SPECTRUM 2011

ST. MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA
SPECTRUM 2011:

A Journal of Student Writing

What is Spectrum? Spectrum is an annual competition in essay writing sponsored by the Composition Program at Saint Mary’s College. Now in its twenty-fourth year, Spectrum honors all Saint Mary’s students who take writing seriously, who, in response to course assignments, write essays that are original, thoughtful, and persuasive. Submissions are read by a panel of judges and awards are given at the end of each spring semester. Winning essays are published the following fall in the journal you presently hold in your hands.

Spectrum seeks to publish essays from a wide range of disciplines, and all undergraduates at Saint Mary’s College are encouraged to submit essays written as part of their coursework for consideration.

Submissions for the 2012 contest may be submitted as follows: 1) via campus mail to Spectrum, c/o Teresa Joy Kramer, Director, The Writing Center; 2) dropped off in the zebra-striped box on the third floor of Dante Hall; or 3) sent as email attachments to Teresa Joy Kramer (tjk2@stmarys-ca.edu). All submissions must include a cover sheet with the author’s name, phone number, and email address, and the name of the faculty member and course for which the essay was written.
Acknowledgements

Thanks to this year’s dedicated judges who selected six outstanding prize-worthy essays out of over 60 essays submitted:

David Bird
Keith Garrison
Rosemary Graham
Sandra Grayson
Teresa Joy Kramer
Br. Mark McVann
Felicidad Oberholzer
Joseph Zepeda

Thanks also to the many students who submitted excellent essays and all the faculty members who encouraged students to submit their best work. Enjoy the essays in this issue of Spectrum:

• First Prize: Indrani Sengupta. This stylish and lively essay offers a critical framework within which to examine the currently popular genre of “Paranormal Teen Romance.” “Deconstructing Gothic Fantasy” examines the manner in which post-modern author Angela Carter employs the conventions and character-types of 19th Century Gothic Fiction in order to expose and comment upon the fantastical elements of that genre. This is Indrani’s second essay to appear in Spectrum.

• Second Prize: Gabriel Ladd. Not only does “The One as Beginning and End” make sense of the notoriously difficult philosophy of Plotinus, it is also a model of close textual reading, incorporating passages from multiple sources — quoted in the original Greek — and explaining the ambiguities caused by the various translations of those passages.
• **Third Prize**: Michael Neibuhr. Written in elegant and witty prose, "This Animal Called Man" celebrates the searing misanthropy of Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels. This is Michael's third essay to appear in Spectrum.

• **Third Prize**: Sarah Marlett. "Ptolemy and Copernicus: On the Motion of the Earth" compares the theories of two early astronomers, exhibiting both an exceptional grasp of these scientific texts and an ability to articulate the subject matter with clarity and accessibility.

• **Honorable Mention**: Elizabeth Schroeder. Intelligent performance criticism is rare among student writers – rarer still, if the performance it critiques is non-textual: in this case, dance. "Culture and Childhood: From Past to Present with Robert Moses" compares two dance pieces, showing the ways in which each conveys the importance of children and the connection between past and present cultures and communities.

• **Best Freshman Essay**: Sofía Castañeda's personal essay, "Our Ocean Home," employs the physical description of a vacation home in El Salvador, occupied by multiple generations of the author's family, to give us a touching portrait of that family, their ties to each other, and the importance of the time they spend together.

• **Best Freshman Essay**: Emily Sutfin's "The Worth of Worms," is an informational guide to composting, using humor and subtly sending-up the "FAQ" format to promote responsible trash disposal.

The cover photograph, entitled "A Duality" is by Thomas Vo, a Junior Marketing and Economics major, who enjoys cooking, playing guitar, and taking photos. Thomas comments: "I took this photo after finding a bunch of my uncle's old medium format cameras. After some time shooting with both digital cameras and these beautiful old machines, I
realized that both are only tools; they are needed, but they are not the end result. I try to capture that idea in this image."

*His photographs can be seen at* [http://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasvophotography/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/thomasvophotography/)

*Finally, extra special thanks to Gail Drexler for coordinating the contest, helping with production of the journal, and innumerable other services without which Spectrum would not exist.*

For the English Department,

David J. DeRose

Faculty Moderator, *Spectrum 2011*
Spectrum 2011

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Deconstructing Gothic Fantasy

by Indrani Sengupta

In the 19th Century, when writing about sex and sexuality was taboo, some Gothic Fiction writers such as Bram Stoker and Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu used vampirism as a euphemism for the sexual act: a literary device through which they could comment on unmentionable real life issues. But Angela Carter, writing in the late 1970s when the discussion and depiction of sex were no longer considered unacceptable, can write of sex freely. She does not need to use the Gothic genre to disguise her subject matter or opinions. Instead, Carter, unlike her 19th Century predecessors, employs Gothic conventions to comment on the Gothic genre itself in an attempt to expose the Gothic as fantasy, as the fiction that it is. She achieves this in The Lady of the House of Love and The Company of Wolves by recreating Gothic conventions -- the archetypal Gothic characters, and the typical Gothic setting -- and then thoroughly deconstructing them.

In keeping with Gothic tradition, Carter labels her characters clearly as monsters - evil, inhuman corruptors of innocence -- and as victims/virgins -- whose innocence and purity makes them easy targets for the monsters. However, Carter gradually reveals that each character is "more than he seems" (111). The monsters, for instance, are certainly monstrous in name: they are vampires (Lady of the House of Love) and werewolves (The Company of Wolves). They are even monstrous in action. The vampire queen does lure young men into her bedchamber with the promise of sex, only to feed on them. The werewolf, "carnivore incarnate" (110), devours the young girl's grandmother, and sits wait-
ing for her to arrive so he may feast on her as well. And yet there is something fundamentally human about them on the level of character. When we see the vampire for the first time, she is not an image of bloodlust and fear, but rather a lonely young girl, clad in her mother's wedding dress (as if she had hopes for love once which were thwarted by her monstrosity, symbolized by the blood from her kills which stains the dress now). She plays with Tarot cards every chance she gets -- evidence of her superstitions, her fundamental weakness. But monsters in gothic fiction are not allowed such weakness, for weakness is human. Usually, it is the victims of monsters (e.g. the Transylvanian villagers in Dracula) who are superstitious. Thus, unlike other monsters in Gothic Fiction, monstrosity of the vampire and the wolf in Carter's work is not a power, but rather "a deformity," "a disorder," "a condition" (94). More so than all the men and women and rabbits they prey upon, they are the victims of their monstrosity, of their "irremediable appetites" (112).

What is more, whereas Dracula is unambiguously evil, Carter's monsters are sympathetic; their morality is in a grey area, like most human beings. This is evidenced by the vampire's characterization as "both death and the maiden" (93): on one hand, she is a predator, a seductress, steeped in the sin of her actions; on the other, she is a "maiden," which implies chastity, purity (an idea supported by her wearing a white wedding dress).

Carter's monsters, the werewolf and the vampire, have consciences, which sets them apart from most other Gothic fiction monsters. They feel regret and remorse at their actions, at their names, at their monstrous identities. The wolf's song is full of "inherent sadness...as if [the wolf] would love to be less beastly if only [it] knew how" (112). The vampire "loathes the food she eats" (96), and loathes herself for eating it. She would
much prefer to have the rabbits as pets than to feed on them, but she is tormented by her own hunger. She, like the wolf, is simply trying to survive.

*The Lady of the House of Love* sums up the contradiction between name/action and character: the vampire is the ideal monster, “everything about [her] is as it should be...except her horrible reluctance for the role” (95). The label of “monster” is exposed as a mere role, a part that is simply performed, and that, too, reluctantly. In light of this quote, the actions of the vampire and the werewolf are revealed to be mostly pretences, which belie their true natures. When the wolf is threatening the girl with the well-worn lines from Little Red Riding Hood -- “all the better to hug you with,” “all the better to eat you with” (118) -- it is as if he is reciting empty phrases (this is supported by the fact that the girl laughs in his face), playing the role of a monster rather than being a monster. Similarly, the vampire puts on a show when she seduces men and lures them into her bedchambers. She puts on a satin negligee (her costume), and “to conceal her inner voices, keeps up a front of inconsequential chatter in French” (103) (her lines). Her role consists of a “system of repetitions,” evinced by the fact that the reactions of her “audience”: the young men whom she preys upon are always grateful for their “luck.”

However, when she is in her room alone, the pretence of monstrosity is unnecessary, and then she is reduced to her true form as a lonely young girl, obsessed with her Tarot cards, surrounded by portraits of her “demented and atrocious ancestors,” the true monsters, who have oppressed her into the monstrous role she must eternally play. This is why when the old crone and the officer enter her room without her having requested it, she is “startled by their entry” (101), and the officer is able to see her at her most vulnerable -- a girl with the fragility of the skeleton of a moth, so thin, so frail” (100), a girl who needs to be protected from the light of the lantern by the old crone, lest she crumble, a girl like
“a child dressing in her mother's clothes” (100). The officer sees her in this moment of vulnerability and innocence, and the impression stays, so even when she attempts to resume the role of the seductress, the predator, the monster, he remains unconvinced, and wants only to protect her, to kiss her wounds well again. The vampire, faced with the officer's fearlessness, his innocence, “[fumbles] the ritual” (105), forgets the blocking, the lines for her role. And “there is no room in her drama for improvisation” (106). Once the pretence is broken, it remains broken.

