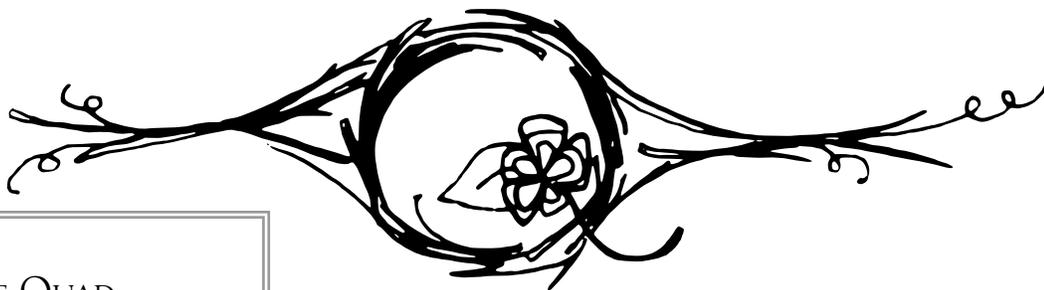


THE QUAD

Spring 2009

of Grove City College





THE QUAD

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Editors' Note

In our last issue, we maintained that there was nothing new under the sun, even in our postmodern age. This issue, however, examines in what ways our historical location might be unique. Clearly some derivations from the past are lamentable. We open, for instance, with a nostalgic defense of letter writing. Text-messaging and email, Mr. James Parkin asserts, will never replace the intimacy and efficacy of hand-written correspondence. Professor James D. Dixon points out some benefits of being postmodern in "What Can Christians Learn from Deconstruction?." By shedding the artificial systems that stem from our flawed epistemologies, we can have a more humble and honest approach towards religion, literature, and philosophy, i.e. towards Truth. Likewise Beauty, stripped of its enlightenment categories and romantic deifications, now wields a terrifying profundity and power. Mr. Makoto Fujimura's new book, *Refractions*, charts his personal journey in postmodern culture as an artist and as a Christian. We close the magazine with a rewarding examination of contemporary mathematics. Mr. Bill Robinson explains how the modern marriage of math and logic has been annulled by Kurt Gödel, and he examines the philosophical implications of this distinction as advocated by Mr. Alain Badiou. Once again we find our understanding of Truth to be not so neat as we might like, but certainly more rich. In the end, comprehending the insights of people like Badiou—however difficult and demanding they may be—provides us with a fuller understanding of Truth and greater reverence for its Maker.

This magazine as a vehicle for Truth would never have been created or sustained were it not for several generous and supportive individuals and groups on at the college. We thank Mr. Jeff Prokovich for his help in funding the magazine, President Jewell and the administration for incorporating us into their vision for the college, Dr. Vince DiStasi and the TLC staff for helping produce the magazine, SGA for their various contributions, Mrs. Ann Stranahan and those in Student Life and Learning for their constant encouragement, Dr. Collin Messer and our editorial board for their empowering guidance, and our staff for their dedication and hard work. Lastly we would like to thank our writers and readers for their involvement and interest. You are why we exist.

Truly,

Joel David Musser
Senior Editor

Hannah Schlaudt
Junior Editor

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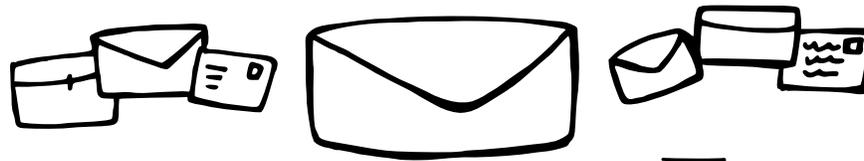
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Call for Change

Dear Editor,

Mr. Andrew Brinkerhoff's article ("Science Humbled," Winter) makes an excellent point, which may even be understated, in questioning why Thomas Kuhn's theories are not taught as part of our understanding of science. Science is today universal religious institution. This is not to say that its claims are supernatural or supported only by blind faith, but it is the trusted source of all knowledge in the world. Disciplines rush to be scientific because science is far more respectable than any other field. In attacking this situation, we should not fall into the trap of anti-intellectualism and simply deny the claims of science with no backing or deny its usefulness as a path to truth. But we also should not allow the scientific community to perpetuate the myth of its steady march to infallibility. Thomas Kuhn's theory provides a well-supported vision, and I would be happy to see his theories and those of similar authors replace the dominant textbook view of science. Perhaps a scientific revolution is needed even in our concept of what science is.

Luke Juday

In Praise of Philoscience

Dear Editor,

One of the reasons I continue to enjoy picking up *The Quad* each month is not only the diversity of subject matter it encompasses, but the challenging and insightful perspectives that are often taken. Mr. Brinkerhoff's article "Science Humbled" stood out in my mind as one such work. What was interesting to me was not the idea that scientific theories are often imperfect models, as important as that is. What struck me was the theory of how these theories are replaced and modified over time. Mr. Brinkerhoff and Kuhn present a sort of Hegelian model of the formulation of theories; theories are held onto and assumed to be true

until they fail to describe phenomena in which case they are replaced with a new theory. The new theory is then accepted and embraced until it fails in which case it is replaced with a new one. With each new theory comes a better description of the universe. Therefore, our knowledge of the universe increases with each new theory.

I am very pleased that Mr. Brinkerhoff draws our attention to the fact that a study into the history of scientific theory shows us the limited scope of science. Theories have historically been discarded and refined and probably will continue to be. However, modern science seldom takes the time to consider that current theories might one day kick the bucket. We've lost any sense of humility in modern science. Why is that? Ultimately, I think it is because scientific theories are more than just descriptions of the physical universe; they have effects on the way we view reality. The medieval church defended the geocentric view not because there was no alternative (Galileo had proposed a much better Copernican model and was labeled a heretic). Instead, the church defended geocentrism because it was viewed crucial to a literal interpretation of scripture. And so, in examining a modern science that is in sore need of humbling, we ought to ask the question: is there more at stake than a scientific theory?

