

QUIZ & QUILL RETRO CHAPBOOK 2019 | CELEBRATING 100 YEARS



QUIZ&QUILL

OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT LITERARY MAGAZINE

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Foreword

Happy Birthday, Quiz & Quill! You've reached 100!

To all those Otterbein students from 1919 to 2019 whose creative writings were considered for this special publication, congratulations!

I feel so grateful for having been asked to write this foreword. I may be the oldest former Quiz & Quill member Otterbein could locate. You see, I'm only 9 years younger; I'll celebrate my 91st birthday this year.

For most of those years I have been a writer. I wrote my first poems in early elementary school and by 5th grade had written a short play. I can still feel the thrill of having several of my poems published in Scholastic magazine when I was in high school. At Otterbein, a poem of mine won first prize in the Quiz & Quill Dr. Roy Burkhart Poetry Contest of 1947-48 when I was a freshman. As a sophomore, I was voted into Quiz & Quill membership, which was a highlight of my college years. How I enjoyed the meetings, the camaraderie with other student writers, and especially the expert direction and kindness of our advisor, Dr. Robert Price, whom I tried to emulate in my own teaching career.

For 34 years after my graduation from Otterbein in 1951, I taught high school English, dramatics, speech, and French. During this time I wrote on the side, mostly plays, songs, musicals, and poetry. When I retired in 1985, I had more time for my writing. But it wasn't until 2004, at the age of 76, that I published a full-length book, a memoir. I published a sequel in 2006, then two children's picture books, one in 2008 and one in 2010. Later I had the good fortune to be recognized as the Ohio United Methodist Historian of the Year and to be inducted into the Ohio Senior Citizens' Hall of Fame, both in part for my writing.

As a founding member of the Tuscarawas County (Ohio) Writers' Guild and its current Resource Officer, I continue to champion the value of literary magazines, edit manuscripts, and encourage others toward publication so that they, too, can experience the thrill that still motivates me.

Writing has been a passion of mine in every decade of my life. I plan to keep going past 100, just like you, dear Quiz & Quill. You continue to inspire.

Ruth Mugridge Snodgrass
Class of 1951

A Word From the Editors

Dear reader,

We are so excited to share this chapbook with you and to kick off what is sure to be a memorable year for Quiz & Quill. 100 years ago, the first Spring Magazine was released by Quiz & Quill in 1919. Now, in 2019, we have the great privilege of putting together the 100th issue of this remarkable publication. We have some big things planned for our centennial celebration and can't wait to celebrate by bringing together alumni and a new generation of young Otterbein readers and writers.

This chapbook was inspired by the past 100 years' worth of amazing writing that has come out of Otterbein students and been published by Quiz & Quill. We browsed archival copies of past magazines to find pieces that are not only great works of writing but that also offer a glimpse into the time in which they were written. The pieces in this chapbook span 100 years of history, from World War II to the Civil Rights Movement and beyond. They serve as memorials to specific times and places, yet we hope you'll be surprised by just how much they still speak to our present day and resonate with us in the way that only good literature can.

We hope that this time capsule of a chapbook will introduce you to some old voices cast in a new light. We hope that you enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed producing it, and we can't wait to celebrate 100 years of Quiz & Quill with you this spring. Cheers to 100 more!

Best,
Abby & Alex
Managing Editors



10s

The Moral Is—

Pauline Stubbs

1919

A young girl on an Autumn day
Started to Otterbein, far, far away.

Beneath her dark lashes, shone her bright eyes
For she'd soon be a Freshman, and was feeling quite
wise.

She sped over valley and plain and hill
And that evening found her in Westerville.

But when she arrived at this, far strange town,
She felt her spirits sinking down.

Her laughter died and a vague unrest
And a nameless longing filled her breast.

A wish that she hardly dared to own
And this was it—she wished she was home.

Her thoughts wandered back to her own town
And soon the tears began falling down.

She thought of mother and dear old dad,
And of all the many friends she had.

She thought of Bob and Jack and Sue
And as she thought she felt more blue.

She found the college a lonely place
For she saw not one familiar face.

The profs were wonderfully wise and stern,
The lessons were long and hard to learn.

And some days when she was frightfully dumb
She wished again she hadn't come.

She often sighed and said, "Ah, me,
That I might only a Senior be!

“Then I’d forget about French and Greek
And writing those horrid themes each week.

“Then I could sleep every morning till ten,
And I’d never have to come back again.”

But the weeks passed by, and this lonely girl
Soon found herself in such a whirl

Of books and lessons, and good times, too,
That she had no time to be feeling blue.

There was French and Math, and History,
How she got them all was a mystery.

There were Chemistry and English, too,
So she always had a lot to do.

Besides all this, which seems enough,
There was always a lot of extra stuff

To take up her time and make her feel
That the good times of which she had dreamed were
real.

She went to parties and football games,
She met all the fellows and learned their names.

She went to pushes by the score,
And only wished that there were more.

She went to slumber parties, too,
Where they stayed awake the whole night through.

She went to lots and lots of spreads
Where they sat around on the tables and beds.

And ate chicken and cake and candy and pie
Till it really is strange that she didn’t die.

She went to football rallies, of course,
And yelled until she was dreadfully hoarse.

And did the snake dance down the street
Till she almost ruined her dainty feet.

She went to Willie's about three times a day
And spent her money in a reckless way,

Buying chocolate soldiers and cherry ice,
Banana splits and everything nice.

She often went to Columbus, too,
When she had nothing else to do.

And there she shopped the live long day,
Till the stores all closed and she couldn't stay.

Or sometimes she "rushed the coop" to see
Some far-famed celebrity.

And stood in line an hour or more
Until her feet were tired and sore.

Perhaps it would interest you to know
That this lively Freshie had a beau,

A Sophomore fellow, tall and thin,
Who liked this Freshie, and she liked him.

And any beautiful, warm Spring night
When the moon was shining clear and bright,

You could see them strolling down the street
To the bridge, where all fond lovers meet.

Not only at night did you see them together,
But all hours of the day, and in all kinds of weather.

