shares the same thick
coat as the phone number.
Breathe it in and your throat thickens
with thirst.
The scent of time, missed, is nothing
like you'd imagine.
But it chokes you just the same.

She could cook, but she was mean.
She smiled at me, but did not speak much.
So I learned, once she died that
she spoke Creole and didn't just cook
she baked Heaven on plates and loved her grandkids
to pieces and craved fat red sausage too
and was stubborn too and we even shared
the same glare.

Her picture doesn't hang in my room
to become part of the clutter.
She will have her own wall in my home.

JESSICA CAIN

Allow Me

Allow me to know
those secret nights
Of fires so bright
And reckless serenading
Grant me the knowledge
Of things done
In dark corners
The words that are shared
The gifts exchanged
Earthy vessels forever rearranged
Time approving
Time removing
A sweet essence
From one moment

Radish Roses

In soft cold water they bloom
Inside a summery incubator
After being carved like wood

Pleasant memories of an exquisite afternoon
On my couch after Sunday Mass
I watch the creative process

As innocent daydreams give way
To a remarkable moment
Of radish roses in an edible garden

MIKE DUNKLIN

Bloody-Trap Casualty

I didn't know your name
I didn't have time to tell you
"No, don't!" or "Tell
the Captain to fuck himself!"
Just time enough to play
dunk and cover.

When the first instant
steel met earth as you
probed with the bayonet
the blast threw you
like a rag doll
in a lazy somersault.

But I carried you--with three others,
somber pall bearers--each holding a poncho
corner and hiding our own dazed,
primal thoughts of mortality,
as we performed one last act of faith,
toting you on the first leg
of your trip back home.

Chapbook

The first rule of writing is
to not write about writing.

I crop a line here
cut a word there.

The prose isn't coming like it should.
The poetry—which is usually the priming of the pump—
comes not at all. My heart is vapor bound.
The pump runs dry.

So I arrange words like
a dissatisfied stone mason—
trying to find the right fit—
faking it till I hope I make it—whatever making it is.
Defiantly, I don't keep score
as the big game clock grinds down.

So I sit and jiggle words
not buying any particular craft propaganda,
Because commas aren't really tracers
and words aren't made of stone—so much, so little.
I try to remember the second rule
which is to mostly ignore the other rules.
I read it somewhere, though I can't footnote it.

The Oiler

like works within a whirling
clash of moving steel,
which he amends with
a soothing balm of amber oil.

like pours his liquid gift
from a long-necked spout,
and shuffles quick-step on the rattling gratings,
man serving machine as the engine whines

and pounds and demands:
do what matters, do what matters,
suppress all else, all else....else.

Pirate Articles

I thank ye, shipmate, for the grog.
It helps me ease the pain a mite.
'Twas sailing on a Guineaman
that's brought me thus far here.
A free sailor sailing on a slaver,
leaves a part of hisself there.

I thank ye for the drink, it helps.
Pardon me for my raspy voice.
I tried to fire the powder
But it only flashed, it did not blow.
An evil necessity on us forced
when we took ye for a merchant brig
and found instead a navy snow.

Aye, I have not a drop of wetness to me.
The powder fire has scorched me dry
but 'tis only preparation for my hellish end
When I dance from the gibbet high.
I thank ye for the grog, dear mate,
but belay that palavering Bible talk.
'Tis true we both sailed a Guineaman afore
but I took the pirate articles
whilst ye signed aboard a man 'o war.

Nay, and don't try and scare me with
all that talk of kickin' 'neath the noose.
If a good bosun ties the knot
me neck'll snap afore I fetch the yard
and the navy casts me loose.
Yes, I die a pirate.
But we chose our captain-true.
So I trust when the trip me up
I'll die a freer man than you.

Sugar Booth

"Bring home enough chocolate," Montezuma told
Cortez, "and you'll never have to worry about faked or-
gansions."