A skeptical science major,

Benjamin Cox

Not Lost, but Gained

Dear Editor,

I thoroughly enjoyed Hannah Schlaudt's contribution, "Lost Time," in the Winter 2009 edition of *The Quad*. It was delightful to read a defense of education—as in having a vibrant life of the mind, rather than jumping through hoops and completing assignments in order to receive the corresponding reward of a letter on a report card—that did



not take the form of an expository essay. Though I have no objections to expository essays, her experience showed a picture of what following the precept of cultivating a life well lived looks like, in which one recognizes that learning does not come from textbooks (if they could generate learning) or even solely for traditional educational settings. It comes more importantly from being faithful to the people around us (in her case, being a faithful daughter and sister).

Sincerely,
Jess Garver

Home, Sweet Home

Dear Editor,

Thank you for publishing Mallory Wilhelm's review of the novel *Home* in the Winter 2009 Issue. Marilynne Robinson is my favorite living author (maybe tied with Annie Dillard), and I want everyone to read her beautiful stories. It is hard for me to describe my "book joy" without using too many superlatives. I believe Robinson's writing shows the wondrous simplicity of quotidian grace. In her last novel, *Gilead*, the main character writes: "This is an interesting planet. It deserves all the attention you can give it." Marilynne Robinson deserves attention, and so I'm reading *Home*.

Rebekah "Nike" Wallin '07

Disconcerting Decision

Dear Editor,

I must applaud you for your brilliant choice of placement of Mr. Hartman's "Quiet Interlude" with Mr. Olson's "Aren't You Excited!!?" The juxtaposition was nothing short of inspired. Reading Mr. Olson's account of "the massive crowd, two million strong, that braved the wind and cold" at President Obama's inauguration, one could not fail to recall Mr. Harman's comments just two pages earlier describing a celebration for the Japanese Emperor, a "spectacle of 100,000 people standing in the rain, waving and singing their praises in unison - to the living symbol

of their faith!" In fact, I fear that Mr. Olson's sentiments are little different from those of the Japanese masses. He writes, "We are indeed one people, and as one we have placed our hope in the very ideal that has been the secret to our greatness... we have placed our trust in the idea that one man can take a nation that is broken and dissuaded and craft a new beacon of resolve and prosperity for all the world to see" (insert patriotic music, slow-motion shot of star-spangled banner blowing in the wind, and we can have this Obama advertisement ready to go for the next election). What more needs to be said?! His words speak for themselves. Obama is indeed the living symbol of a faith, a faith in man, a faith in an all-powerful government, a faith that fears not God.

As Mr. Olson closed his piece, I expected at least some qualification of his starry-eyed enthusiasm. To my dismay, however, his final words of caution served not so much to qualify his zeal for Obama as to enhance it. It seems his greatest concern is not that his hope is at all misplaced, but rather that in this "era of true blessing", his love for the blessings of God will exceed his love for God Himself! If the election of president Obama is a true blessing from God, I pray that God will be a bit more thrifty with his blessings in the future.

Sincerely Yours,
Gordon James

Technological Straits

Dear Editor,

I want to thank *The Quad* for consistently urging us to be cautious and not to hearken unthinkingly to the siren call of technology, particularly electronic technology. It is so easy in this wonderful institution to go to one extreme or the other, to what Professor Postman labels "Technophiles" and "Technophobes". I am encouraged that your articles are generally neither Luddite in tone nor lustful for the newest Blackberry. Thank you for helping us to learn how to better cultivate the image of God within us and the Garden of God without, through the thoughtful and

continued on page 12

THE HANDWRITTEN MANUSCRIPT AS AN ARTIFACT

JAMES PARKIN

Dear reader,

It is my sincerest hope that this letter finds you well and in a wonderful mood, as spring is upon us. I admit it must seem odd to find this letter written to you here, a place often saved for scholarly review, poetry, prose, discussion and essay. And yet it is my hope that you will see that this letter, and the humble letter in its basic, universal form, accomplishes all of these functions without losing its own essence and substance—a conversation of the highest level, of the most intentional and thoughtful variety. Dear reader, the letter is itself a medium once revered to the point of volumization, as many of the greatest minds of our century and those before it have had their written conversations compiled into books of all shapes and sizes. Sayers, Lewis, Freud and others can be read, re-read and enjoyed as if their letters showed up in our own mailboxes to engage, challenge and edify us. So I write to you here: a letter defending the letter.

Consider, for a moment, the nature of written correspondence. It is more than reading words followed by the dull blinking bar in a word processor—it is a physical exchange with natural media. Conversation of all kinds has slowly diminished in quality and meaning in our fast-paced world, and a hearkening-back to our communicative roots may be in order. My great-grandmother used to sit in the living room at her correspondence desk, writing not only to family and friends, but also to countless missionaries and authors abroad. In doing so, she practiced something that few of us understand today. She knew that the mystique of her hand-written letters, artfully crafted collections of thoughtful words, could approach even a stranger and entrance him with her greetings, sentiments and arguments, eliciting without hesitation a cordial reply. Even in the most intentional face-to-face engagements, few of us can produce such a balanced and purposed exchange in the same context.

Verbal conversation will always remain the greatest option when available, but with such a swift cheapness built into most email, cellular phones and other instant media, the hand-written word could tip the scales towards equilibrium. I have recently been introduced to a Swiss architect and novelist named Max Frisch. In his novel, *Homo Faber*, he says that “Technology [is] the knack of so arranging the world that we don’t have to experience it.” I do not mean to paint a fatalistic picture—by no means!—but Frisch aptly points out that there *is something to experience*. Nearly all things can be merely accomplished, but there is virtue and pleasure found in the *experience* of communication.