They skated and hiked and played tennis, too,
Or spent afternoons in his little canoe.

But alas for this Freshie, who had so much fun,
When exams came around had her troubles begun,

For she'd spent so much time in her pleasures, poor
dear,
That her lessons were sadly neglected, I fear.

Oh, pity the Freshie, and pity us all
Who vainly our own sad mistakes recall,

For of all sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these, "I've flunked again."



20s

The Revolt of Percival and Petunia: A Playlet in Two Acts

Esther Harley
1920

ACT I

(Scene: A small island in the Pacific Ocean about 20 x 40 feet in size, most of which space is occupied by a cottage. When the occupants sit on the porch, they must dangle their feet in the ocean, so close to it are they.)

CHARACTERS

PERCIVAL PENNYPOLE: a happy groom of two days.

PETUNIA PENNYPOLE: effervescent bride of the above mentioned groom.

TIME: that bewitching hour of the evening when the mosquitoes commence to sing and cut up capers.

PETUNIA: Percival, my love, aren't we having the darlindest honeymoon that ever was?

PERCIVAL: Um-hm.

PETUNIA: Why, of course we are. And isn't that ocean out there too sweet for words?

PERCIVAL: Um-hm. Also the mosquitoes, confound them!

PETUNIA: Now dear, you mustn't swear in front of me. You know I wasn't brought up that way. I was never even allowed to say "the dickens". So you won't swear, will you, darling?

PERCIVAL: No, my love,—only when my feelings are too strong for expression in common ordinary words.

PETUNIA: And just look at that sea-gull out there, flying over the briny deep! Isn't he picturesque?

PERCIVAL: Yes, yes, of course.

PETUNIA: You mustn't be so gruff with me, dear Percival. And there's another despicable little habit of yours that I want to tell you about—and that is smoking that dirty, vile, wretched, abominable pipe of yours. Of all the disgusting habits.

PERCIVAL: Mrs. Pennypole, when you married me, you were aware that I smoked. Smoking isn't nearly so detestable as that low-down, chorus girl, chewing gum habit of yours. If I had known how you chewed before-

PETUNIA: (*sobbing wildly*) I suppose you wouldn't have married me. Oh dear! Oh dear! Here you've brought me away out in the Pacific Ocean to tell me that you w-wish you hadn't m-married me just because I chew gum- oh dear-

PERCIVAL: (*collapsing dutifully on his knees before her*) Now, darling, I'm sorry I talked like that—I am a low-down wretch to smoke those dirty pipes, and I will take all seven of them and pitch them into the ocean—

PETUNIA: (*brightening up*) Oh! You darling! I will get out my nine boxes of Juicy Fruit and throw them into the water to let the fishes chew awhile—

(*Exeunt hurriedly, PETUNIA and PERCIVAL.*)

ACT II

(Scene: the cluttered-up-back porch of the cottage.)

TIME: midnight of the day on which occurred Act I. Inky blackness envelops the scene.

(*Enter PETUNIA, cautiously pushing one foot before the other.*)

PETUNIA: Oh dear, I wonder if I can find them. I threw them out here, and now I want them so much! Sh-sh-here comes someone—

(*Enter PERCIVAL, stealthily in stockinged feet.*)

PERCIVAL: Ouch, my toe! Confound that chair anyway—good thing Petunia didn't hear that swear word. Where did those things land anyway? I threw them out here instead of in the ocean- hello, who's there?

PETUNIA: What are you doing here, sir?

PERCIVAL: And if I may ask a lady, what are you doing here, madam?

PETUNIA: Sir, I am looking for my Juicy Fruit.

PERCIVAL: And madam, I am looking for my old brier pipe and Prince Albert.

(*Curtain.*)

The Hole In The Doughnut

A. W. Elliott

1920

The sun may be shining when you read this but it is a dull day now.

The sky is an ugly, drab smudge. There is no sun, no rain, no flowers, no nothing.

Across the campus is the stupid college building. In it are stupid students and stupid professors. I know them. I wish I didn't. There are many people you are sorry you have met.

I would have a fire but it is too close to have one and too cold not to have one. Is anything hollower and drearier than a fireless fireplace?

A bird is on a tree outside but he is not singing. His head is all drawn down into his shoulders and his feathers are all ruffled up, and he is just sitting there hating himself.

A bunch of students is passing down the campus. They are the dullest, homeliest bunch of human beings I have ever seen. I abominate students.

A crash! Someone has broken a chair downstairs and no doubt the best one in the house. I would go down and give them a going-over but I hate to move. Why move on such a day as this? If you must be miserable, why spread it around?

Some "pimple-head" has been in my room smoking and I loathe smoke. I opened the window to admit some fresh air and a mosquito came buzzing around. I tried to chase him out and upset my can of talcum powder. All powder cans will be destroyed someday, as all men must die. All women must die too, also all dogs, all cats, horses, cows, and grizzly bears. A hundred years from now everybody and everything will be dead and there will be a new crop and after awhile they too will die. What's the use? I ask you kindly.

The gas is low today. So am I. So is the universe.

I would read the paper but there is no news in it – only Germany and Bolsheviks and H. C. L. and who will be the next President. Newspapers are all poor. Why read? Aren't you miserable enough as you are?

Two of my Professors are sick but they are likely to be well by tomorrow. I am trying to enjoy my vacation. This morning I played a game of Rook and was beaten by a poor boob that played worse than I. Then I played two games of solitaire. Lost both.

Wish I had something to eat but I guess I am not hungry.

The weather is thickening. It is going to rain.

I would go to sleep but I would have to get up again and it is hours and hours till bed time. Ain't it awful?



30s

Night

Mary Altman Oppy
1935

The day slipped from my fingers
And left me
Watching
The first purple streak
Of night.

I stood silent
And felt the shadows
Wrap about me.
Then night tantalized me
With one lonely star.



40s

The Store–Window Dummy

Julia Thomas

1942

She sits there passive all day long—
Unmoved by the actions of the throng.
In her serene world of brittle glass
She dumbly ignores the things that pass.