The conquistador did not see a wink or tic in the Az-
tec, so the brown stuff became the true cargo of the home-
bound galleons--loaded high above the reach of the bilge
water--sitting atop the stacked ingots that simply pro-
vided purchasing power for the chocolate treasure--for
you can't eat gold.

Ah, the perfect food--with or without nuts--sugar,
caffeine, saturated fats and cholesterol--all that's needed
is a little alcohol and nicotine to round out your RDA.

My thoughts are like chocolate
mummy and gooey in the summer heat of day
sometimes congealed and sometimes not
but sticking to me anyway with the persistence
of fudge on the hips.

Sugar rush and caffeine high--swirl up
the batter in the bowl of your brain pan
Past and future fold together with
a brown swirl darker than that other brown--if
experience and truth didn't tell us to
we'd never eat this stuff--but
once we've had the taste, once we've
been inoculated with the exposure only a Jane Fonda
automaton clone could resist it.

Pour on the pecans and try to have
the patience to wait long
enough so you won't have to eat
the stuff with a spoon again.

Feel the concrete melt in your mouth
to turn into that artery-clogging elixir of joy and death.

Ah, chocolate, the halls of Montezuma
are paneled with Hershey bars—
the landing ramps of oblivion drop
into mocha seas lapping up on the Tripoli
shores of those ambered brains
that focus on the golden-wrapped bars of brown.

LUKE GARLOCK

Blue Eyes

Two
breathless fault
lines shatter up either side of
my spine: gelid wings exploding under beach-baked
skin, shrapnel shooting up hitting a red tent
ceiling, only to pound, rebound off those same
spasmed wings: a second rush of up-rain pelting fierce
and sudden,
a million silent metal pins slapped up into
a magnet running and trickling
down my back, fading, even
as it goes, like
ice water spilled
in an empty stomach,
like hot blood
crashing through an
upturned skull,
dying down, even
as it comes, surging soft,
even as she leaves,
and I'm left
to right
the chaos
alone.

The Bowl of Ghosts

When you were built the natives called you *Usttabeassiti*- a "Howquaint-savage-name" that roughly means "the bowl of ghosts." God rolled his eyes, ghosts drifted in, or stumbled out and stayed. Inside the bowl they snagged on wind, dragged along the years, while round the hazy lamps there stretched their fraying after-breath. The ocean counted her sand. And every hour they would pause, a simultaneous swoon, recall the hush and hiss of saints: a promise of others on their way.

ERIC GUNTER

West Texas Summer

The cracked ground
blisters with burrs;
the blazon sun
burns my skin off.
Water or mercy
are nowhere ahead
as my calloused feet
break a brown path
through broken grass.

JASON HIDAHL

One Starry Night

One starry night, in that quiet, valley-bound town,
all were settled, all was still, and all were deep within
their humble homes, near to sleep until
you stepped out. From your hillside house
you emerged to chance upon a stunning sight:
the gloaming sky as it never once beseeemed,
and no one saw but you. And so, none knew
the way the air was dancing, and the moon
and all the stars wore brilliant halos.
Below, the sombre township differed much
to the majesty presented up above you.

That night, angels held high their holy lanterns
just for you, so you might notice
something sacred out of nature.

It ended, just like every pretty thing must.
So you returned to bed and then
The sky never looked the same again.

At least, though, it left an impression.

BELASHIA JOHNSON

The Power of Love

Power
FULL
A closeConnection
That is far from ordinary
My other ha lf
and I
stand firM
on both hal ves
of the world,
putting our best foot
forward
and not l oo king
back
on yesterday.
We are
1.
Perfectly aligned
In sTaTure
With
The sun's
noitcelfeR
On our bronzed skin.
Purity's
Clothes
cannot be
S ee n
Through
Closed
Eyes.
But it can
Be Felt.

He
upLIFTS
And
Holds
HISmeARMS.
I dare
Not
B r e a k
A
W
A
Y,
For WE
Have taught
Each other
How to
stAnd
UPagainst
The World.