I posit, dear reader, that the hand-written letter offers the entirety of this experiential conversation. I do not only read the words before me, but I can handle the paper. I can note the envelope chosen (purchased or hand-made alike), the unique, infinitely personal script of the writer, the faint smell of their hands and home lingering amidst the pages. While emotion cannot be seen, it is instead painted in every phrase. Each line is a smirk, a raised eyebrow, a small step backwards and forwards. Finally, to wait on the reply—the next step of the conversation—is an exercise in blissful, ordinary patience, something we consistently fail to grasp in our hurried lives.

It is not my duty to convince you to imitate my own behavior, but I hope that my words will have some effect. Perhaps the next time you feel like calling someone, you’ll write them instead.

Sincerely yours,

Jim

Jim Parkin is a junior History major who is slightly more pretentious than he ought to be. His goals include, but are not limited to, the following: to press coffee that elevates the drinker to a higher plane of existence, milk a swollen mountain goat and turn its dairy into the choicest of cheeses and coax delicate strains of yeast into a loaf of artisanal bread with an impossibly soft crumb.

WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM DECONSTRUCTION?

DR. JAMES D. DIXON

For many years now, conservative Christians have been prone to view postmodernism with deep suspicion. Some have gone so far as to label postmodern thinkers as anti-Christian and demonic, as they seek to undermine our traditional notions of truth. I have even heard some suggest that deconstruction began in the Garden of Eden, when Satan asked Eve, “Did God really say . . . ?” Satan called into question the language and received wisdom by which Eve had oriented her life and so disoriented her long enough to cause her fall from the security of God’s love and grace. Conservatives worry that something similar happens whenever unsuspecting students come under the sway of such thinkers as Jacques Derrida, Francois Lyotard, and Michel Foucault.

This is the audience to whom James K. A. Smith addresses his recent book, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism? Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church*. Smith is a professor of philosophy at Calvin College and director of the Seminars in Christian Scholarship at Calvin as well. His purpose in writing is two-fold: 1) “to demythologize postmodernism by showing that what we commonly think so-called postmodernists are saying is usually not the case,” and 2) to demonstrate that the primary claims of these three thinkers “have a deep affinity with central Christian claims.”

To do this, Smith argues that postmodernism is not so much anti- or post-Christian as it is, well, post-. Modernism in Western civilization has been the dominant perspective since the Enlightenment offered man the dream of rational certainty in all areas of existence—certainty detached from theological conviction. Smith suggests that Christians who feel threatened by postmodernism have perhaps constructed

their theology on the shaky foundation of modernist epistemology. Postmodern thinkers like Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault can serve to remind us of this shaky foundation and help us to, well, deconstruct our unexamined reliance on the flawed tenets of modernism.

After an introductory chapter, Smith spends a chapter apiece on each of these three thinkers. In each case, he begins with an extended discussion of a contemporary film

to demonstrate how postmodern ideas have filtered through and are often best expressed by recent cultural artifacts. With Derrida and deconstruction, Smith dis-

cusses the film *Memento* to illustrate Derrida’s seminal statement: “There is nothing outside the text.” (In a tilt toward accessibility, by the way, Smith also refers to Disney’s film *The Little Mermaid* to make his point.) The modernist faith that Derrida counters with this statement is the notion that language, more or less, can connect us with objective truth. Derrida, according to Smith, simply reminds us that our every use of language, in fact, our every experience of “reality” is always already an “interpretation.” In taking Derrida “to church,” Smith suggests that Derrida’s understanding of the very nature of language and knowledge can remind us that faith always precedes knowledge. He can also remind us that the verbal constructs we build can themselves become idols we worship in place of the God whose full nature forever exceeds our grasp. Derrida can restore in us both a proper humility in our claims to absolute truth and a prophetic challenge to call into question the rickety constructs in which we too often place our trust.

Smith does something similar with Lyotard, with his famous definition of postmodernism as “incredulity

*Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism?
Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to the Church*
James K.A. Smith
Baker Academic, 2006



toward metanarratives,” and Foucault’s claim that “power is knowledge.” Again he roots his analysis of these difficult philosophers in easily accessible icons of contemporary culture: he introduces his chapter on Lyotard with a discussion of the Coen brothers’ film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* and his chapter on Foucault with a discussion of the film of Ken Kesey’s novel, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*. And again he demonstrates how the seemingly anti-Christian perspectives of these postmodern philosophers can actually help the church to recover what it has lost under the modernist delusion.

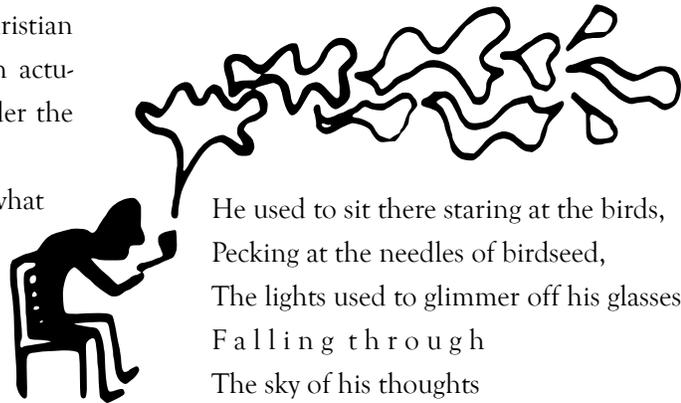
Smith concludes his book with a chapter on what he calls “Applied Radical Orthodoxy: A Proposal for the Emerging Church,” in which he attempts to apply the lessons gleaned from postmodernism to the contemporary church in the Western world. Smith argues that a properly postmodern church will in many ways be a premodern church as well, leapfrogging in some respects over the false Enlightenment dreams of Cartesian certainty back to a more presuppositional (i.e., Augustinian) understanding of truth. This is a delicate balancing act, as Smith acknowledges that postmodernism too often veers off into skepticism. The postmodern church will also be catholic in the full sense of the term, delighting in ancient practices even as it explores the different ways in which Christians around the world today worship God, reminding us of both the contingency of our understanding and the multifaceted community of believers whose differing perspectives and experiences can enhance our own.