Incapable of feeling; stupid and senseless,
She rests unaroused and wholly defenseless
Glass windows will shatter, if she only knew
But passive she sits—an American too.

They Speak

Sylvia Phillips

1944

They speak so coldly of steel and concrete,
And how many divisions we are keeping busy,
And the lines of trade that are closed or opened.

They speak so coldly of steel and concrete,
And tonnage and strikes and production,
And the probable post-war stock market.

They speak of subversive propaganda and the fifth column,
And attacks made to gain an hour somewhere,
And the possible points for the final invasion.

They speak—these omniscient political manipulators
Of war mathematics. Do they not realize
That human life is the common denominator?



50s

The Young God

Ruth Mugridge

1951

He was a very young god
And, therefore, conscientious.
The yearning prayers, the exhortations,
The rising clouds of burning incense
Found him faithful in his throne.
Of course, it was his first real world . . . that always makes a
difference.

He had been quite disturbed about Creation:
There had been Absolutely Nothing to work with.
But once he got started — once he had the feeling
Of hills curving under his hands,
Of grass growing up between his fingers,
Of water's throb and pulse around his feet,
His delight was almost too sharp for bearing,
And everyone said his works were full of promise.

But the breath of his being . . . the very life of his happiness . . .
Was poured into his creatures. The older gods watched and
wondered.

Some questioned . . . and some doubted.
But the young god had gone too far to be swayed by the others.
He had to check his passion, his overwhelming love
For Man . . . frail synthesis of flesh and bone,
Of the undivined depths
Of a desperately eager and hopeful god.

The older gods watched and wondered.
They murmured that he too would weep . . .
That despair would touch his heart . . .
That remorse for Creation would color his days . . .
That the river of loneliness would flood and drown
The early rapture and the tender promise . . .

The young god heard all these things, but went on as before.
He could not be deflected from his course.

That was a long time ago . . .

I have often wondered about that world.
I have often wonderered about that god.

Atom Bomb

Ted Houston
1956

A strychnine mushroom
Blooms over the desert.
It ripens and bursts
Scattering spores of death
In the trembling air.
It's a devil-plant
That laughs thunder
In defiance at the limits
Of its maker's imagination.

If Only

Pat Jacobs
1957

My life is a yo-yo
I dangle it before
God's very face!
I let it travel
Down the string
To His fingertips;
And then, with a change of will
And flick of wrist,
Bring it back again!
Ups and downs!
But at those moments
When I send it down the string—
If only He would reach out
And grasp it . . .



60s

Haiku

Rod Reed

1966

Clever bumblebee,
Commuting on this train. But
Why go to Boston?

In Late Childhood

Rachel Cring

1967

If there were time and it were any good,
I would try to feel a nausea; but it is too late now,
and I am tired, and it wasn't that important anyway.
Just finding out that warm blue-jewelled nights in August
do not exist and never really did,
and wondering how I ever might have thought they could.
But then, it took some time before I learned
that there is no such thing as a cummings day in spring;
for even as I saw the empty days float past
until the warm green leaves had come,
I still could smell the pungent mud
and hear the goat-foot whistle.
So naturally I waited.

And now, months away from August,
I take time to stop and drink a cup of tea
And wonder if the dark, soft humid nights appeared last year,
or if I just imagined them.

I sigh, and sip my tea, and pretend that I cannot remember.
Until the ghost sound starts, coming through the distance,
growing louder, faintly louder, until it makes an all –
surrounding racket of grating crickets' chirp.

Stunned, I listen.

In the din I turn to stare, dead-eyed at the mirror,
and wonder why we are afraid, all afraid.

A Poster on the Wall: "Blood Donor Trips"

Tom Lauchner 3:30 P.M.
1967

Coming out of class, feeling hung up because you are hung up – at least on *The Theory of Economic Growth*, going to burn that book! Walking slowly down a leaf-strewn sidewalk, the atmosphere warm and muggy – a smell of decay in the air. Sickly sweet.

A group in the parking lot – fellow donors. Four homely girls, two boys, one very talkative driver. You climb in the car, light up a cigarette and listen to him eagerly blow-off – “It doesn’t hurt at all ... nah, nothing to it ... sure I’m glad I’m not there to receive it heh, heh, heh. Yeah. Sure Pal. One pint is O.K., but don’t let you be caught over there. A fellow could get Killed over there.” Already I hate the driver and he is one of the petty organizers of this bit. His yellow streak shows. Inside my shell now, I watch the road and smoke in silence.

Inside the hospital, walking down pure white corridors – the smell of antiseptic pervading all else. Into a lounge where the girls sit down and chatter nervously about nothing. You attempt to read a magazine. Second thoughts start darting around in your brain.

A nurse in her late forties, “Who’s next please?” A bit too eagerly, jumping up, sitting at a desk. The usual questions – and answers. The ten-dollar winner, “Do you wish to donate to a specific person?” Oh boy. Yeah, to some poor guy who’s been shot and is hurt and is crying and I can hear it and I am sure it is me – even in my dreams it is me – no one answers my plea – don’t worry I hear you – I know your fear and I’m grateful not to be there – “No, no one.”

Next room – blood pressure – blood sample test – cold impersonality – the nurse has a headache, hungry and tired – a long day. “Go into the next room.”

Eight beds spaced about the room – friendly, attractive nurses – an air of compassion. “Your cards please?” Here, I don’t want them. Reminders that anything you do is recorded. For the rest of your life.

“Lie down, Tom, and just relax.” Sure, but what about my heart – it looks funny sticking in my throat like that.

The extended arm, the sharp sting and a wooden peg to hasten the flow. “Squeeze it every so often – it helps.”

Roger Wilco – over and out – now leave me alone dammit!

A pure white ceiling – no marks – nothing to focus attention on. How many people have searched the shiny surface? Squeeze. My mind wanders. In a small tent a lone soldier writing on a cot. “Jesus! I’m dying

somebody help me. He shot me ... my insides are coming out, I hurt. Help me, help me, help me, help me, somebody, anybody, medic – medic – MEDIC!” Squeeze. “The poor kid. He’s had six bottles. White count way the hell up. Better call the chaplain. He’s had it. Hello son, how are you? Our father who art in Heaven...” Squeeze. “How are you doing Tom?” Peachy keen. Squeeze. “... he died in the service of his country. Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust...” Squeeze. Darkness.