Dodging Your Aim

Even though I was only three,
I still remember.
I see you shooting rubber bands at me,
while I leap and hop,
dodging your aim.
Laughing excitedly I gather them up,
and run to you, waiting for that aim.
How this became our game,
I'll never know.
As I grew older, I would sneak into your office,
that cherry desk lurking in the corner,
radiating your soul.
Yet it was the carefully positioned medals
hanging above
that always caught my eye,
leaving me to gaze in wonder.

hike away

the sand clumps to my bare feet.
water droplets slither down my legs,
a blending of sticky salt water
and fine blown sand.
my skin itches and burns,
annoyed by the gluey gummy crumbs.
still, I stand here looking out
among the endless rolling sea,
another year addicted to living.
they come and go like
the boundless churning wind.
slapping my face for that wake up call,
dying down as life is dreary,
and murmuring in my ear,
as I hike away, to return next year.

ALEX MONCEAUX

Anticipation

Yearning, I cast a furtive glance
Down those paths so common to you,
And, handle down, lean upon my hoe,
Hoping our rendezvous to renew.

For when from the road a friend calls out
And slows to a meaningful walk,
It'd never do to stay at work
Not leaving the field to go talk.

Though I can hardly bear to think
Surlly it's true that much has changed;
That the storm that blew through our lives
Has left many a friendship hanged.

Blood Red Moon

A bloody crescent spills
its haunting light as she
struggles with her fears
and smears away her tears
... *Death* ... her family ... her Dad.

The heart seeking solace,
wishes for harmony
in that pallid moonlight.

And around me I hear
hymns of hope and of cheer –
scriptures to give light,
Then from beyond the glow,
comes a whisper soft and low:

There are wounds not mended by kindness,
There are sorrows not mellowed by time;
These only the hope of Heaven heals.

Blushing

There are times when it looks like the moon has been
slapped.
Its skin blotches and smolders
As though some cloud in passing it over
Rudely, shamed it insufferably.

True to its nature, the moon's face really doesn't waver
But I'd like to think there's a heat that springs from
within
Like a fever that burns from an impetuous child
After an honest thrashing.

Sure, it's crazy to think of such things,
But still I like to hold to the notion
That the moon, in its rise and its fall,
Blushes, seeing its light unacknowledged and wasted.

Calls

He calls at midnight
or two or four.
Nothing much is said...
As we sit in the silence
between burst about
a new girl or some friend.
Then, he tells me of
A song he's just found,
"I'll be right over," I reply.

We sit in the half-light
of the living room
on the floor, knees bent,
He, head in his hands
as the song drifts up,
and ends in our quiet.
His eyes cut deeply into mine
and I wish I had the key
to free him from this self-imposed prison.

Rapture

The *ka-boom* bursting from the house
Jolted the birds from the pecan.
Maybe he just wanted the peace
That stills after the echo dies.

HOPE PASSMORE

Letter to Ex

You have me now dreary and now drained
At times your stoic comments belittling
My heart wants to keep on but I feel strained,
With your nasty words cutting and crippling.

The pressures of your love are inconsistent
And never did I think of our love planning
But it evolved then shrank to nonexistent
Where did it go? It was so truly granting.

You strongly hold me safely now alone.
Left confused, bewildered and awaiting;
Slaved to hear the bells inside the phone
To call, or not to call I am debating

Our love I am determined not to miss,
For that's the only way to find true bliss.

TYRRELL PREJEAN-CHAMPS

Lady Sings the Blues

For the first time, in time,
this Black Kat fell in love
with a Blue Hue;
the night a Lady Sings the Blues.

Sing those blues sweet lady...
sing, sing, sing
then find yourself
swingin' and swayin,'
scattin' and sayin'
all of the things my soul needs
to comprehend.

This Black Kat fell in love
with a Blue Hue;
the very moment a Lady sung my tune.
sung my tune in the key of Bb...
made the melody her own and sprinkled
a little bit of her own scat...

Ti bop bop, skeeee dweedle dee doom ba roo!