Whereas the “monsters” in Carter's stories are reluctant to play their roles, the “victims” simply refuse to do so. The young girl in The Company of Wolves reacts to the wolf's threats with laughter, knowing full well that she is “nobody's meat” (118). Not only does she refuse to submit to his monstrous dominance, she also usurps the role of the aggressor from him. Where he is supposed to be corrupting her, destroying her, she purifies him, saves him. The officer in The Lady of the House of Love is similarly unfazed by the horror around him -- the horror presented before him in the form of a bloodthirsty vampire. Instead of being afraid, he desires to protect his predator, for he doesn't conceive of himself as prey. He doesn't recognize his intended “Gothic” role, and, as a result, there is a clash of scripts, between that which represents conventional Gothic roles, and that which represents characters as they truly are, or as they want to be.

Why do the victims not fear their predators? Carter suggests that it is because there is actually nothing to fear. The officer in The Lady in the House of Love is depicted as the quintessential Englishman, the epitome of reason. Likewise, he lacks imagination. “If [he] were sufficiently imaginative, [he] could almost imagine twisted faces appearing momentarily beneath the crumbling eaves” (98), he could imagine horror where horror does not exist. But he lacks imagination, and this is what gives “heroism to the hero”
(104). In the classical Gothic tradition, such as in Dracula, the skepticism of the Englishmen made them easy prey. Here, Carter deconstructs the traditional role of "victim," and lack of imagination makes the officer impervious to the vampire's terrible power. So long as he has no capacity for imagination, he is unaffected by the fantasies, the theatricalities, that depend on the imagination to exist. Instead of seeing the role the vampire attempts to play -- a role that requires imagination to conceive, the officer sees the reality behind her pretences, for as a rational creature, reality is all he can perceive.

Just as the monsters are reluctant to be monsters, and the victims are hardly victims, the Gothic settings in Carter's stories are not all that Gothic. Traditionally, Gothic fiction stories are set in strange (foreign), isolated areas that are steeped in darkness and the macabre. In The Lady of the House of Love, in addition to the mysterious and the unknown, we are presented with the image of a bicycle (ridden by the officer), a most recognizable and modern object, and, in Carter's own words, a "product of pure reason applied in motion" (97). The vampire herself is wearing what is tantamount to sunglasses, also a modern, recognizable, un-mysterious object. Even when there is darkness, mystery, morbidity in the setting, it comes across as theatrical and, ultimately, fake. When the old crone unlocks the doors to the vampire's manor, they swing back on "melodramatically creaking hinges" (99). The bedroom appears, by night, "vile and murderous" (106), just as a Gothic setting should be. But when morning comes, when the vampire is dead, when her pretense is dead, the reader sees the room as it really is:

Now you could see how tawdry it all was, how thin and cheap the satin, the catafalque not ebony at all but black-painted paper stretched on struts of wood, as in the theatre (106).
There is no real darkness in the room, only "black-painted paper." The setting is attempting to appear Gothic, but in the end, it is no more than a facade, a "theatre" in which people are expected to play the roles of typical Gothic fiction characters.

Thus, through a thorough deconstruction of character and setting, Carter is able to expose the theatricality behind the Gothic genre, and present Gothic terrors for what they truly are: mere fantasy. The characters in her stories are labeled monsters and victims, just as most Gothic fiction characters are labeled, except her characters transcend the limited implications of their names, thereby exposing the labels of "monster" and "victim" as mere roles, repetitive tasks, even pretences. If a distinction is made between terror (the feeling of dread which precedes a horrifying experience) and horror (the revulsion felt after the experience), it is clear that her Gothic monsters and settings may be terrifying (unless of course you lack an imagination, in which case you would not anticipate a horrifying experience at all, and hence feel no dread) for they are able to project a fearful image. However, they are not horrifying (at least from the perspective of the young girl and the officer, who are not personally harmed, for they are able to triumph over fear and are not fooled by image of monstrosity set before them). In a way, Carter is commenting not only on the fantasy behind Gothic fiction, but the fantasy behind all fictional literature: it has the ability to incite emotions of fear and other things, but in the end, it still isn't reality.

So if Gothic monsters aren't truly monstrous, and Gothic settings aren't actually fearsome, then what is? Carter makes this clear in a brief aside about the officer; she says that "he will learn to shudder in the trenches. But this girl [the vampire] cannot make him shudder" (104). The true monster, thus, is present in the real world. It is the monstrosity of war, and of other societal evils. So when the officer leaves the vampire's manor, join-
ing “his regiment [which embarks] for France” (108) the next day, he has not narrowly escaped a cruel and twisted death: he is, presumably, heading towards it. Perhaps he was safer amidst the exaggerated, theatrical monsters of the Gothic fiction world.

Note: Since the characters do not have names, I have referred to the vampire/vampire queen/girl/lady/monster/predator in The Lady of the House of Love as simply “the vampire”, and the young man/officer/bicyclist/virgin/victim in the same story as simply “the officer,” I have referred to the werewolf in The Company of Wolves as “the werewolf” or “the wolf”, and the young girl in the same story as simply “the young girl.”

Works Cited:


Indrani Sengupta is a sophomore majoring in English with a Creative Writing emphasis, and contemplating a Women's Studies minor. She aspires to be a fiction writer, and promises to stay away from the genre of ‘Paranormal Teen Romance’ although her essay might suggest otherwise.
The One as Beginning and End

by Gabriel Ladd

In “On the Good or the One,” Plotinus begins his commentary on the nature of the One by saying that all beings are beings by it. This claim is the root of the rest of his analysis of the One. He proceeds to attempt to find a way to describe the One, and he is largely unsuccessful in his endeavor. He can give some explanation, but he does so mostly by showing what the One is not. After having done his best to give some intellectual basis for the One and having described how all things exist by it, he shows that the One cannot truly be understood by the intellect, and, instead, he explains how to experience the One. Therefore, he says that experiencing the One is the only way to connect with it. Plotinus’ descriptions of the One depict a kind of cycle of being in which a being begins with the One, and its final destination and most worthy goal lies also with the One.

At first, the idea that all beings are beings by the One seems simple, and one might liken it to the prologue of the Gospel of John when John says, “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:3). However, there is one crucial difference. The Greek text of this passage in John says, “πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἐν ὁ γέγονεν,” which literally means “Everything came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be which has come to be”. The qualifying phrase “ὁ γέγονεν,” meaning “which has come to be”, changes the meaning of the passage. Where the Gospel of John says “πάντα...ὁ γέγονεν,” or “everything...that has come to be”, Plotinus says “πάντα τὰ ὅντα,”
which means “all beings” or “all the things which are.” John leaves room for things which were not made but are eternal, whereas Plotinus claims that everything that exists, exists by the One. This means that the One must either make itself, or it must not exist. Since nothing can make itself, the One cannot properly be said to exist.

In Plotinus’ first demonstration of how all beings are beings by the One, he uses the example of an army. All the people in the army exist on their own, but the army does not exist until all of its component soldiers have become one. In this case, it is clearer to use the word “unity” instead of “one.” To exist as an army, all of the soldiers must be unified in one being. In the same way, the individual man only exists when all of his parts have been made into one being. A man is made up of many parts, such as body parts and a mind, but these parts do not exist as a man until they are united.

Despite this, the One is not the same as being. If it were being, it would have to be one of what Plotinus takes to be the two kinds of being: individual being or universal being. Individual being signifies any one entity such as a flock of sheep or an individual human. Universal being means all beings, not simply as a group, but also as the form of being, or being in itself. The One cannot be individual being because the individual is made up of many parts, as the soldier is made of various body parts and of a mind and soul. If the One is made up of many parts, it cannot be one; it must be many. The One also cannot be universal being, because universal being contains all beings in it. This as well would lead to the division of the One into parts, and therefore cannot be so. Therefore being is not itself the One, but the One must be something apart from it. All beings are beings, then, not because they are the One, but by “sharing and participation” in the One (VI.9.2.23-24). They participate to some degree in oneness because they are each one being, but they do not participate fully in oneness, otherwise they would be the One.
One of the consequences of the One's nonexistence is that it becomes difficult to talk about the One. The verb "to be" cannot properly be applied to the One, and neither can any other verb, quality, or quantity. Plotinus says, "It is not in movement or at rest, not in place, not in time" (VI.9.3.41-42). Although this appears to be a contradiction, it is not, because such predicates are external to the subject. If the One is said to be at rest, it is so by rest, and not because it is the same as rest. The predicate is not the subject; it is applied to the subject and is thus external to it. This application of a predicate creates a duality between the One and its predicate which the One cannot admit. There is nothing which can be predicated of the One in this way. This principle is carried out by our language. A predicate is applied using the verb "to be," as in the statement "the table is round," but since the One is not anything and does not exist, this construction cannot be used with it. This means that nothing of this kind can be said about the One. The only way to illuminate the One with predicates like these is by negation, saying what it is not.