From nowhere, a voice, “Tom, wake up. Were you sleeping? Let me wipe your face.” I am dripping wet. The man next to me thinks, “Poor kid. Probably never given blood before. He’s scared to death. Why, there’s nothing to it.” Go to hell mister you’re too old to go and besides you never had the chance to see yourself dying. Probably shake you up too.

The nurse slips the needle out, “Rise up slowly, Tom. Thata boy. Are you hungry?” Yeah, bring on the filet mignon. “Yes, can I have some coffee?”

Walking unsteadily to the canteen, the smell of warm coffee and doughnuts. Others bragging about how easy it was – “It didn’t hurt at all.” Agreeing and smiling weakly, trying to hide the trembling hands underneath the table.

The ride back in silence. In your hand a small pin, “Blood donor.” You thrust it into a coat pocket. The street lamps begin to blur, the road runs on in a haze, there is complete silence.

On the radio, “There were several minor skirmishes with the Viet Cong today, American casualties were listed as moderate.”

God Bless America.

I feel sick.



70s

Drifter

Sue Casselman

1971

I walked away. Maybe that's my whole problem – I walk away.

Now, Moses is a small town like a lot of small towns I seen – a bank set on one corner, and a white church on the other, and a grocery store set somewheres in between. Now, I never aimed to stay; I can't. I stick around for a week, maybe even a month, and then there comes this itchin' in my feet, and I know I won't sleep easy till I'm on the road again. There's a freedom in the wind when you're shed of all the trappin's of a town. You don't make many friends, but there ain't many people worth stickin' around for. *I never seen much worth stayin' put for.* So when I rambled into Moses, I was ready to spend a week or so, like usual, and then be movin' on, no strings.

June is a good month for a drifter like me. It's summertime, and folks seem more inclined to be friendly to strangers. I started the usual way – find a place to stay cheap. I usually tried boardin' houses.

“Well, I'll tell ya, mister,” said an old man, pushin' a battered straw hat back on his head. He wiped the sweat off his forehead. “There ain't one. But you could try Miz Michaels up there on the hill. She takes boarders; ‘though,” he said, eyin' me, “she's right particular about her people.”

“Thank you kindly,” I said and started towards the hill.

I knocked on the door of a big old clapboard house. It was all covered with this gingerbread stuff – you know – as decoration. It needed paint, and the eaves was a-droopin', and I was pretty sure of gettin' enough work to earn my keep for a while. Pretty soon, I hear a click sound as the door was unlocked. And Miz Michaels and I was face to face. She eyed me, and I eyed her, and I reckon neither one of us liked much what we saw. She was a skinny woman with gray hair in a bun. I could feel her eyes goin' straight through me, without so much as a how-de-do. School marm, I thought. And me, well, I don't know what she thought of me, exactly, but I can guess. You see, I don't hold with shavin' everyday, and I could see just by the look of her that she did. I cleared my throat kind a quiet and was ready to say hello, but she didn't give me no chance.

“Well?”

I could see that there weren't no use botherin' with pleasantries, the weather and all, so I told her straight out I would help fix up her house if I could stay on for a week or two.

“What's wrong with the house?”

That kind a took me back, but I got a grip on myself fast. I consider myself a regular ball o' fire when it comes to talkin'. I smiled, “Well, ma'am, I notice your eavespouts look 'bout ready to go, and some of the

shrubs and such need clippin'." She just stood there a-lookin' at me, not sayin' a word, so I went on. "And I'm right handy with tools."

"And?"

"Uh, that's all." I kind a petered out. She kept a-lookin' at me, and I got to admit I was gettin' a mite uncomfortable. I was figurin' to look somewheres else.

"All right, you're hired." She turned to walk back into the house, then turned on me again. "But you give me any trouble..."

"Oh, I won't. Nossir, I most certainly won't." And I meant it.

It weren't no time at all before I figured I'd made a mistake. Now, I'm a travellin' man, like I said, and I can't afford roots. They just cause problems. I can't afford no roots at all. And that includes people, and I was gettin' to like Miz Michaels. Fact is, she kind a put me in mind of Ma a little. Ma was kind a sharp-tongued – well, I guess she had to be to manage all us boys – so Miz Michaels manner of speakin' didn't bother me none. And you could see she was a lady. Oh, the house wasn't much now, but you could tell it had been somethin' fine once. And she always had a white handkerchief with her. Now that's a lady!

So like I said, I started to get a special feelin' for Miz Michaels, and I knew I couldn't afford that, but I kind a hated the thought of leavin', and that's a bad sign. Fact is, I felt kind a sorry for her up on that hill all alone without no kin to help her. She didn't have much, but she wouldn't ask nothin' of anyone – not money-help, that is. But somethin' like extra wood for the stove, or helpin' with clearin' the table or somethin', that she appreciated. She was right pleased with that little dog I made for her; said it reminded her of the dog she had when she was a little girl.

Well, I was tryin' to get up the gumption to leave, and I knew it had to be soon, when this feller comes to call on Miz Michaels one afternoon. The minute I clapped eyes on him, I had a feelin' he was trouble. Don't ask me why – I reckon maybe folks like me just develop a sixth sense for people, and his big cigar and gold watch gave me an itchy sort a feelin'. He and Miz Michaels went into the parlour, and they talked a good spell until suppertime. Then the door swung open, and she told me to show the gentleman out. I was kind a surprised she didn't ask him to supper seein' as how town was a ways away and dark was comin' on. But she never said a word about it. Well, I figured it was her business who she wanted in her house. Later than night I was fiddlin' with somethin', and I ask Miz Michaels for money for some supplies for the house, and I reckon I should have known better. She looked at me real sharp-like and said, "Money! That's all all of you ever want, isn't it!" I just looked at her. She yelled a lot, but she never meant nothin' by it, not till now.