In the end, James K. A. Smith urges that Christians engage with postmodern thinkers in the spirit of “all truth is God’s truth, wherever it may be found.” Instead of the “Christ against Culture” paradigm of the recent “culture wars,” he proposes a paradigm of Christians and culture in conversation. May the conversation continue.

Dr. James Dixon is chair of the Department of English and teaches several courses, including the infamous Literary Criticism & Theory. He used to be a knee-jerk reactionary regarding all things postmodern, but he has slowly come to see that truth is much more complex and multi-faceted than the Enlightenment once led us to believe.

On My Grandfather

Julia Anderson



He used to sit there staring at the birds,
Pecking at the needles of birdseed,
The lights used to glimmer off his glasses,
F a l l i n g t h r o u g h
The sky of his thoughts

He used to wander around that house,
Adjusting his homemade alarms,
Following the imprints on the carpet,
S t o p p i n g a t
The window to watch people walking by,

He used to putter around the yard,
Studying the storm clouds,
Watching flocks of birds screeching warning calls,
F a l l i n g t h r o u g h
A mountain of eyes

He used to live here,
In the corner of our hearts,
Flying by the surface of our love,
T e l l i n g S t o r i e s
Of childhood adventures.

ADJECTIVAL MISCREANTS

ANDREW BRINKERHOFF

We are all well aware, on an intellectual level at least, of the immense power of words and language in shaping our perceptions of reality. Naming in the political arena is an oft-cited example: pro-life, pro-choice, pro-gressive. Murderous dictators obfuscate persons with the euphemism of “undesirable elements.” Students and professors, of course, seldom find themselves having to justify genocidal activities. More often, we are concerned with words in the context of *description*, as a way to deeper understanding of a subject, to the apprehension of its essential character. Adjectives, by their force of imaginative suggestion, are highly persuasive. When received uncritically, however, their relation to true understanding is at best ambiguous, and at worst antagonistic.

While polemic descriptions abound, I will content myself with perhaps the most pilloried institution of the modern age: the suburb. Immediately, our minds flood with absorbed adjectives: sprawling, bloated, cookie-cutter, artificial, inhuman. Whether these are apt descriptors is, to this discussion, irrelevant. The real danger lies in thinking of the suburbs only in terms of these adjectives, while forgetting the particular object they describe. This can be easily demonstrated by substituting adjectives which *denote* the exact same attribute, but connote an entirely different image: what is bloated and sprawling could be grand and expansive, and we may say the layout is neat and ordered rather than cookie-cutter. It seems strange to call “artificial” a place where the snow still showers, flowers bloom, grass grows, and leaves fall. Further, the commonly idylized rural life takes advantage of contrasts in adjectives whose substance is far from clear; the monotonous nine to five is, after all, a pretty good approximation of the sun-guided “rhythms of nature.” Country living can bring its own descriptive baggage: sheltered, parochial, insular, hick. The point in all this is that we should be aware of how adjectives are being used, and not allow them to truncate our vision of the actual objects which are being described.

Of course, vivid descriptions are extremely useful in bringing us beyond simple externals to grasp something of a subject’s essence. Here, another pitfall presents itself: the idolatry of the material. Roughly, this involves taking an object, situation, or institution, reasoning from its observed characteristics to aspects of its essential nature, and then imputing these values back into the original subject. Thus, because a city is big, it must be vast and impersonal. One is suddenly less inclined to pine after the New Jerusalem. This habit is particularly common when it comes to the imputation of boredom or meaninglessness to a certain context. Descriptions which should reveal the inner life of a subject are often used instead to suck it dry of worth and interest. In reality, it is possible to be bored anywhere. We can be practical nihilists in any situation. Conversely, joy and meaning can be found in many places which we have predisposed ourselves, through the idolatry of the material, to avoid. If we are prepared to see significance in the design of a web or the cycles of the seasons, why do we not consider the weave of a fabric or the intricate complexity of economic cycles? It is possible to see the same city street in Dickensian gloom or in Chestertonian delight. We can live in community with the farmer down the lane or with our suburban landscapers. We are too quick to blame our environment and modern material structures for our lack of poetic vision, imagination, or the virtues of awe and wonder. In reality our poverty is self-imposed. Men across millennia have dreamt of flying. The most august Caesar would have trembled with delight to step into a 747, Aristotle might exclaim on the unity and diversity of its parts or Pythagoras on its linear symmetry, and Homer would wax poetical on the concourse of celestial and terrestrial paths. It is not the modern mechanistic world which bores us. We bore ourselves.

Andrew Brinkerhoff is a senior Physics major. Some of his favorite adjectives are rum, wry, laconic, and apt (though he can usually be described as late).



THE BIRD

TYLER ESTES

The way its beak
repeatedly smashed
into the full pane of glass
must have been exceedingly painful.
At first

I thought someone
was tapping on my
window to awaken, spite
or vex me, for it happened every
thirty

seconds or so,
for at least fifteen
minutes. (Poor bird.) Certainly
it showed no signs of ceasing
while I

witnessed. A shame,
really. Those robins.
So graceful, normally, when
they're not flying into window panes.
But this

unfortunate
creature seemed all but
destined to besmirch itself;
its once carefully contoured face—now
bludgeoned

by the window—
matches in color
its otherwise beautiful
and nomenclatural red-breast. Shame
on you

for laughing. The
funny thing is, I
had been sleeping quite soundly,
probably teaching myself to fly,
when it

happened. Birds perched
outside windows make
for fantastic alarm clocks
when singing or whistling or chirping
and all.