There is, in fact, only one way to make positive statements about the One, but positive statements of this sort are rarely used in common speech. In general, when a person says of something that, for example, it is good, he does not mean this absolutely. If someone says, "The apple is good," he means "good" in a limited sense, that is, most likely, taste. The apple tastes good, but the apple is not absolutely good; it must in some way be qualified. This qualification, which amounts to saying in what way a predicate applies, limits the subject, namely it limits the subject in the ways that the predicate can be said of it. In the example of the apple, there are ways in which the apple is good, such as taste and appearance, but there are other ways in which the apple is not good, such as knowledge or virtue. The One, on the other hand, cannot be limited. If someone were to say that the One is good in some ways but not in others, this would imply division within.
the One, thereby introducing otherness and making the One not one, which is absurd. Therefore, qualified statements cannot be said of the One, but unqualified statements can. An unqualified statement amounts to saying that a predicate is the same as the subject. If the One is called unqualified good, this means that the One is the same as good. Such statements can be made because they do not break down the fundamental nature of the One in the way that qualified statements do. If it were not possible to make such statements about the One, then certain basic characteristics of the One would be called into question. For example, the principle of identity—that a thing is the same as itself—would no longer be secure. It would not be right to say “the One is the One” because this would be making a predication of the One.

These two types of statements which cannot be made about the One are actually the same type of statement. The second type, making a qualified statement about the One can be described in the same way as the first type. For example, to say that an apple is good in certain ways, such as taste, is the same as saying that the predicate “good tasting” is applied to the apple. Fundamentally, there is only this one kind of statement, that of applying something other than the One to the One, which cannot be said.

One of the only positive statements that Plotinus makes about the One is that it is good. He says, “οὐ τοίνυν οὐδὲ ἄγαθόν λεκτέων τοῦτο, δ παρέχει, ἄλλα ἄλλως τάγαθόν ὑπὲρ τὰ ἄλλα ἄγαθά” (VI.9.6.56-58). This translates literally as “Therefore we must not call this [One] good, but in another way the Good above all other goods”. He distinguishes “ἄγαθόν” -- some good -- from “τάγαθόν” -- the Good. Because he calls the One “the Good” and not “some good,” he is identifying the One with the Good in an unqualified sense. One result of this identity is that because all beings are beings by the One, which is the Good, to exist must in itself be good. If all existing is ex-
istence by virtue of the Good, existence must be good. This, in turn, has further consequences when Plotinus discusses experiencing the One.

The inability to make certain types of predications of the One also means that it is not correct to say that the One generates all things, despite the apparent similarity of this statement to Plotinus’ original thesis that all beings are beings by the One. No action can be assigned to the One because any action would be external to the One in the way that applied predicates are. In addition the action of creating implies change, and the One cannot change. It is not by an action of the One that all things are, but by an action of these things. The One does not create them, but they become one by sharing and participating in the One.

The concept of participation in the One can be clarified with reference to Plotinus’ opening sentence: “πάντα τὰ ὄντα τῷ ἐν ἐστιν ὄντα” (VI.9.1.1). The One — “τῷ ἐν” — is in the dative case, which cannot be translated with any single English word. It is often used to indicate the prepositions “in,” “with,” or “by.” Although the translator chooses “by,” “with” is also a viable option. However, it would be misleading to use the word “in” to describe the relationship of a being to the One. Plotinus says that things are not in the One, because this would mean that the One was divisible into parts, and, hence, not one but many. Therefore, it is also correct to say that all beings are beings with the One, in the sense that they have it and use it as an instrument for being.

Becoming “by the One” is directly linked to the One’s infinitude. Plotinus says of the One that “it must be understood as infinite not because its size and number cannot be measured or counted but because its power cannot be comprehended” (VI.9.6.12-14). The word translated as “power” is the Greek word “δύναμις” which also means power in the sense of potential. The One is infinite potentiality without any actuality. It is the
source of all things, because it has the potentiality of all things, but it is not itself anything.

The sense of Plotinus’ statement that all beings are beings by the One becomes clearer when he writes about how a person can commune with the One. He says that “our awareness of that One is not by way of reasoned knowledge or of intellectual perception, as with other intelligible things, but by way of a presence superior to knowledge” (VI.9.4.1-3). In order to approach the One, the soul needs to abandon everything outside of itself and even abandon thinking of itself, so that it may be in “contemplation of that One” (VI.9.7.21). Plotinus describes this as a mystical experience; because of the One’s incomprehensibility, it cannot be thought. Physical characteristics—body, shape, size—cannot be applied, and even existence cannot be said of the One. It therefore requires some sort of experience which is entirely outside the realm of the intellect. Plotinus calls this experience “σύνεσθεν” which literally means “being together with”. A person cannot know the One; he must be together with it. This can be achieved because the One is “always present to anyone who can touch it” (VI.9.7.3-4). This is because the One has no “otherness” (VI.9.6.43). The word for “otherness” is “έτεροντις” which is best rendered as “otherness” but could also be translated more plainly as “difference.” The One, which is indivisible and uniform, precedes any otherness or difference, so, in order to return to the One, a person must lose his otherness.

Plotinus says that to see the One, a person must turn inward, ignoring all outward things, but must also ignore himself. Turning inward seems to mean self contemplation, but Plotinus rules even this out by saying that one must ignore himself. Because he rules out contemplating all things, both inward and outward, he leaves only the One to be con-
templated. In doing so, the soul must become a kind of blank slate, without distinction or duality.

Plotinus gives an analogy of two circles. One circle is the individual person who is attempting to experience the One, and the other circle is the One. In order to experience the One, a person must unite the centers of these two circles, resolving the duality produced by having two different centers. He says that, by this process, a person becomes “not himself” (VI.9.10.16). Yet, in a seemingly paradoxical statement, he later says that upon arriving at a vision of the One, the soul arrives “not at something else but at itself” (VI.9.11.40-41). The soul, then, arrives at itself but becomes not itself. What he describes by this is analogous to an out of body experience, though that is not exactly what he means. He uses the word “ἐκστασις” which means “being out of place,” to describe how a person arrives at himself while not being himself (VI.9.11.23). The soul is outside of itself, or “out of place,” and hence is able to arrive at itself, similar to the way in which a person who has an out of body experience perceives himself from without. When the soul is itself, it cannot arrive at itself, for there is no way to arrive at something which it already is. Once the soul has achieved this arrival at itself, it goes “beyond substance,” “ἐπέκεινα οὐσίας” (VI.9.11.42-43). This word “οὐσίας” also means “being,” so in this way, the soul has gone “beyond being” as well, which is reasonable because the One is prior to being. As Plotinus further depicts the process of coming to the One, his descriptions become increasingly obscure, and one gets the sense that what he is telling must be seen to be understood. Indeed, he says, “whoever has seen, knows what I am saying” (VI.9.9.46-47).

Experiencing the One is not merely a static interaction with it. For example, it is not the same as when one looks upon a physical object such as tree. The tree is perceived,
and the interaction ends at this; neither the perceiver nor the perceived is changed in any meaningful way. In contact with the One, however, a person cannot look upon it without being changed. He does not see the One by anything similar to what is normally called perception, but by becoming more like the One. The entire process of coming to experience the One is a process of becoming one and, therefore, of becoming more like the One: This is also why a person exists more in turning to the One. As Plotinus described earlier, all beings are beings by the One. In other words, it is their oneness which makes them exist. For example, if all the individual sheep in a flock are separated, the flock ceases to exist because it has lost its oneness by becoming differentiated. Turning to the One is the opposite of this process of differentiation. To turn to the One means to become more one, and hence to exist more.

Because all beings come from the One and all beings desire to return to it, the One is, as Plotinus says, "beginning and end" -- "ἀρχή καὶ τέλος" (VI.9.9.20-21). It is the ἀρχή because it is the root of all things. It is prior to all things, and they are only beings by virtue of it. The One is the τέλος because it is the goal of all things to be united with the One. Because the One and the Good are the same, union with the One is also union with the Good. Therefore, it is the highest goal of all things to come to the One. The One, then, is both the beginning and end of all beings: they come from it and desire fervently to return to it.

Works Cited


Gabriel Ladd is a sophomore in the Integral Program.
This Animal Called Man: The Misanthropy of Jonathan Swift

by Michael Niebuhr

Jonathan Swift was a mad old fool, an unquestionably demented, mentally compromised man with a penchant for the unabashedly absurd. At least, those are the kinds of words uttered by the good majority of his readers. Additionally, and as if these comments didn’t provide a good enough starting point for any budding psychoanalyst, the man was also a devout misanthrope. Swift made no great secret of his general disgust for human-kind, going so far as to remark in a letter to Alexander Pope, “I have ever hated all Nations professions and Communityes... principally I hate and detest that animal called man” (Correspondence, 584). What is ironic about Swift’s incredible cynicism is that the author lived during the last century of the Renaissance era, a time period that was marked by extreme adoration of all things human. In art, the human body was depicted romantically as a work of divine perfection, the pinnacle of natural creation; and in academia, the prevailing assertion was, as stated by the Humanist scholar Giannozzo Mendetti, “the genius of man...the unique and extraordinary ability of the human mind” (cited in Clare) – so it is safe to say that the popular opinion on being human was optimistic, to say the least.