I don't know if that did it or what, but pretty soon after that, I started

gettin' that restless feelin' in my shoes and this urge to be movin' on. And I told Miz Michaels so. She just nodded – she never was much of a talker – and asked me when I was plannin' to leave. Next day, I said, at sunup.

When I got ready to go the next mornin', Miz Micheals didn't get up to say good-bye, but I found a sack of sandwiches on the kitchen table – no note or nothin', but I didn't expect one – and I said thank you to the walls, though I s'pose that was a dumb move. I was part-way down the hill, and I turned for one last look. She was a nice lady, and I was goin' to miss her. I knew she hadn't meant nothin' by that remark. I looked up just in time to see a white curtain flutter shut, so I kind a waved my hand and made for the road.

Well, I left that town of Moses far behind me, but every once-in-a-while I'd think 'bout Miz Michaels and her poor old house and wonder how she was gettin' on.

About January of the next year I was passin' through that way and reckoned I'd stop in and see how she was. So I trudged up the hill, only now it was kind a slushy and cold, but I finally got to the top and gave a knock on the door, and pretty soon I hear footsteps a-comin'. Then the door opened and some old woman with little blue eyes was standin' there sayin', "Yeah? What you want?" real snappish. And I asked her kind a confused where Miz Michaels was.

"You a stranger?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, Lottie Michaels been gone must be a year and a half now. She couldn't pay the taxes on the house so she had to let it go. Bank took it. We got it dirt cheap. Lottie Michaels' house," she said, rubbin' the wood. "Mr. Groves told her himself she couldn't hold it much longer 'less she got some money up for the taxes she owed. She's been fightin' to keep this house for years, but I guess last year she just couldn't make it. She started takin' in laundry, even practically beggin' for it." She laughed. "Never thought I'd see Lottie Michaels takin' in washin'." Now it takes a lot to get me riled, but when she said that, just smilin' away, I felt like knockin' the teeth she had left down her throat. "But it didn't do no good, I guess. She lost the house anyway."

"Any idea where she went to?"

"You her son or somethin'?"

"Just a friend."

She kind a smirked at me. "Young feller like you?"

"Look, ma'am, do you know where she went or not?"

"Now, don't go gettin' smart with me, you tramp."

I just walked away, like I always do, and Miz Michaels' house was settin' back there on the hill, starin' at me. Maybe I could have done somethin' – anythin'. But regrets are bad things for a travellin' man – like roots. So I just walked away, no strings. Not now.



80s

Patriots

Phyllis Magold

1987

She said it was wrong	He said it was right
She said don't go	He said I must go
She went to college	He went to war
he joined the protests	He joined the Berets
She burned the buildings	He burned the towns
She watched friends get beaten	He watched friends get killed
She popped pills	He smoked grass
She was arrested	He was ignored
	They are
	Am er
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Praise

Bobby Shimba

1989

Yesterday, I was scolded by Tom
because I do not have white skin.
I was scolded by Sue
because I have slight eyes.
I was scolded again by Jimmy
because my hair is black and straight.

I was scolded by Mary.
I was scolded by Johnny.

I was scolded by Nancy
because somebody attacked Pearl Harbor.
I was scolded by George
because I was standing there,
because I was breathing.
I was scolded by anybody.
I was scolded any time.

But today, I was praised finally.
I was praised at last.
I was praised by a lady.
I was praised and she gave me a hug.
I was praised by the lady
because my English has no accent.



90s

Kiss of Knowledge

Amanda Greaves

1998

“Some minds remain open long enough for the truth not only to enter but to pass on through by way of a ready exit without pausing anywhere along the route.”

Elizabeth Kenny

Australian Nurse

Let me bring you into The Garage (The Gay-Rage) with me.

You enter through double doors and the first thing you feel is the heat.

It's the subzero weather outside and your red face, in the short minute since you've entered, has already begun to become speed spotted with the droplets of condensation born from the humidity in the room. All you can feel is pure pulsation. The hard downbeat of the music pulsates in your chest—makes your heart feel like it is going to leap out of the quiet peace you maintain in your body. You strain your eyes to make out faces, but, with the jagged lighting, you can only make out a sea of black and silver and red. A sea of anxieties being let loose from the hair of a group of people who have come to gather—who have come to “Dance our asses off!”

You stop for a moment. The last phrase that echoes in your ears is her advice: “Keep an open mind.” You remember how she stood up there and told you to vanquish preconceived notions. You remember thinking how open your mind was...

But you also remember your friends' stories of the last time they were here. You remember them telling you how they had been felt up in the restroom. You remember hearing things like, “She put her hand on my breast and squeezed as hard as she could,” or, “He was flaming. Wearin' that tight shirt and talkin' with his hands.” You remember your friends' vivid descriptions about how they were “molested” by the bartender. You recall all of this. But what hangs out vividly, what really stops you in your tracks, is that girl who kissed you full on the mouth in a drunken stupor last week. The smell of her perfume and the feel of her hair brushing against yours.

Did you put those feelings aside to come here? Or did you come here to figure out if you really liked the way that felt? Did you question your sexuality after that kiss? Or did you just go about your heterosexual relationship, not speaking a word of it to your boyfriend...not speaking a word of it to your heart?

So you stop for a moment, the memory of that kiss in your head. You stop right in your place and you can only think about leaving. Right

now you realize how afraid you are, only you don't know that it is not this group of people you're afraid of. It is yourself you fear. You fear the expansion of your mind. You fear the places your mind can take you.

You don't want to break down the constructs of familiarity. And you just stand there with that kiss fresh on your lips. And your stomach begins to turn a pale shade of green.

Your heart is still pulsating... And you feel that beat. Feel it moving toward your mind. Feel that beat overtaking preconceived notions about the group of people you are about to meet. You feel the music in your soul. That is when you truly know that what that beat in your heart and that music in your soul want you to do is to be free, Free to be with these new people.

So you take your first step toward the dance floor, and then your second. You walk into that sea of red and black and silver anxiety. There are no faces looking at you. Only hands, and bodies, and extreme heat... You stand there for a second, perched to take your third step when you see them—two women kissing in a well-lit corner of the dance floor. Keep an open mind... but you're just stopped there. No hands, no bodies, just heat. You think it's the heat of embarrassment, but it's not. It's the heat of something radical and truly new being burned into your brain. It's the heat of muscles moving to accept something so new.