To awaken
to this scene here is
the greatest of ironies.
Farewell, Macpherson; shame on you for
laughing.

Tyler Estes is a sophomore English and Christian Thought major who has delighted in watching sparrows and robins outside his window for at least as long as he's been (left-handedly) writing poetry and music. He loves coffee and tobacco and literature and is trying to culture himself in jazz and opera.

A MERCY, AN APPRECIATION

DR. DIANE DIXON

Tony Morrison's novel *Beloved* tops the *New York Times* list of the best American novels in the last 25 years, and she is America's only winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in the last 30 years. Her eight novels have invited a wealth of critical attention—partly because of her profound exploration of the legacy of slavery and partly because of her evocative style of writing.

I have been part of this cottage industry of Morrison scholarship, devoting one chapter of my doctoral dissertation to *Beloved*. When a new Morrison novel appears, many critics and readers eagerly respond. So do I.

Most of Morrison's novels explore the complex consciousness of mothering. Motherhood is a powerful experience that had been largely ignored in literature until contemporary mother writers began featuring mother characters, a previously undiscovered country. In *Beloved*, Sethe, an ex-slave mother kills her child rather than have her taken back into slavery—a fate she knows is worse than death.

Morrison comments that “it was the right thing to do but she had no right to do it”—articulating the dilemma that prompts this deeply unsettling look at maternal vulnerability. Sethe's mother-love, her best quality, also sabotages her and initiates a powerful look into the unspoken silences of slave mothers.

Morrison's newest release, *A Mercy*, offers variations on the theme of mother-hunger; a surrogate mother, Lina, explains this term: “Mother-hunger—to be one or to have one—both of them were reeling from that longing.” The book is a patchwork reverie of four women whose interlocking stories often blur as scraps from the past and present are stitched together in the narrative. Voices include Lina, a native American healer, Sorrow, a shipwreck survivor, Rebekka, a bride sold by her parents, and Florens, a slave

child given up by her mother when she was ten. These marginal women deconstruct and reconstruct our impression of life in the fledgling settlement of Virginia in the 1690s. These female Jobs work together to survive small pox, rape, hunger, death of children; their suffering becomes a catalyst for some healing as the communal support they give each other waxes and wanes.

The novel begins with questions, but they defy ready answers. Morrison draws readers into the deliberate ambiguity of the text. The meaning of the title, *A Mercy*, is not readily apparent but invites reflection. The plot revolves around Florens, a sixteen-year-old slave girl who was given up by her mother to pay a debt to Jacob, an Anglo-Dutch trader. We hear multiple unsettling accounts of their experiences from various women who chorus-like merge and separate. We do not hear until the end why Florens' mother gave up her daughter—to save her from certain use as a “breeder” by her master. She judged correctly that Jacob

would protect her daughter, but Florens has been tortured these six years by her mother's rejection which may well contribute to her obsessive love for a free black man who pushes her away with “own your self, woman.” Such “too thick” love can be another form of bondage that sabotages the soul. Is this the “mercy” suggested by the title? Will Florens recover from her abandonment? Readers, privy to her mother's thoughts from afar that “giving dominion of your self is wicked,” see Florens desperately scratching her story into wood. Stories have the power to heal, so perhaps she can exorcise her pain. The conclusion is ambivalent but offers a glimmering of hope.

But it is Morrison's language—more than her plots—that delights many readers with gourmet tastes in fiction. Parts of her narratives are shimmering prose poems. Her dreamy

A Mercy
Toni Morrison
Knopf, 2008

monologues carry readers into the labyrinthian recesses of the heart. Her linguistically rich allusions can be baffling to some. Emotionally captivated while confused, readers must be willing to float along with few bits of solid ground. Her montage style includes bits of native lore, Biblical echoes, proverbial sayings, and odd syntax as well as occasional jarring contemporary colloquialisms. What delights Morrison fans will frustrate readers who prefer more solid ground beneath their feet.

Morrison has again engaged my imagination with the mystery of the interaction between past and future, oppression and hope, brokenness and redemption.

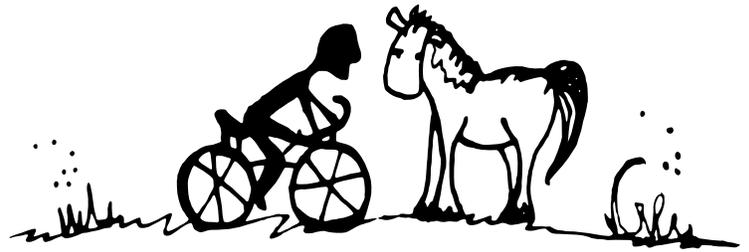
Diane Dixon is a professor of literature and communication studies at Grove City College. She loves the window on the world gained from reading contemporary international literature while she delights in the woods and pond out her own back window at home.

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meditative application of technology and not simply running after the newest gizmo for the sake of fashion. God has given us minds to redeem the time and by thoughtful use of those gifts we can better redeem the Earth for His glory; with unthoughtful abuse of God's gifts, we can create a progressive holocaust.

As always, long live the South!