However, this wave of popular sentiment did not stop Swift from infusing his misanthropy within the absurd adventures of his pseudo-intellectual hero in Gulliver’s Travels. Throughout his plethora of voyages, Gulliver is taken prisoner by a race of intelligent gnomes, made a fascinating pet of giants, stripped naked and thrown into women’s’ cleavage, and caked in excrement courtesy of a humanoid species of wild beast; he greets
a king by licking dust from the palace floor, and becomes engrossed in a discussion of morality and ethics with a horse. While these events sound like the ravings of a lunatic, these absurdities represent only a vehicle in which Swift’s misanthropic satire can ride. In fact, the absurd nature of Gulliver’s adventures becomes a mirror that reflects the even greater absurdity of actual human society; and nowhere is this clearer than in Book Four of *Gulliver’s Travels*, when Swift uses Gulliver’s interactions with the “Houyhnhnms” to emphasize the base animalistic nature of mankind underneath the thin façade of so-called human reason. In pitting the typical tenants of human civilization against a morally superior, anthropomorphized animal society, Swift debases all notions of humankind’s perceived natural superiority by illustrating that the humans are not only physically abhorrent and useless in nature, but is also the only species on the planet that works ceaselessly towards its own destruction.

Swift begins his satire in Book Four superficially: by examining and insulting the physical appearance of the human body. Early on in his exploration of the Houyhnhnm country, when Gulliver stumbles upon the “Yahoos” – a particularly vicious animal species with an anatomy almost identical to that of humans – he describes their appearance as, “very singular, and deformed...they had Beards like Goats, and a long ridge of hair down their Backs, and the fore Parts of their Legs and Feet...but the rest of their Bodies were bare...Upon the whole, I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy” (*Gulliver*, 193). In describing the Yahoos, Gulliver is simultaneously describing the generalized body plan of a human being, the only modifications being a four-legged posture and longer nails on the fingers and toes. Swift’s physical cataloguing makes the human body sound like a dirty, malformed mass of flesh covered in awkward patches of hair, quite the departure
from the image of divine perfection that was so common during the Renaissance period. Swift turns this view completely on its head by examining the human form for beauty, employing the standards one would in examining any other animal, and asserting that, on these grounds, humans are actually some of the most disgusting creatures one could ever look upon. This harsh and insulting description quickly knocks the human anatomy off its Humanist pedestal, and places humankind on much more equal ground with the rest of the animal kingdom.

After Swift establishes an equality in the physical judgment of humans and animals (specifically in the context of the Yahoos), he goes about proving that mankind is actually inferior to animals when it comes to their bodily utility in nature. In conversing with the Houyhnhnm lord, Gulliver explains that when it came to his body in comparison to the Yahoos and other animals, he was at a significant disadvantage. As Gulliver states in recounting the conversation, "[my Master] thought I differed for the worse. That my Nails were of no Use...That I could not walk with any security...that I could not look on either Side without turning my Head...that [my feet] were too soft to bear the Hardness and Sharpness of Stones...[and] that my whole body wanted a Fence against Heat and Cold" (Gulliver, 209-10). Swift here points out that, compared to other animals, man is actually quite ill-fit for a life in the natural world. Humankind may have the ability to create tools and elaborate shelters for safety, but the body itself is markedly unfit for survival in nature. As the Master horse says, the human body has no truly effective natural defense mechanisms, rather limited sensory perception, and requires artificial coverings if one is to avoid freezing to death or burning under the sun, the point being that even though humans typically pictures themselves at the upper terminus of the food chain, most would be completely incapable of surviving if placed on an equal playing field with
the other animals of the world, with only their own bodily assets to rely on. Swift’s purpose here is much the same as in the preceding example: by examining the human body as it would be seen in the state of nature, the author makes the sound point that Humanists are mistaken in holding man’s physical form as the pinnacle of natural creation.

Once Swift has thoroughly battered the superficial side of Renaissance Humanism, he turns to its intellectual component. In further conversations between Gulliver and the Houyhnhnm lord, Swift shows the reader that not only is humankind lacking in its physique, but is likewise lacking in intelligence and reason. For example, when describing the political goings-on of London to his Houyhnhnm host, Gulliver describes some of the more common reasons man goes to war: “He asked me what...made one Country go to War with another. I answered...Sometimes the Ambition of Princes, who never think they have Land or People enough to govern: Sometimes the Corruption of Ministers, who engage...in a War to stifle or divert the Clamour of the Subjects against their evil administration” (Gulliver, 213). At this point in Gulliver’s Travels, Swift begins to slowly abandon his humorous absurdity (a point which must be taken with a large dose of relative context – Gulliver is, of course, still talking to a horse). As the topics of discussion breach politics, Gulliver becomes increasingly deadpan in his descriptions of human actions. In the above quotation, for instance, Swift makes no effort to give Gulliver’s statement humorous exaggeration. Instead, Gulliver says simply that princes are a singularly full of avarice and that their ministers are more than willing to incite war to conceal their own political malignancy.

Swift’s trend of letting down the satiric veil continues for the majority of the remaining text; further down the same page, Gulliver says on the same subject, “Difference in Opinions hath cost many Millions of Lives...Neither are any Wars so furious and
bloody, or of so long Continuance, as those occasioned by Difference of Opinion, especially if it be in things indifferent" (Gulliver, 213). In both this and the preceding quotation, Swift is attacking the sort of attitude held by scholars like Mendetti pertaining to the supposed "genius" of man. According to Swift, mankind is unique, but not because its members have a higher capacity for reason; rather, quite unlike almost all other animals on Earth, who have a common goal in ensuring the survival of their individual species, a good number of humankind's constituents seem to have no qualms about attempting to bring about the destruction of their own population. Gulliver's comment about wars being fought over differences in opinion is no great exaggeration: millions have been killed in the past because man couldn't settle on whether the name was "Allah" or "Elijah" (a phenomenon which sadly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, continues into the present day). There is no other organism on the planet that can boast such an immense tally of self-inflicted pain, suffering, mutilation, and death as Homo sapiens. This is the great irony that Swift is speaking to during the entirety of Book Four: humans speak of their intellectual and logical superiority over other "lesser" life forms, and yet the force that has caused the species more harm by an infinitesimally wide margin is the species itself. That is neither intellectual, nor logical; indeed, it is the perfect representation, the first definition, the raw essence concentrated via distillation, of utter stupidity.

In truth, it is hard to tell whether Swift was a satirist because he was a misanthrope, or a misanthrope because he was a satirist. In spending almost his entire life bringing the corrupt actions and soulless dealings of politicians and others in power to the public eye through literature, the development of any attitude less cynical would have been bordering on the miraculous; it is no wonder that he scoffed at the romantic Humanism of the Renaissance. However, in the end these two opposing parties were looking at two
completely different cross-sections of society. The Humanists wondered at the skill of the human hand by observing the likes of Michelangelo, and stood in awe of the beauty of the human body represented by his finished product; that is to say, they focused their attention on the arts. Swift, on the other hand, concerned himself with the rotting stump that is government and politics. His muse was not the *David*, but Robert Walpole (woe to he who finds himself in such a situation). It is more than possible that Swift acknowledged this distinction: in a more complete excerpt from his letter to Alexander Pope, he says, "I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas and so forth. this [sic] is the system upon which I have governed my self many years" (*Correspondence*, 585). Swift may very well have fully appreciated the human artistry present in his time, but these pristine examples of the human condition were not controlling the political machinery of his country – which, actually, may be the greatest joke of all.

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Ptolemy and Copernicus: On the Motion of the Earth

by Sarah A. Marlett

Ptolemy and Copernicus held contrary views regarding the motion of the heavenly bodies. Of these motions, that of the earth is the most controversial. I will consider both Ptolemy’s and Copernicus’ arguments concerning the motion or stasis of the earth. Both Ptolemy and Copernicus present their views with geometrically plausible models for the observed motion of the heavens. In order to discern which model might be more convincing, I will consider which model better explains the appearances rather than just suiting the appearances to the model. In the first case, the inherent features of the model explain the observations. In the latter case, the model merely predicts the appearances without its features having a direct relation to the phenomena. In this model, the features are the means employed to illustrate the observations, not to explain them. This latter type of model is inferior because the only reasoning behind the different characteristics in it is that they allow the model to predict the given appearances. In the former model, its parts both demonstrate the phenomena as well as explain the different relations in the phenomena.

I will start by dissecting Ptolemy’s and Copernicus’ underlying beliefs on the position of the earth in the universe. Ptolemy begins with the earth as the center of the universe. His argument is mainly based upon the phenomenon of the equinox positions being halfway between the solstice points. He presents and refutes three other options for the position of the earth. The first of these corresponds to the position that Copernicus
argues for. In this case, the earth is not stationed on the pole of the axis of the universe’s rotation, while still remaining equidistant from both of the poles of that axis. Ptolemy argues that this would result in an uneven occurrence of the equinoxes between the solstice points. Since there is no difference between these points regardless of the observer’s position on the earth, Ptolemy says that the earth must be at the center of the universe.