And then you realize that you looked that way last week, with her lips on yours. You realize that a kiss is meaningful—only sometimes. You realize that it was perfectly fine to fell joy in that kiss because it was something new that opened your mind to new schools of thought. You learned from that kiss. You learned, but not until now.

Were you dancing when you realized all of this? No, but everybody else was. Wheeling and reeling in the joy of having time away from the prejudice of others. And this is what The Garage became to you at that moment. A place away from the anxieties and actions of others, and a time away from your own censorship. So you take your first step of motion and begin to dance. And finally you see faces, three hundred beautiful faces. They are smiling and laughing—not at your kiss, not at your motions. Just laughing—living!

So you're dancing. Caught up in one moment of time with these three hundred beautiful people. And you realize that these are people—not men, not women. You realize that they have a right to be together to celebrate. To make joy together. To make love together. To fit together. To fit with you.

You go to bed that evening satisfied. You think of what it'll be like to be a teacher. And you see yourself teaching your students to see the beauty in faces, not in the sexes, because you know that prejudices aren't born in the sexes, they are born in the mind. You see yourself showing

your students how to celebrate each other. You teach them how to fit together. You teach them how to fit with you. Because they can all dance, and they can all love.

And you fall asleep, as knowledge kisses your lips, and you are dancing...



00s

Uppity Nigger

Ladan Osman

2004

The first time I was called a nigger
I was walking down the street
When a little blond boy grinned
And bared his yellow teeth
Then as simply as you damn well please
He spat the word with gleeful ease,
And kicked some gravel onto my sandaled feet.

The nigger in me
Wanted to choke and beat
That dirty kid with crooked teeth,
The nigger in me
Should've grabbed that beast
And made him kiss my dusty feet.
My Nubian goddess feet.
My mahogany mistress, ebony vixen,
Somali queen feet.

But you'd better believe
As simply as you damn well please,
My Negro step didn't miss a beat
As I sauntered past him
And down the street.

Cribs burn

Burn MTV

Dan Boyd
2004

Before reading, ask the audience to scream, “burn,” after every quote. Start them off with the chant. It is recommended that you chant with them. I have found pointing at them helps as well.

“BURN
BURN
BURN”

“Sir, how many cars do you have?”

Pitts BURN
BURN Pitts

Read as though you are Keanu Reeves.

“Dude, I have like, 10 cars.”

Britneys BURN
BURN Britneys

“Congratulations. All of you masses, aren’t you jealous? If you made money, wouldn’t you do the same? Wouldn’t you spend it on yourself? You already do.”

Hollywoods BURN
BURN Hollywoods

What are they trying to tell me?
What are they telling you?

Imitate voices from The Osbornes.

“Ozy! Ozzy! OZZZZZZY!”

Why can’t she find him?
Is it because the mansion is too big?

“I CAN’T FIND YOU IN THIS HOUSE!”

Camera: Cut to cute kid.

“Mom bought me this knight’s armor. I didn’t even really want it, I was just like, ‘Mom, will you buy this for me,’ and she did.”

Why would he ask for things her doesn’t want?
Is it because the American dream demands it?

“That’s awesome. I wish my mom would buy me whatever I wanted.”

And now I want a house... A BIG MOTHER OF A HOUSE
I want a bigger house than caps lock will indicate.

HOUSE

I want a bold house. I want a twenty point **HOUSE** bold **HOUSE**

I want ten of them **Hut** in the Bahamas

Castle in England **Villa** in Spain

Pagoda in japan, and that one can be on stilts.

| | , | | | | | | | | | |¹

MANSION

Residence six in some jungle **hOusE** built in some funky manner

ABODE PALACE CITADEL— and-why-the-fuck-not-house.

Read like a two-dimensional Hollywood stereotype of stupid.

Natalie, on the way home from Church, “I wish I could retire at 26. I would just travel.”

Colleen, “What happens when you run out of places to go?”

“That would never happen. There are a lot of places. I just want a couple homes. Have you heard of the Hilton sisters? If I could be them, I could be truly happy.”

¹Read, “Ding dilling ding ding ding,” and play the air drums.

HILTONS BURN
BURN HILTONS

Permit me to say more

If my tongue flint,
Let me lick light souls.
If: entertainment | war,²
Let me be the *cross* to it.

If I Diablo, “*pass the kerosene.*”
To Dublin, Bexley, Granville,
Gahanna, and Westerville,
I endorse a wholesale murder of those that make over \$100,000 a year,
the cost of a match
the cost of a life.

I have a hallucination
Alone, amongst a multitude,
seeing some band at the Wexner Arts Center.³
I, with a Zippo.

²Read, “If: there be a thin line between entertainment and war,”

³Les Wexner owns the Limited and Victoria’s Secret Stash. He lives in Columbus and graciously supports the arts, particularly DIY and post-modern artists, The arts Center also brings in art from all mediums, past and present, along with the well-verse guides and instructors. Burn this poem. Art is evil. STOP ALL ART NOW.

Cavalier

Wes Jamison

2009

I

Perhaps it is my duty as an American to write something that would be inevitably considered American.

I came to my computer from the lighted couch, through the darkened kitchen and hallway. Walking into my unlit room, I stepped on a belt with a Last Supper buckle and pieces of fabric that I've been meaning to hang in the hallway, but I have yet to muster the gumption to do so. I came to the bedroom from reading – I've done only a little bit today; the rest of the day was spent cleaning and baking, and sleeping, because it was my dad off – until 2, lay in bed until 3. And at this very moment, sitting at my computer – and since the moments I sat down to read, previously – I've been fighting this urge to leave.