Yours sincerely,
Ryan F. Biese



HORSES SHY AT SCREECHING BIKES IN A BACK COUNTRY ROAD

ROSS KUCKS

Riding on a machine, a bike,
we became something else;
no longer lifted by limbs or ligaments,
but peddled by chains, and moved by wheels.
Our travel too smooth over soil,
too well oiled and limbre to be real –
less organic, more spokes and steel.
The voice that spoke was one of brakes,
a screeching rubber scream,
alarming, frightening as the clicks and creaks
of tensed metal, of springs and seats.
To the horses riding in the road,
we on wheels had lost all life,
men solidified in steel frames
till all the animal saw was wheels and chains:
dead, moving like life, yet unreal –
and their reaction was right, to rear and run
to shy at so unnatural a sight,
some instinct born of nature gave them heed
to mistrust, treat with caution, even shun.
The only sign, which re-instated
organic life in the horse's eye,
was hearing human voice and tone,
from tongue and lips, from mouth and bone –
for no machine creates such sounds;
where voice is, something good remains
though wheels speed and no foot feels ground,
still not all evil is the manner,
so long as voice sounds, the horses stay.

Ross Kucks is a junior English major who adores alliteration, sings to himself at all hours in all places, titillates over trees, and loves his pipe and tea. He entertains the wildest of friends, writes poetry about their adventures, and likes buying obscure books which turn out to be fantastic. The Swamp Fox is his hero, coffee, his side-kick, and "what the deuce," his mantra.

COHERENCE

HÄNNAH SCHLAUDT

Is there a place for meaningful art in a postmodern, fragmented culture? What role should it play and how can it effectively achieve that today? How can [ought] a Christian meaningfully interact with art in today's society?

These are daunting questions that cannot be answered fully or easily. Subjectivity and a vortex of emptiness pervade the world of art today. Talent is rampant, but technology and the pursuit of instant gratification cheapen skill. Few attempt to ponder and create with depth and sincerity; it's too much work and doesn't sell. We value democracy and individuality so highly that culture and community are slipping away from us as we chase the evasive and all important "I" as a society.

Art, a glorious medium of self-expression and fulfillment, becomes increasingly nihilistic as an end; the self on its own struggles meaninglessly in a seemingly bleak universe.

One artist in New York City ventures to grapple earnestly with these issues. Makoto Fujimura has an advantage over his peers in the art world as he seeks to reconcile art and postmodern life, the grimness of reality and the search for meaning: his faith in Jesus Christ. For Mr. Fujimura, we can wrestle with and understand these issues to a degree, because of the objective reality and hope found in the gospel that can withstand the shifting chaos of humanity's confused bumbling. In the midst of brokenness, he uses unusual, provoking paintings and essays written in a gently thoughtful tone to bring light and Christ into the muddled and solipsistic world of art.

Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art and Culture, Mr. Fujimura's collection of essays, ruminates on his calling as a Christian artist trying to effectively engage and gently speak truth into a frantic, fragmented culture. Mundane events

(voting, looking at colleges with his teenage son, a tour of a chicken factory) and earth-shattering moments (9/11/2001 in NYC, the death of a fellow artist) intertwine with his pervasive confidence in Christ and truth, and his aim of expressing hopeful meaning through art and beauty.

Mr. Fujimura presents the reader with ideas to mull over in his short essays (each is between four and six pages long) in a manner captivating and easily accessible. He doesn't attempt to be profound or monumental, but he humbly sifts through ideas methodically, with a keen eye for redemption. Photographs pertinent to the subject matter illustrate each chapter, displaying snippets of his own artwork, various other artists' pieces, and snapshots of NYC and nature. The simplicity and clarity of thought in these concrete images creates a coherence in *Refractions* that exemplifies his main artistic concern: the coherent life of a Christian artist engaging with society.

The implications of the gospel in NYC, the world of art and the future of our society as a whole haunt each essay in *Refractions*. He undertakes enormous questions of being, purpose, and future with honesty, humility, and incisive perspective illuminated by his identity as a Christian. Sincere and personal, Mr. Fujimura's winsome gentleness and honesty engages readers and carefully plants the seeds of provoking questions in the minds of his audience. Regardless of your artistic inclinations, his questions will resonate and stir you to think, even if just a little more deeply, about the roles of art, faith, and hope in our broken society.

Refractions:
A Journey of Faith, Art, and Culture
Makoto Fujimura
NavPress Publishing Group, 2009

Hännah Schlaudt sketches her professors and classmates when she should be taking notes. She apologizes profusely to Eliot, Faulkner, Hopkins, and Ktisia for her poetry.

FAR FROM HOPE

RENADA ARENS

Rejoice in the Lord always. Cast your cares upon Him. Seek and you shall find.

Such Scriptural maxims grate on the ears of Christians in the midst of spiritual darkness. While those struggling with alienation from God often conceal their emotions, Matt Rogers allows readers an intimate look at his four-year crisis of doubt and depression. In *Losing God*, Rogers confronts the fears many seek to hide, and his honesty reveals his journey back to hope.

The book traces Rogers's spiritual crisis from its beginnings at the 1996 Urbana Missions Conference through the challenges of college and a new career. His visceral narrative includes journal entries and e-mails written in his darkest moments. Much of the book deals with the author's struggle with the doctrine of predestination and his resulting doubt over his own salvation. He encounters many who offer their opinions, both wise advisors and those whose formulaic answers stung his desperate soul. Even while despairing of certainty over God's character, Rogers relied on friends and mentors who simply listened. His gradual emergence from depression followed an acceptance both that God transcends human understanding and that his disease was "more of the mind than of the soul."

Losing God avoids the tendency to oversimplify depression by treating it as an exclusively physical or spiritual malady. The book serves as a gentle rebuke to those who point to lack of faith or hidden sin as the cause of depression while ignoring the role brain chemistry plays in the ability to think clearly. While Rogers's depression eventually subsided without the aid of medication, he urges those

experiencing similar symptoms to consult doctors and Christian counselors. Throughout the book, Rogers shows how healing comes both through the restoration of healthy brain chemistry and the embracing of the mystery of a God who transcends emotions.