This argument, while it appears convincing at first, does not fully stand up against the refutation of Copernicus that the earth is not the center of the universe. “Anyone who denies that the earth occupies the middle or center of the universe may nevertheless assert that its distance (therefrom) is insignificant in comparison with (the distance of) the sphere of the fixed stars” (I, 5). Here, Copernicus bases his argument on the relative size of the earth to the sphere of the fixed stars. On this point, both Ptolemy and Copernicus agree: the earth is so comparatively small when compared to the immense sphere of the fixed stars that, according to Ptolemy, it has “to the senses, the ratio of a point to the distance of the sphere of the so-called fixed stars” (43). This is observed from the fact that an observer’s horizon bisects the sphere of the fixed stars. Also, the distances between the stars are not different when measured from different positions on the earth.

Copernicus uses these same observations in his consideration of the position of the earth. In addition, the irrelevance of the earth’s size to the heavens is one of his reasons for ascribing motion to the earth. His argument for motion is preceded by his theory that the earth is not the center of the universe. Since the earth has such an insignificant size compared to the sphere of the fixed stars, if the earth was off-center, this difference would, according to Copernicus, also be undetectable in terms of the appearances. Copernicus is further convinced of this offset position of the earth because the orbits of the planets do not appear equidistant to the earth at all times. While Ptolemy accounts for
this through the epicycles and eccentric circles in his planetary models, Copernicus assigns all planets, including the earth, separate circles all centered about the sun. The latter model appears more convincing because of its single center for all basic motion. Ptolemy, because of his firm conviction that the universe was geocentric, was forced to find a way for the planets to move around a center other than the earth. His epicyclical hypothesis kept the idea of the planet moving circularly about the earth; but, he had to add a second rotation about a different center, that of the epicycle, in order to explain the planets varying distance from the earth. Ptolemy, however, favored the eccentric hypothesis, in which the planets' mean motion was not centered on the earth.

In his model of the universe, Copernicus ascribes this eccentric to the sun. This is an interesting interpretation of the appearances that Ptolemy also accounted for in his model. Copernicus has better reasoning when it comes to the formation of the model. Copernicus uses the sun as the approximate center of the motion of the heavenly bodies, including the earth. Knowing the exact center is not important for Copernicus because by the observations he sees the sun is close enough to the center. Copernicus is mainly interested in knowing how and why the heavenly motions, especially those of the planets, are linked to the sun; the exact placement of the absolute center of motion is not his chief concern. Ptolemy knows that the motion of the planets is somehow linked to that of the sun, but does not explain why through the structure of his model. In the case of inner planets, Venus and Mercury, these bodies always appear relatively close to the sun. Ptolemy matches his model to this phenomenon by setting their motion equal in speed to the speed of the mean sun. He does not provide an explanation for this similarity of speeds. Copernicus, in putting the sun as the center for this motion, explains why these planets appear to move with the same speed as the sun. These planets are closer to the sun than
the earth, so they will maintain their positions in the sun’s vicinity even as the earth travels about the sun. Since Ptolemy can only say that these bodies move with the same speed because of the appearances, his argument seems less strong than Copernicus’. Similarly, in the case with the outer planets, Copernicus is able to explain the relation that they have to the sun by directly linking them to the sun, centering their motion about the sun. Ptolemy, on the other hand, says that, for his model, the vector from the center of the epicycle to the planet on the epicycle and the vector from the observer to the mean sun must always remain parallel. His proof for this is based on his relation of the motion of the mean sun to the motion of the planet in longitude added to the motion in anomaly, which comes from the epicycle of the planet. Ptolemy doesn’t have an explanation for this relation of speeds; he just states it because it is needed for his model to predict the positions of the planets based on the position of the sun. Copernicus provides reasoning for the connection that is observed between the outer planets and the sun in his model by centering for the motions of the heavenly bodies around the sun.

Having introduced the possibility that the earth’s position in the universe does not significantly affect the appearances of the heavenly motions of the fixed stars, Copernicus explains why motion could be ascribed to the earth. Earthly motion was entirely rejected by Ptolemy, who thought that any motion would cause objects on the earth to fly off because of the great force of spinning or because of the great apparent wind that would necessarily ensue. Rather than confront these objections at the beginning, Copernicus chooses to examine the appearances that could be explained by a motion of the earth. After showing that certain motions of the earth can explain the same phenomena that were previously attributed to the motion of other celestial objects, he refutes the arguments against earthly motion.
First, Copernicus addresses the appearance of the daily motion of the fixed stars. He reasons that, "Every observed change of place is caused by a motion of either the observed object or the observer or, of course, by an unequal displacement of each" (I, 5). For the specific daily motion of the stars that Ptolemy assigned to the motion of the sphere of the fixed stars, Copernicus explains by giving the earth a rotation about its own axis.

Ptolemy rejects this rotational motion in his consideration of motion for the earth. He does admit that this would account for the daily motion of the heavens in terms of the observations; however, he reasons the effects that this motion would have on the objects on the earth would render this motion ludicrous. Another point that Ptolemy makes against the motion of the earth is related to the great speed with which it would have to rotate in order to complete its revolution. Ptolemy says that this motion would be violently against its nature as the dense and earthy object of the universe. He says that these sorts of objects are not easily moved because of their heaviness. The only motion that Ptolemy admits is possible for such objects is downward linear motion, which is obviously not the case with the earth because of the circular observations.

Copernicus chooses to dissect this argument that Ptolemy makes concerning the nature of the earth. In his reply to Ptolemy's argument, he states: "Yet if anyone believes that the earth rotates, surely he will hold that its motion is natural, not violent" (I, 8). Copernicus doesn't agree with Ptolemy's appeal to nature when explaining the heavenly phenomena. His rejection is based on the inscrutability of the true nature of the heavens by man, who is earthly. Copernicus does not understand why Ptolemy's argument against the motion of the earth shouldn't also be applied to the motion of the entire universe. This motion, because of the vastness of the sphere, would have to be even swifter.
than that of the earth. This argument of Copernicus is convincing because he shows that Ptolemy did not consider the situation equally with respect to the nature of the earth and the nature of the universe. Eventually, Copernicus presents the case that since the earth is a sphere and the entire universe is so great in magnitude that its shape cannot be determined; the motion should be given to the earth because spheres are fit for circular motion.

In response to Ptolemy’s other argument against earthly motion, which was based on the gravity found on the earth, Copernicus chooses to assign a similar force to each of the planets. He reasons that this force is needed to keep the planets in their observable circular shape as they whirl about. By doing this, Copernicus is likening the earth more and more to the other planets so that it soon appears to become one of them. Since the gravity is now applied to all bodies, Copernicus shows that the planets, in their revolutions, are not going about the earth as their center of gravity. This aids his argument for the motion of the earth about the sun. This second motion of the earth serves to explain the retrograde motion of the planets as well. Because the motion of the earth is at a different speed than that of the planets, while completing one revolution, the appearance of the motion of the planet will be advance, retrograde, or station at different times. These observations come from the varying position of the earth on its circle of revolution with the respect to the position of the planet on its own orbit about the sun. At certain times the earth’s motion will be in the same direction as that of the planet and at other times, in the exact opposite direction.

Of these arguments for and against the earth’s motion, I find that Copernicus develops his model to explain certain details that Ptolemy’s model does not. Ptolemy developed his model without taking into account the reasons for various relations and connections in the celestial phenomena. A particular example is the Copernicus’ centering of
planetary motions about the sun. Ptolemy was not able to explain the reason for the coincidental appearances of the planets with his model. In the case of Venus and Mercury, he had to assume that their motion was the same as that of the mean sun because that was how his model was able to match the observations. Copernicus, however, is able to give a reason for this link in their position with respect to the sun.

It is interesting to see which points the two agree on. For example, both agree that the size of the earth is insignificant when compared to the size of the universe and sphere of the fixed stars. Even in these agreements, they often use them to explain opposite theories. In conclusion, it is important to note that while developing their arguments they both disregard the position of the other many times as not sound and flawed in some manner or another. This suggests that both truly believe in the validity of their own models over the other models. Both Ptolemy and Copernicus succeed in geometrically modeling the observed motions. Their models can be used in calculating positions for the planets and the sun. At times, though, Copernicus appears best in structuring his model from the phenomenon rather than developing an assumption for the phenomenon and then assigning that assumption to the model. In the case of the different observed motions of the planets (advance, station, and retrograde), Copernicus’ model succinctly explains this by its heliocentric characteristic. Ptolemy has to say that the motions of the planets are related to the speed of the mean sun. But, he does not have a reason for this coincidence in speeds. In the end, Copernicus displays the more convincing argument.