Perhaps this is because I've been reading *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*; perhaps it is because I am still trying to get over my ex-boyfriend; perhaps it is because I say that I want to spend time in San Bernardino, like Didion. Regardless, I want to go. The thought came to me that I could go to a bar or club – under-aged – in Columbus and watch bodies thrash and (don't say gyrate) gyrate (don't say under the strobe or in the strobe or anything like that) within the strobe-light's glare, which would seem menacing to me, for sure; knowing that, why would I want to? How could I bear the noise and the people and the sweat and the smells and the effort and money? Perhaps I couldn't; or perhaps I could because, for the first time, I have the desire to; perhaps I am no longer so heavily influenced by my panic and fear. Perhaps I don't want to bear at all.

The stronger urge though, is to leave – not visit a club or bar with loud music and people that would surely be too close to me – but to leave, to drive to a location that I've never visited. I wouldn't be able to make it to San Bernardino. Not with this amount of money; nor this early in the morning, 12:51, without falling asleep at the wheel; nor in my car. And maybe that is the reason that I want to: every one knows that one's Desire is for things he cannot have or cannot do. Is my life really that text-book? Ah – perhaps that is the reason I want to leave: to avoid prescription and mundane-ity.

The logical side of me says that if I did get in my car to drive anywhere, it'd be to Brimfield to see my boyfriend: he is far enough away that the trek is worthy of being called a trek, and the destination is one of the most rewarding I can think of.

I consider traveling to be cathartic.

I definitely just took a two day road trip. I totally, just... disappeared. For two days. Didn't take phone calls, was really far away from campus, honestly didn't know where I was. Saw a mega-creepy laundromat and an awesome motel (and by awesome, I mean it was crazy-ghetto). I left emotionally unstable and return with... I don't know – a new found becoming or something.

I told you, Suzanne, this, but not the others of you – though, Tammy, I am sure you know: Elliott is no more. It is good – not bad. He avoided me like the plague all weekend until I flat-out asked him about it. He called me and was very short – was just like, “Did a lot of thinking and some talking to some friends: despite whatever I may have said to give you hope, I do not want a relationship with you. Also, I acknowledge that what we have functions as a relationship; I know that this is how you perceive it. Since I don't want a relationship, we have to stop what we are doing.” And that was that. I said, “Yeah – duh. That is why I was so confused all the time.” I cried and I don't know why. I wasn't upset. I handled it very well. I, however, feel as though I lost a friend. A close friend. An amazing, amazingly close friend. We haven't talked since. Just a short text.

If nothing else, I got one good poem out of it (though it has yet to be finished... Claire, you saw what I was working on... I'm halfway through another draft. It is going splendidly).

Apparently the Goodyear World Headquarters... or something along those lines... is in Ohio. Who knew?

Never drive on 76.

It was quite a peculiar thing – on 71 North, the land becomes quite like it back home: hilly – very hilly – and rugged. A lot of farm houses, a lot of animals, the smell of manure, the smell of not-city-infested nature. North of Columbus was a lot of land that reminded me so much of my home – Logan County – but with different trees. It was so peculiar – I could place the images of my home over my windshield, and it would have aligned perfectly, but the trees were a different kind.

I didn't tell them that Elliott offered, and would have liked to continue to have sex with me, like it was a favor he could be doing me; I didn't tell them that I took the trip the day after he told me those things to see another boy: a boy that I met online; a boy that I found very attractive: a boy with foreskin; a boy that I was planning on having sex with; a boy that wasn't Elliott; a boy that I was scared to have sex with because he wasn't Elliott; a boy that I was nervous to meet because I thought sounded too effeminate over the phone and may have been a queen; a boy that

was to become my current boyfriend; a boy that I would grow to love too much and too soon (perhaps).

Traveling was cathartic that day: the music (don't say) pulsed through me and vibrated all the negative nerve endings in me. This is a lie. The bass was just really high, and the music was just really loud. I remember that I was listening to Jewel, where the "Becoming" shit came from. Driving that far, for that long, alone, going to a place I'd never been, and worrying about my car dying forced me to think a lot – again, I am predictable psychologically: I was alone, so I thought about recently passed events and my near future.

But there were the trees, though with more trips to and from Brimfield, they have become common. Perhaps they are not different; perhaps I only wanted them to be, or perhaps I wanted to keep my home safe: similar yet exceptional.

I also didn't tell *him* that I was there the day after Elliott broke up with me.

Brimfield I imagine is a bit like San Bernardino, or the picture Didion paints of it: muu muus and wife-beaters; teased hair; where the highlight of life is Homecoming; everyone waits for marriage, for that is when life truly begins. Trailer parks. Deaths. The American Dream (though I have yet to see any of the last three in Brimfield). I go there and, though I spend most of my time in Matt's bed, I often wonder what else is going on in that city, what happens in the three hundred and sixty degrees of the Circle? *You guys gay?* What was that man thinking? Was he what I suspected – a closeted homo? Why did he with *I'm just kiddin' ya*. And why was I the one, instead of Matt, to carry a conversation with him? I paint pictures of those people and those encounters. I bet the woman at the café is abused. While I was getting gasoline at the Circle K, the men in the truck that pulled up were staring at me, thinking something about how I am a fairy; did they have a tire iron?

Brimfield is my pathetic attempt to be (like) Joan Didion.

6

Another morning, and I still find myself to be fighting the urge to flee. That is something I didn't account for while writing last: perhaps I am *fleeing*. From roommates? From solitude? From any and all financial responsibilities?

Why do I have such a strong desire to leave?

Perhaps more reading will answer my questions.

Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas has come and gone by this point; they found what they were searching for: The American Dream. Perhaps I am not an astute enough reader, but I can't figure out what it is, and perhaps that is the point: there is no physical manifestation of the Dream. *Take that, Didion*, Thompson seemed to be saying. Frontier – it is merely a location, merely a place for the action, really no different than the east or the south.

Regardless, after finishing the novel, the desire was still present: go to San Bernardino, or North Vegas, or Seattle – hell, go to New Orleans, like you've wanted; I (have) want(ed) to get out of Ohio – and the desire is infectious, apparently.