The story of *Losing God* fills the void left by self-help and five-step-recovery books. Christians floundering in spiritual doubt will deeply resonate with Rogers's realization that "emotions are a gift, but I learned in the dark that we must be careful of the conclusions we let them draw for us." Those without first-hand knowledge of depression

will better understand how to support their struggling friends, while readers investigating Christianity will find not glib optimism, but the God who speaks through storms.

One of the most painful aspects of depression is the feeling of isolation—the assumption that no one else wrestles with similar issues. Rogers's honesty shows the struggling Christian she is not the only one asking questions. Without attempting to smooth away all doubts, *Losing God* leaves its readers with the hope expressed in a quote by Madeline L'Engle in one of the last chapters: "The ultimate end of the story, no matter how many aeons it takes, is going to be all right." To those in the middle of the storm, Matt Rogers's message is as simple as it is compelling: hold on.

Losing God
Matt Rogers
InterVarsity Press, 2008

Renada Arens '10 graduated from Grove City College in December and plans to move to England this fall to study publishing at Oxford Brookes University. In the meantime, she lives in the Pacific Northwest and blogs about God, baking bread, and other adventures at www.inklessinseattle.blogspot.com

AN ANNIHILATION

STEPHANIE CARROLL

Lady Macbeth has met her match. The title character of Ron Rash's latest novel, *Serena*, sweeps through this haunting book, leaving behind a bloody wake. Set in the North Carolina mountains during the Great Depression, the novel offers a troubling portrait of unchecked ambition and lost innocence.

George Pemberton returns to the Appalachians of North Carolina with his new wife, Serena, in 1929. An old man, Harmon, and his daughter, carrying Pemberton's illegitimate child, await him on the railroad platform. Harmon, armed with a knife, confronts Pemberton for impregnating his daughter. Pemberton kills Harmon, spilling his intestines onto the platform. Unmoved by the scuffle, Serena hands the Harmon's knife to his daughter and encourages her to sell it, saying, "It's all you'll ever get from my husband and me."

Thus begins the story of a woman who lunges after power with the same determination and calculated diabolism as Lady Macbeth.

Serena wields the same blunt cruelty she displays with the mother of Pemberton's child as she works alongside Pemberton to build their timber empire in the mountains. The two fight against the government's project to turn their land into a national park, ravaging the land for lumber and killing anyone who gets in their way. As their opponents meet gruesome ends, Serena wants to solidify their power by producing an heir. After a violent and damaging miscarriage destroys Serena's chances of ever having a child, she turns her malice towards Pemberton's illegitimate son.

Rash's blunt, refreshing prose creates a world in which everything is unsettling. He balances the narrative among Pemberton, Rachel (the mother of his child) and the loggers, who as local highlanders often act as a comedic Greek chorus. One of them, a self-taught preacher, believes Serena,

who wears pants and oversees logging operation, heralds the end times: "It's in the Revelations. Says the whore of Babylon will come forth in the last days wearing pants." Though his theology may be less than sound, Serena's decimation of the land and people around her make her seem like an agent of the apocalypse.

Rash achieves a powerful effect by maintaining narrative distance from Serena. The narrative never strays into Serena's consciousness, much like Faulkner never enters into Caddy's in *The Sound and the Fury*. This allows Serena to become more than a character. She becomes a force.

This destructive force of a woman becomes terrifying and consuming. Serena's ferocity expands and engulfs the work as she manipulates Pemberton with the same ruthlessness with which her Shakespearean ancestress manipulates Macbeth. The violence mounts with the tenor of a Shakespearian tragedy as her incomprehensible evil overtakes the work.

Like Shakespeare, Rash creates a tense atmosphere for his tragedy to play in. Rash's beautiful, dark setting matches the potency of his villainess. As the violence in the novel swells, a deep, ancient spirituality reveals itself in the mountains, creating an atmosphere as terrifying as the story itself.

Serena is a tale of power, greed, beauty, and death. Rash's highly moral yet disconcerting tale reads like a thriller but pulses with the blood of a great American novel. Prepare yourself as this startling novel becomes more and more chilling with the turn of each page.

Stephanie, when not reading about murder in the Appalachians, enjoys studying art and eating. Luckily, she has the chance to indulge in both while studying in Florence this semester. She has decided that there are few greater pleasures than the Uffizi, ribolitta soup, and Nutella pizza. When she returns to the States, she will start a movement to make eleven a.m. cappuccino breaks mandatory.

Serena
Ron Rash
Ecco, 2008

IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL

PHILIP GRUBER

My sister took harp lessons for several summers; she practiced on a Celtic harp borrowed from her teacher. After helping to tune it at my sister's request, we experimented with some easy songs to see what this large instrument could do. I pulled out a hymnal and happened to turn to #2, "It Is Well with My Soul." I had heard of the song but had never played it before. I flipped the appropriate tuning pegs on the harp to make it play in D major (two sharps), a transposition from D-flat major (five flats). The hymn sounded slowly and amateurishly from the Celtic harp, but it was beautiful in its own way. When I sit down to play the piano after a long hiatus, I am reminded of the majesty of the music. Similarly, the harp's ethereal sound gave grandeur to the piece.

After that first special performance of "It Is Well"—the only time I've ever played a harp—I only heard the song a few times before I got to college. At college, however, I was confronted with "It Is Well" overload. I was unaware that so many of my peers esteemed this century-old song so highly. A contemporary band, Haste the Day, has even taken its name from the song's lyrics. My greatest concern about "It Is Well with My Soul" is not that it is overused, but that it is consistently used without knowledge of its original context. While knowing the story behind a hymn is not requisite for singing it, these stories often lend greater meaning to the songs. I probably wouldn't have thought much about the context of "It Is Well" had it not been for a commencement speech at my high school.