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Culture and Childhood: From Past to Present with Robert Moses

by Elizabeth Schroeder

Children have been and continue to be the primary means of carrying on family and tradition. A child represents a medium in which familial roots, including heritage and culture, are cultivated and thrive. From generation to generation, it remains the children of a community who stand as strong foundations of the hope for the future, while serving as a link to the way things were in the past. Within his dance productions of The Cinderella Principle and Fable & Faith, Robert Moses conveys the importance of children as the connection between culture and communities of the past and present.

In his Cinderella Principle, Moses associates past and present familial dynamics within what can be the emotionally draining subject of having a child. According to Cynthia Cohen Bull in her article, “Sense, Meaning, and Perception in Three Dance Cultures,” dance “can be understood as a source of information and analysis, used to create and crystallize important and often ignored aspects of our shared cultural knowledge” (269). Moses’ choreography embodies this principle by applying the inherent generation-al desire to have a child in order to continue family culture and lineage.

A female narrator introduces the story of a woman who has been unsuccessful at receiving in vitro fertilization. The narrator mentions this woman’s biological clock is ticking; her hope for a future generation is diminishing. A female dancer, wearing white overalls, enters downstage, embodying the worry and panic of the mother-in-waiting. As if desperate to have a child, this woman walks to a blue baby mat positioned downstage. Supporting herself with her hands and knees on all fours, she crawls on the mat much like
her ideal child would. Baby clothes on tiny hangers begin to fall down upon the blue mat. The woman greedily gathers them up in haste; she longs to fill these miniature clothes with a living, breathing baby of her own. In panic and distress, the woman, now sitting on the mat, takes a piece of clothing off its hanger and begins to bend the hanger into the shape of a teddy-bear doll, a doll she longs for her child to have. Simultaneously, a metal structure is lowered downstage right into the audiences view. To reiterate the woman's pain of losing hope in having a child of her own, this structure dangles with hangers that have been bent and sculpted into children's toys, clothing, and other accessories. This woman's dream of obtaining a child to carry on her family roots and history is quickly fading into a pipe dream of mangled and coiled wire hangers.

According to the program notes, "The Cinderella Principle explores the disconnect between who we are now and how the family unit has historically been defined." Moses' thoughtful attention to merging props and choreography help to bridge the gap between children of the past with the adults they are in today's world, attempting to create new families while maintaining past culture and heritage. Five small, wooden, multicolored houses are set in a semicircle pattern downstage right. They symbolize multicultural, non-traditional family constructs. Each house is suspended to the ground by a thick, red cable extending up to the rafters of the stage. Male dancers enter stage right and lie down on their backs in between these houses. An Asian woman costumed in a white girdle and short puffy skirt, who the narrator states has been adopted from China by an interracial couple, begins to step on the men's stomachs, weaving in between the colorful houses. She explores the houses, forced to step on her forefathers while attempting to connect her displaced cultural roots, detached heritage, and the new family she has been adopted by.
As she continues to step on the male dancers in searches for unity between her and her new family, through a process of elimination, the Asian girl detaches the red cables, one by one, from the houses she is not culturally connected to. According to Cohen Bull, this dancer is struggling to locate her “social function” and, through her movement, she is “improvising within the social and cultural rules of her [newly constructed] environment” (270, 271). During this experimental exploration between past and present, dancers begin to enter both sides of the stage. While facing the audience, they slowly walk in place. It is as if these dancers are smoothly gliding in air, suspended an inch above the stage, mirroring the Chinese woman’s stepping motion. These gliding phantoms function in uniting past family constructs within a complicated evolution toward present-day, modern families; they are caught in slow motion, operating as mediators between babies not yet born or adopted and families not yet completed. Guided by the gliding dancers, the childless mother on the blue mat and the adopted Chinese girl are interwoven as two distinct models of the non-traditional family dynamics.

*Fable & Faith,* Moses’ second dance section, merges the modern concept of family and children, established within *The Cinderella Principle,* with the past’s shaping of culture and heritage. Children continue to symbolize an ever-changing dynamic between the past, “*Fable,*” and “*Faith*” for the present and future generations. Simply put, children are showcased as key components that bridge the gap between precedent fables and current faith, both being rooted within traditions instilled by storytelling.

This connection is instantly presented when the stage curtain opens and a narrator repeats words, “In the beginning,” as it is projected to a scrim on stage. A male dancer, dressed in knee-high pants and an embellished blue Victorian coat, enters stage right and moves his body in a disjointed manner between the projected words and as they are being
read. His head and limbs heavily jerk and twitch; his weighted arms chopping through the airy letters around him as if he is reconstructing the past within modern times. The narrator tells the popular children’s fairy tale of the Pied Piper as the dancer continues to twitch, convulse, and slice the air around him. It is as if he is coming to life and transforming into the Pied Piper; he embodies the ornate fable being explained. In this way, the dancer represents old traditions of story-telling reshaped and reborn into a very modern and technologically based childhood learning tool. Projections of words and lights, storytelling by a narrator, and the dancer’s movements cohesively create this modern day method of teaching children lessons.

Where the act of storytelling is transcribed from the past to a modern setting, the involvement of the San Francisco Boys Chorus joins past and present with their sing-song stories and movements on the stage. The boys embody a “cultural knowledge” and local language through their choreographed movement and singing, according to Deidre Sklar, the author of “Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance” (30). The chorus, barefoot and modestly dressed in khaki slacks and white undershirts, walk in a single file line from the orchestra pit up onto the stage. They sing and echo the haunting lyrics, “sometimes I feel like a motherless child” as they circle around and enclose the mythical fairytale creature of Phoebe in the middle of stage. The boys, displaced from their mothers and predecessors, walk toward her as a unified group, lift her up on their shoulders, and carry her down to the front of the stage. It is as if the boys are liberating fables by carrying Phoebe upon their shoulders; the boys act as a human vehicle to transport the past, represented by Phoebe, into the present. In this way, the boys, who make up the youth of the future generation, embody a bridge between old and new; old fairytales
and lessons evolve, and past and present heritages become one in this full circle moment as the children sing of fables and carry a mythical character into a modern context.

Robert Moses’ production of *The Cinderella Principle* and *Fable & Faith* was a smooth progression of seamless movements united by raw and emotional storytelling of present facts and fables of the past. *Fable & Faith* not only updated modern day multimedia storytelling by uniting it with its oral predecessor; the dance also combined the two in such a way as to incorporate children and childhood, via the San Francisco Boys Chorus, as the mode of transgression from past heritage to present cultures and methods of learning. According to Allan Ulrich, in his review of the dance, the collaborative artists “scrutinized the Western heritage of fairy tales and re-interpreted them with a pinch of irony and a huge helping of imagination” (E1). The children, by singing and intimately interacting with dancers on stage, maintained an unprecedented innocence. They opened themselves up to old fables, embracing their imaginative essence, and then transformed them by carrying them in to a modern and experimental future; by literally lifting Phoebe up, the children solidified a faith within the past by embracing them in present culture.

Children also united past traditions and cultures to modern day family dynamics within *A Cinderella Story*. The untraditionally modern methods of carrying on family roots and lineage were addressed within touchy subjects of adoption and in vitro fertilization. The heartache of a woman longing to conceive a child of her own and the confusion and betrayal felt by a Chinese girl adopted into an interracial family were conveyed through effortless transitions. A distraught mother sculpted her unborn child’s teddy-bear with a wire clothes hanger; a Chinese woman weaved her way around multicultural homes while stepping on her predecessors; others walked in slow motion with such poise and grace, it is as if they were phantoms joining together these two stories of family
struggle and affliction. All together, these choreographic elements were extremely effective in portraying the importance of children serving as the ultimate driving force behind continuing heritages. Children served as the vehicles by which diverse cultures were transported from generation to generation, and they stood for future communities rooted in and woven together within modern complexities of past cultures.

Although dance critic Allan Ulrich applauded Robert Moses’ “mastery of all the theatrical elements” in his dance production, Ulrich failed to recognize the impact of the two dances performed together in one program (E1). When paired together, Fable & Faith and The Cinderella Principle facilitated each other in creating smooth transitions between imaginative storytelling and factual realities. Because both dances were rooted in the fundamentals of the spoken word, movement and oral narratives were woven into a cohesive stream of story-telling and lineage from one era to the next. Ulrich does admit, “Moses walks a careful line between characterization and abstraction,” and Moses succeeded in doing so (E1). In both dances, Moses conveyed the importance of the family dynamic, shifting and changing to fit the times, but not defined by them.

Children are the fundamental components of a maintained and healthy family dynamic. They not only stand for hope in a brighter future, but they are directly related to the family, community, and culture from which they spring. They shape past heritage anew by growing and changing with the times in which they are born. In order for children to effectively incorporate the past to present, they must first be born into or adopted by a family. But, they also must accept and know of the culture they carry within them while immersing themselves in the culture they will help to shape. Offspring of today’s modern families both unsuccessfully conform to and resent stereotypes cast upon them, like the infertile mother and Chinese girl; or they successfully break free from such nar-
rowly defined labels and embody hope for a brighter tomorrow, like the boys chorus. The
culture and heritage today’s children choose to embrace is ultimately up to them. The
beauty within this choice is watching a child figuring out the world for him or herself and
forming his or her own mark within it.