On somebody else's money (their parents'), my roommates were planning a trip to LA, and upon finding out this was their plan, I felt immediately betrayed. *We are going to see relatives*, they told me. *We just want to go get drunk on others' money in another city. A bigger city. A better city.* (What they really said was hardly half as interesting; they just babbled about how they could *afford* it and how they've no responsibilities keeping them here.) I felt betrayed because I'd wanted to go for longer than they, and I've reasons to go – legitimate ones that will benefit some part or aspect of humanity. There is the possibility that I never felt betrayed by them, but perhaps only by Fate for having constantly denied me the opportunity for travel, for there have been other dates and other locations.

I wanted to go to Italy once; now the desire has almost left entirely. I can pin my not going on one person who gave me misinformation. I wanted to follow the footsteps of the literati who had traveled there before me, sit on the same steps upon which they sat when they were first inspired for their pieces, lounge in the same buildings in which they talked to each other about writing. Through osmosis, perhaps, I desired to obtain a fragment of their skill; now, though, I am merely stepping on Didion's footsteps.

Elliot frequently had a desire for pizza, one that would require me to personally deliver to him about once a week, and we'd order or go out for some a time or two during a week. He used to ask me to bring a frozen pizza to cook when I went over to his apartment; I did. He was horribly inept in the kitchen, so much so that he couldn't make a pizza (that is, he was so dominant of a personality, that he made me cook the pizza, never

offered to do so himself; it wasn't about the cooking, but instead about subservience). Cooking one of those frozen pizzas, I burnt myself, though now I cannot remember how: just below my thumb and barely above my left wrist lies a tiny scar that blends in with the creases of skin there. Dark and teardrop-shaped. It bubbled up and scarred over. I see it every day. He never knew about it.

I hate to make the comparison, because they are nothing alike, but Matt, my current boyfriend, also enjoys pizza – though we rarely have the money for it. We walk to the Wal-Mart near him, and we walk back with a feast, including a frozen pizza. Matt is inept in the kitchen, like another was, so I've done the cooking. I often feel the heat of the pan or the oven racks on my fingers or hand, but once, I felt it too long, and I burnt myself retrieving the pizza from the oven. Right hand; between forefinger and thumb; large; next to another, much smaller scar. It is long and rough; a different color than the one on my left; it bubbled up and hurt for several weeks, until the skin fell off and then scarred over. I see it every day. When it happened, he immediately kissed my hand and hugged me, asking me to be more careful.

(Perhaps) I cannot cook frozen pizzas, no matter who it is for.

In traveling, (perhaps) there are common landscapes with differing trees.

6

It is easy to see the beginnings of things, and harder to see the ends.... Nothing was irrevocable; everything was within reach.... temporary exiles.... That is what it was all about, wasn't it? Promises? ...it is distinctly possible to stay too long at the Fair.

I like to read personal essays while I write them – comforted to know that I am not repeating ideas or entire paragraphs; comforted to know what it is I could (or should) be doing. I opened what non-fiction I had next to me, Lopate's *The Art of the Personal Essay*; as I looked at the pages, I noticed that two were dog-eared: "The Death of the Moth," which I wrote about at length in my Virginia Woolf class, and the other was Annie Dillard. Though I appreciate Dillard, I simply wasn't in the mood for her; I flipped pages, and saw that just before her was Joan Didion: I found that I had written all over the margins of her "Goodbye to All That" but couldn't remember the essay itself, so I reread it, and I was struck by how she speaks from my very soul – her words are mine, or mine hers.

[T]o those of us who came from places where no one had heard of Lester Lanin and Grand Central Station was a Saturday radio

program, where Wall Street and Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue were not places at all but abstractions (“Money,” and “High Fashion,” and “The Hucksters”), New York was no mere city. It was instead an infinitely romantic notion, the mysterious nexus of all love and money and power, the shining and perishable dream itself. To think of “living” there was to reduce the miraculous to the mundane.

Regardless of whether it came from me or Didion, was about New York or San Bernardino, or where I come from – though I assure you I fit this mold that Didion has cast, as far as New York being some sort of romantic notion instead of a place for people to live – I told myself that she just explained it to me – what San Bernardino, New York, North Vegas, Seattle, and New Orleans, what they are to me.

In her essay, Didion grows too old for New York; she says she spent too much time there. *It is distinctly possible to stay too long at the Fair.* I found, in reading those words, the reason for my desire for travel – I’ve simply stayed here too long, and it is okay if the explanation doesn’t go further than that.

6

This is just me trying to be (like) Joan Didion again.
Perhaps.

II

Banks close before I get off work, so I had to go on my lunch break. I took my Cavalier to the Kroger down the road only a few minutes away; with the lunchtime traffic, though, I was granted a few more minutes with my CD player – listening to what had prior to then become my roving music, *Velocifero*. I was finishing a cigarette by the time I had parked and gotten out of the car and begun to walk into the store. When I looked above and to my right, I saw a seagull swooping and whipping around in the air while others were perched on streetlamps.

The sound of seagulls has always been to me a sort of stimulant – their calls seem to excite something buried in me – and I am not frequently reminded of that part of me, buried for any of various reasons, but today I was when I heard their calls again for the first time in what seems to me my entire life; as cliché as it is, their calls today, catching the wind and brushing past me, were somehow new. But of course I’ve heard them before: when I went to Lake Erie with my father, they were always present; I cannot specifically recall their sound then and there, but

I admit they must have been, if for no other reason than the presence of the washed-up fish, fleshless; or when I went to the nearer lake with my mother, they were there too, I am sure.

I know their sound from movies, largely, and gulls sometimes appear in samples in music I enjoy. Today is the only time I can recall actually hearing them, though not accompanied by the sound of waves, like they are in that music and in those movies. Or maybe it is not the sound of waves under the seagulls but of the wind around them, and it was that wind that I felt today howling around me.

b

Looking again at what has been written, I am stuck pondering over that last line: *Or maybe it is not the sound of waves under the seagulls but of the wind around them, and it was that wind that I felt today howling around me.* I know that I only meant that the day was windy – noting that I feel the wind upon which I think gulls are dependent; but upon revisiting the sentence, I find something more. So I ask myself if I am not also dependent on those squalls. I ask myself how similar gulls and I are.

100