A sort of redemptive song too;
the kind that had my soul weeping
briefly...my tears cleansing and sweet...
The sugared misery I endure flows away
the color of rainbows into the streets.

*Ti di, bop boop! Skandangle doo doo, dee boom, ta ba
too!*

The night a Lady Sings the Blues
slowly...
breathlessly...
endlessly...
purely and smoothly
The night a Lady Sings my tune...
This Black Kat fell in love with a Blue Hue.

RANDY SAMPSON

Dear Mother,

When you check out, they'll put what's left of you
in a neat padded box, the lid will lock,
the box will then be lowered into a hole,
covered with dirt, & topped-off with a rock.

The newest addition to the neighborhood,
someone will cut the grass, water the lawn,
keep a stray pet or two from messing around--
thank God all of this will be pre-arranged.

Here, monuments like mailboxes mark what remains.
Deliveries will stack-up: a few pink flowers,
two plastic figurines, your favorite what-not,
a photograph of you with a loved one.

Mother, don't worry yourself too much with this,
before long all will forget your new address.

Ode To Parfum

Dancing
potion of rainbows
trapped inside a globe of glass,
reflections deformed...
purple

leather,
snatches of cool nights,
the crunch of chicken tenders,
salsa and fortune
cookies,

turquoise
velvet, careful curls,
scents of paradise petals,
songs from memories...
lilies

breathing,
small honeysuckle,
kisses of lavender jewels,
roses, hyacinth,
lilac,

nubby
raw silk, velveteen
blankets of fair orchid fields,
solitude, laughter...
today.

Squeeze Box

Handcrafted
Never-ending lines for
Airways relinquished by a single
Silver button commanding the flow of pearly
Rounds of cream cushions pushing-pulling
Controlling every tune
My pale stems
Guide along

Tuneful chest
Red like a blazing fire
Shiny as a brand new diamond ring
Eye-filling rows of gold glass releasing soulful
Tunes that send rhythmic vibrations through
The torso high as the
Heavens sky...
The Squeeze Box!

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PULSE Guidelines

Pulse is a student publication intended to exhibit the work of student writers. It is distributed each spring semester. Entries are judged by a panel of qualified faculty members, and cash prizes are awarded for work in each category. All submissions are subject to editorial discretion.

Rules for submissions:

1. Entries should be typed in **Times Roman 12** point font. Short fiction and essay entries should be double spaced and should not exceed 3,000 words. The judging is anonymous, so the author's name should not appear on any submission.
2. Contributors should include four copies of each item, a disk or cd that contains all items in MS Word or PC-compatible format, not Mac, and a completed submission form. Clear photo copies will be accepted. **ENTRIES WILL NOT BE RETURNED**, so keep a copy of all work.
3. Each author may submit up to ten pieces of work, and they may be any combination of items. One submission form should be used for all entries by a single author. Forms are available in the Maes Liberal Arts Building in offices 03 and 08.
4. Entries can be submitted to Maes 04 or the *Pulse* mailbox, both located in the Maes Liberal Arts Building.

POETRY SHORT FICTION ESSAYS
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS

PULSE Submission Form

Use only one form for all entries by a single author. Four copies of each work and a disk with the work in MS Word or PC-compatible format must accompany this submission form.

Name _____
Mailing Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone Number _____
Major _____ Classification _____
SID _____ Email Address _____

Titles and Categories (if poetry, label as form or nonform;
fiction; essay; translation)

Title	Category
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Submit form and entries together to English office 04 or the *Pulse* mailbox, both located in the Maes Liberal Arts Building. No work will be returned.

In Memoriam

Gloria Virginia Weinbaum
February 23, 1926 - October 16, 2005

"A lover of books"

1263

There is no Frigate like a Book
To take us Lands away
Nor any Coursers like a Page
Of prancing Poetry—
This Traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of Toll—
How frugal is the Chariot
That bears the Human soul.

Emily Dickinson, 1830–1886



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