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*Elizabeth Schroeder* is a senior, studying English and Dance. She was excited to com-
bine her love of writing with her passion for performance within this essay, demonstrat-
ing how two different disciplines can come together.
Our Ocean Home

by Sofía Castañeda

Sometime around 1995, my grandparents decided to have a beach house built in their home country of El Salvador. This house was meant to be a place where family could get together and enjoy each other’s company in the clean ocean air. Spending time there would allow for any stresses or pains to drift off with the salty breeze. From beautiful white weddings, to lively birthday parties, to just lounging in the oven-like sun, the beach house has become a place of many, many joyous memories. The house has become a wonderful part of our ever-growing family history. Having a place like my grandparents’ beach house has shown me how fortunate I am to be blessed with such a loving family and to have such a beautiful place to share that love in.

The hour-long drive from the capital city of San Salvador to the beach house in La Costa Del Sol is always filled with excitement and an anticipation to return to our beloved family home. Upon arriving at the property, two enormous wooden doors open up to a curvy cement road which ultimately leads to the two-story, creamy yellow house itself. Stony pillars frame the open front doors where someone is always there to greet you and welcome you in with a warm hug and a kiss on the cheek. The first floor is entirely open and spacious and decorated with incredible sea shells and other beachy knick knacks.

There are two tables on the first floor that I remember distinctly. One is a relatively small table, forever filled with every kind of sunblock, tanning lotion, and aloe vera imaginable. For some reason, even with the countless bottles of UV protection availa-
ble, we always come back to California peeling like snakes. My dad is notorious for getting terrible sunburns. I can remember one trip that we took there, my dad took a nap in one of the hammocks outside. When he fell asleep, his hammock had been in the shade. When he woke up, the midday sun had roasted him to the color a ripe tomato.

The other table is a long, white, plastic table that serves both as a dining table and also as a family game table. Sometimes there is a half constructed thousand-piece puzzle where people stop by from time to time just to add one more piece to the ever-growing picture. A classic game played at that table is Trivial Pursuit. I can remember the older family members playing Trivial Pursuit until all hours of the night (or maybe it just felt really late because my bedtime used to be earlier). When I was little, I never understood many of the questions, but every once in awhile there would be a question to which I knew the answer. I would always feel incredibly smart answering that one question, just as if I was one of the grown-ups.

Upstairs, there is a room for each family: one for my grandparents, one for each of my dad's three sisters' families, and one for my family. I never understood how it was established who was entitled to which room, but whenever we all get there everybody simply knows where to go. And every time we go back to our room, it always looks the same, just the same as we left it. The floors in the bedroom are tile, and in bare feet always feel slightly damp and cool. And the three beds in the room are always covered in the same patterned turquoise comforters. Not much time is ever spent in the bedrooms, other than for sleeping at night and washing up after a long day. Taking a shower at the beach house has never been a particularly pleasant experience. Even though it is very hot and humid down there, stepping into an icy cold shower isn't as refreshing as one might
think. The water hits you like a slap in the face. But once the shower is done, you feel so fresh and clean.

A typical day begins with streams of sunlight seeping through the cracks in the blinds and lighting up your face. We immediately put on our swimsuits early each morning. Downstairs, for breakfast, there are heaping bowls of freshly cooked black beans, piping hot green *tamales de chipilín* filled with cheese, savory beef and cheese *pupusas*. But the best part of breakfast was *pan dulce*, or sweet bread. After breakfast was finished, one of the maids would bring out the tupperware loaded with sweet breads from the bakery of all different shapes, sizes, colors, and flavors. Some were so sugary, you almost felt guilty eating them. Others were so crumbly, most of it would end up all over the table, all over the floor, or all over your shirt rather than in your stomach. No matter what was served for breakfast, however, it was always eaten in the same place: on one end of the back porch facing the pool, the veranda, and the ocean. As a child, it was always very hard to sit and control my excitement while I ate my breakfast. My mind would race, just thinking of all the activities that would be done that day. So I would eat my breakfast as fast as possible in hopes of starting the fun sooner.

Just past the porch is a backyard unlike any other. A rough red path splits two halves of luscious green grass and leads to the pool. Lanky palm trees line the side walls of the property along with stubby bushes elegantly decorated with tiny, red delicate flowers. The best part about the pool is the table integrated into the side of the pool. Snacks of all kinds, platters of chips and salsas, and colorful plastic cups are usually cluttered on the table which makes that spot in the corner of the pool the place to be. Just relaxing in the pool under an umbrella and listening to everybody's stories is always so much fun. My grandfather is the best storyteller I've ever met. It is so fascinating to hear everything
that he has gone through and experienced throughout his life. During every story someone always has to crack some sort of joke. Laughing at the endless string of jokes, some good and some very bad, makes our sides, abs, and cheeks burn and provide our only exercise of the day. Every pool game imaginable has been played in the pool. But it's not just the kids that partake in the pool games because the aunts and uncles can't resist playing either. Chicken, Marco Polo, and countless other pool-time classics accompany the usual splashing, dunking, and squirting that never fail to fill your eyes and nose with chlorinated water.

Beyond the porch is a slightly raised veranda that goes around in a half circle. Four large stone pillars hold up a slanted red roof, and brightly colored hammocks hang in between them. At the center of the veranda is a small kitchen and bar. I can remember countless parties and festivities being held there. I think the best one I had seen was my grandmother's 75th birthday party. Large, round tables with bright, spotless white table cloths filled the area past the veranda, while the veranda itself served as a dance floor. More than fifty relatives and friends came out to the beach house that night and every one of them had a smile on their face. We weren't just celebrating my grandmother's birthday; we were celebrating the gift of family.

The ocean is where my heart lies. The very first time I went to the beach in El Salvador, I fell in love with the ocean. Opening the gate from the back fence of the property and stepping into the sand is like stepping into a totally different world. I can remember neglecting to bring my sandals along with me and running full speed to the water so that the black sand would not scorch the soles of my feet. The first step into the water always gives me a chill, not because it is cold, but because of a feeling that is truly inexplicable. As soon as I step into the sea, all my worries and stresses leave my body and,
for a while, I can lose myself in the warm ocean water. As I look around, I can see my little sisters and cousins running about in the water, jumping up, and laughing hysterically as each wave comes by; a few uncles and aunts are out further, chatting, smiling, while others are standing in the sand or lying in a beach chair, taking pictures or just watching with great pleasure. Out in the ocean, the ebb and flow of the tide takes control and sways you from side to side. The sand underneath you stirs around with every wave. Every once in awhile a wave will catch you off guard and tumble you over, rushing salt water into your nose and eyes. The waves often temporarily claim some family member, who moments later emerge from the salty water laughing wildly under the warm sunny sky.

Each time I go to the beach, I collect some sea shells to take home with me. I feel as if each one has its own personality; no two shells look the same. Every shell is different from the one next to it. Some are silky smooth, while others have little tiny ridges, and others have spikes. Some are a magnificent white, yet others are tan or purple or pink or have spots. When I was a child, my mother would walk down the shore with me for miles, just looking for more shells to put in my little red beach bucket. I have always been fascinated by how beautiful each shell is.

The sunsets at the beach house are absolutely breathtaking. It is a picturesque scene. On really clear evenings, the family gathers on the beach to watch the sky turn into a painting of radiant oranges, lustrous fuchsias, and burning reds. All become mesmerized by the beauty and by how powerful the sight really is. I always remember these times being mostly quiet, hearing only the ever present sounds of the ocean in the background. But I know that in this silence, we are all watching the glorious sun and calling to mind how lucky we are to have one another. We watch in silence with smiles on our
faces until the very top edge of the big brilliant orange sun disappears behind the dark sea.

Around two years ago, my family came very close to selling our beloved beach house. My grandmother had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease some years before and the medical bills were starting to add up. Though I don't know the full extent of the situation, I know that my grandparents were in need of extra money to care for my grandmother whose health was rapidly deteriorating. On top of watching my grandmother live with this frustrating disease, to sell the beach house would be heartbreaking for the rest of the family, but especially my grandfather. When my parents told me that the beach house was going to be sold, my heart sank. I couldn't imagine any other family in it or appreciating it as much as our family did. That house was a part of our family. It couldn't be valued by anyone else. I knew, however, that if it needed to be done for my grandmother, I was not going to complain. A month later, to my surprise, my aunts and my father had decided to take out a loan and help buy off the house, ultimately helping us to afford the medical bills. The family was able to band together to help out in time of such great grief. Although my grandmother is no longer with us, I have no doubt she is very proud of us for saving this important part of our family history. This is the power of the beach house.

Prior to last summer, four years had passed since I had visited El Salvador and the beach house. But, in August of 2010, my sister and I got the opportunity to go back. Stepping into the beautiful house, I felt like I was home again. Everything was exactly the way I remembered it. Even though the entire family wasn't there with us, we were able to spend a good deal of time with my grandfather and some of my other relatives. Being back in that place, and being surrounded by the people that I love, brought back so
many fond memories. I realized just how special the beach house really is. Although some loved ones may pass away, like my grandmother, and some relatives may not be there at the time, the beach house will always be there to remind us of the great times we have had as a family and to provide us with a wonderful place to create even more memories in the years to come.

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The Worth of Worms

by Emily Sutfin

I don’t know very many people who, upon being asked, would say they have witnessed a miracle. I think the typical mental image is of Jesus turning water into wine, or feeding a huge crowd with a couple of fish. To most people, a miracle must be something impossible, spectacular: some act that defies nature itself. To be honest, though, I don’t think Jesus was doing anything that special. Given time, water will spur the growth of a vineyard, and two fish will give rise to thousands. He just took something that was already happening and sped up the process, perhaps with the intention of bringing our attention to such everyday miracles. In fact, there’s a miracle going on right now, just underneath your feet. You’re just not seeing it in time-lapse.

What on earth are you talking about?

Rather, what in earth? At this moment, the soil below us teems with millions of tiny creatures called earthworms. The earthworm is unassuming at first glance, especially when compared to the diverse cast of animals with which we’re familiar. However, this may be the most deceiving appearance in the animal kingdom. Charles Darwin is credited as having said about earthworms, “it may be doubted if there are any other animals which have played such an important part in the history of the world as these lowly organized creatures” (qtd in Mickey). Despite a simple design, the earthworm is an evolutionary jewel—it plays an enormously important part in its ecosystem, and it’s perfectly fit for its niche.
Yet most people underestimate, or are even repulsed by this annelid achiever. What exactly does an earthworm do that’s so incredible? Earthworms are *detritivores*, or organisms that feed on decomposing matter. This group of organisms, which also includes starfish, snails, and many types of fungi and bacteria, is responsible for cleaning up dead and decaying matter. They share a presence in every imaginable ecosystem. Earthworms in particular plow through terrestrial soil, creating a network of tiny aerating tunnels, which in turn allow other underground organisms access to necessary oxygen. Their burrows also keep the dirt from becoming compacted and make it easier for the roots of plants to penetrate the earth and absorb water. In addition, the worms’ digestion alters the nutrient composition of the soil, meaning the soil is healthier coming out of the worm than it is going in. (Conrad)

All right, so worms make dirt better. What does that have to with me?

Consider the Environmental Protection Agency’s estimation that, in the year 2005, Americans produced 246 million tons of garbage. While this total was calculated before recycling statistics were taken into account, it remains a staggering figure. It’s difficult to envision such a colossal amount of trash when all we see are our own modest trash cans. Once trash is removed from the cans, it’s taken to the dump, as most people know. But this is usually the point when we lose track of the waste mentally. While about a third of the garbage is salvaged for recycling, and about an eighth of it is incinerated, the rest goes into a landfill. The structure of landfills varies from being carefully isolated from the surrounding environment to simply being piled into holes. (Freudenrich)
I can put two and two together, you know. The worms can just plow through the buried garbage and make it nutritious, can’t they?

Here’s where we run into a problem with this process. Most landfills are boxed in from their surroundings by a plastic or ceramic lining. This would prevent earthworms from getting in on their own; but even if the worms could sneak in, this garbage would be inedible. When things decompose out in the wilderness, they’re surrounded by oxygen and helped along by detritivores and scavengers. But when things decompose inside a tightly-compressed mass of other decomposing material, they do not have access to oxygen or the sufficient variety of detritivores needed to decay in a healthy way. Instead, they decompose \textit{anaerobically} (without oxygen). This produces methane gas, one of the biggest contributors to the Earth’s pollution and the greenhouse effect. Any worm that tried to eat its way through a landfill would be poisoned. This buried material \textit{will} eventually decay, but it will take a very long time, and there’s no telling how toxic the resultant substance will be. And since the influx of garbage isn’t going to stop anytime soon, the gradual decay does nothing to slow the growth of the physical mass of the piles of trash.

\textbf{Well, this sucks. Isn’t there anything I can do?}

Now that you mention it, there’s quite a lot you can do in the short-term. It’s easy to recycle paper and cardboard, for example, since these materials unnecessarily clog landfills. There are also sustainable alternatives to potential trash, like reusable canvas bags in place of the plastic ones. But the single biggest impact the average person can make to alleviate their contribution to the landfills is to compost. Composting is basically an eco-friendly version of using a landfill: it’s a way to decompose your own organic waste (organic meaning natural, not necessarily organically-grown). Here’s where our
earthworms come in. The presence of worms will greatly speed up the composting process, turning garbage into rich, fertile soil within only a couple months. And they reproduce on their own, so you won’t have to replenish your stock (and you might have some extra worms to take on your next fishing trip).

While you can bury your trash in small increments to let the wild worms feast on it, most people who wish to compost do so by using a worm bin. This is a specially-constructed, properly-aerated bin that holds within it a miniature ecosystem. Refuse, dirt, and earthworms go in, and nutritious, earthy soil comes out. Obviously, it isn’t a magic equation—it does take proper and diligent care to make your worm bin a successful venture. First of all, the worms will only survive in a comfortable temperature range, so the bin must be placed in a shady location, and the worms must be insulated with shredded paper. Secondly, not all garbage is compostable. Obviously things like plastic and metal don’t sit well in a worm’s digestive system, and meat and dairy products make for a messy decomposition and may attract curious animals. But fruits, vegetables, eggshells, tea and coffee, paper products (as long as the pieces are cut small enough), and specially-compostable products (such as corn-starch plastic and those noisy Sunchips bags) are fair game for the worms. And, depending on your lifestyle and diet; this could be the majority of your garbage output. (“Composting with Redworms”)

That sounds nice and all, but I can’t. I’m...

...living in a dorm room, an apartment, or an urban dwelling with no backyard? One of the biggest drawbacks to maintaining a worm bin is the smell, which can range from unpleasant to downright nauseating, depending on the health of your worms. Naturally, the bin’s best left outside, but this may not be an option for those living in small
spaces, especially if they also have pets. And most people would prefer the presence of human, canine, or feline houseguests to that of smelly, wormy ones. What’s more, taking care of the worms may place an added pressure on many people, which would feel pointless if the output (fresh soil) has no function in their lives.

I still want to compost! Are there ways to get around the space problem?

There are, if you can find other people who are interested in composting. With a strategic campaign or petition, it may be possible to set up community composting sites for your apartment complex or residence hall. You would have to find enough people who agree to help maintain it, and make sure everyone involved knows the proper way to sort their garbage. Community gardens usually have worm bins, but these would probably not be large enough to handle the garbage output from an entire block’s worth of households. Individual bins are the ideal because the trash-input/soil-output ratio remains fairly steady. If there is too much garbage, the worms will not be able to get to most of it before it rots on its own—too much of this will kill the worms, and you’ll just have another dumpster on your hands.

Would it be worthwhile to push for policies surrounding composting?

Imagine a scenario in which every household determined a limit to how much garbage they could produce in a week. It would be similar to having a water meter—the household would be fined a certain amount of money for every excess pound of garbage. Recyclables, if properly separated, would not count against this limit. The number of people living in the house would also be taken into account. But, at this rate, most people would probably be exceeding the appropriate limits. If people don’t want to pay extra,
and also prefer not to have mounds of extra garbage sitting around their house just to avoid the fine, their best bet is to alter their buying habits to include less trash and more recyclable and compostable material, and to begin actively recycling and composting.

Now, at the first mention of this idea, there would be quite a few people getting up in arms:

**Why should the government be deciding how much I throw away?**

Well, in large part for the same reason they decide how much you get fined for littering or vandalizing property: piles of garbage, even when underground, are unsightly, and most people would prefer them to be smaller and less prominent. It’s also for the same reason the government provides law enforcement, firefighting, and animal control services: too much garbage, in time, will pose a major hazard. It already is hazardous, but of course many people don’t notice the danger until it’s imminent or direct. The sooner action is taken to eliminate as much unnecessary trash as possible, the better.

This isn’t to say putting a standard limit and fine on garbage output is the only way to reduce it. Although its effectiveness may be questionable, most people would react better to an incentive program, similar to a lot of the current recycling programs we have. For example, an excess amount of garbage may not be fined, but a smaller amount would redeem some money for the household. The states could also be incentivized via federal mandates, which would effectively pit their governments against each other in a race to enforce the most effective garbage regulations. While a successful fine placed upon excess garbage would be the quickest route to reducing trash, the battle against resistant voters who like their disposal system just the way it is may mean an incentives program would be a good compromise in the meantime, to at least get the average person used to composting.
Still, you can never trust lawmakers to get things done... what should I do in the meantime?

Laws cannot change if minds do not change. The most important step at this point is to spread awareness of the benefits of composting and the problems with the current rate of disposal. Encourage the idea of home and community gardening, which provide a perfect destination for all the healthy soil produced in a worm bin. Educate children and adults alike about the necessity of worms, so that they may accept the creatures’ importance rather than be repulsed by them. Let people know that they can work a miracle with their own hands.

Works Cited


**Emily Sutfin** is a freshman majoring in English. She likes writing both fiction and non-fiction, and is honored to have her work included in this year's Spectrum publication.