I played the viola in my high school orchestra, which traditionally plays for commencement. The school board president, C. Willis Herr, always gives a speech at the ceremony; he often draws lessons from the lives of famous Americans, such as Teddy Roosevelt and Stonewall Jackson. In 2005, Mr. Herr spoke about the writing of the hymn "It

Is Well with My Soul." He explained that the daughters of successful Chicagoan Horatio Spafford were lost when their ship sank in the Atlantic; Spafford was at home at the time. Herr explained that Spafford later took a transatlantic voyage and was told when he was in area where his family had been lost. The great grief he felt did not turn him away from God; it taught him to accept what the Lord had let happen to him, and out of his grief he produced a beloved text. That text became a beloved hymn when prominent gospel hymnist Philip Bliss set it to music.¹

The emotional trials Spafford faced are far from the angst and petty tribulations most high school and college students face. I know that quite a few of my peers have suffered experiences similar in magnitude to that of the hymnist's, and the hymn is theirs to work out their relationship with God in their grief. The hymn's effectiveness is diminished, however, when the singer considers the problems the hymn describes as being the less drastic problems of young adults. This hymn was written by a grieving man, and it is fittingly used by grieving people. Singing this hymn at funerals probably reflects the writer's disposition when he wrote it. True, the hymn is not very specific about the struggles its writer is facing—most hymns aren't—and the song can be used in other contexts.

On the other hand, Christians expect sorrows, both as realists and as committed theists. Life is fraught with sadness. Our religion's founder proclaimed that he had no place to lay his head and declared that his true disciples would be willing to give up their material and social standing for him; we are the people Paul advised to be chaste because persecution would be easier to endure as single people. We also feel God's grace and protection, so we can sing

¹ Besides my remembrance of Mr. Herr's account, I also referred to the entry for "It Is Well with My Soul" on cyberhymnal.org for the background of the hymn.



“It Is Well” in joyful yet sober expectation of perseverance in trials. When James admonishes Christians to rejoice at all times, we can respond with this hymn no matter the circumstances. There are, then, two reflective ways to sing this hymn: in response to grief or in anticipation of trials.

Spafford illustrates the need for jubilation in all straits in the first verse. The very first clause is “when peace like a river attendeth my way,” a reference to Isaiah 48:18 and Isaiah 66:12. The relatively small body of water feels more secure than the tumultuous ocean that comes in the next phrase. While “peace like a river” is certainly not an original phrase—several other hymns use this simile, and a Canadian river is called the Peace River—the contrast is effective, and Spafford does not dwell on it. The difference between the familiar river and the harsh ocean is heightened, of course, by the knowledge that Spafford’s daughters died at sea. The hymnist is determined, however, to trust God in his personal tragedy.

The chorus does not always add new meaning to a song; it often just reinforces the meaning and heightens the emotion of the verse. The chorus of “It Is Well with My Soul” serves those purposes, but in this hymn the repetition also demonstrates Spafford’s commitment to accept what the Lord has given him. The reinforcement is not flippant but resolute. When we come to the chorus the first time, Spafford has just delivered the thesis of the hymn: “Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say, / It is well, it is well with my soul.” In the chorus, Spafford proceeds to repeat that “it is well.” At first, the male and female voices sing alternately, suggesting the unstable undulations of the sea, but the voices come together, as if Christ has calmed the waves. While many sacred and secular songs have refrains that are sung in parts, here the technique takes on a special meaning.

The thematic structure of the verses is a variant on the typical nineteenth-century four-verse hymn form (theme, life application, extension of application, glory). The form of “It Is Well with My Soul” is statement of theme, theme and transition toward a general message of salvation, salvation, and the Second Coming. Nautical themes were common

in nineteenth-century hymnody (“My Hope Is Built” and “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning,” e.g.), but for Spafford the sea signifies more than the just the turbulence of life—it is a reminder of his children’s death, of the insecurity and vulnerability of this life. And yet, Spafford is able to move beyond the painful plashing of this life. The sea imagery so famous in this hymn drops out by the middle of the second verse.

At the beginning of that verse, Satan is a stormy wind, “buffet[ing]” the Christian, and “trials” might refer to either Satan’s temptation or God’s testing. This verse builds on the assertions of the first verse that life is an ocean of uncertainty and that God is our refuge. Spafford leaves his nautical images to be more specific about why he can trust God through his difficulties. The “blest assurance” he has because “Christ has regarded [his] helpless estate” is not assurance that he will not have any problems or that God will alleviate his suffering and make him happy. Spafford’s assurance in Christ—which is our assurance, too—is that his eternal love and favor are unending and omnipresent; God’s protection for us is not lessened or curtailed by suffering and grief. Humanity has been laden with grief since Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, but God has mercifully “regarded [our] helpless estate” and provides for our needs. Religion is not about me feeling good and God being my analgesic: it is about me being saved and Christ being my Savior.

Edward Norman, an English clergyman and church historian, writes that modern funerals are more man-centered than they were in earlier centuries. Funerals, he writes, used to be about judgment and the fallenness of man. Now they are a celebration of the person’s life, which he interprets as an unacceptable form of humanism.² While I think the change in the tone of funerals has both positive and negative implications, one problem with using “It Is Well with My Soul” in a modern feel-good funeral is that it says something more than that the deceased is in “a better place.” This hymn is about the costly grace of God; in it, Spafford places his hope of heaven above his sorrows. He does not write that everything is going to be all right; his faith is too sturdy for such oversimplification. After all,

² Edward Norman. *Secularisation*. (London: Continuum, 2001), 91-92.



things may not get better on earth. Our troubles may only increase. Especially in our attitude toward death, Christians cannot indulge in the ego-preening and self-blinding adulation that secularists embrace. God is not a panacea; he is a savior of sinners. Innuocuous, inoffensive Christianity is a rejection of the toughness to which Christ has called us, a toughness that Spafford shows in his hymn. True saints can be known by their perseverance. We cannot say how our lives will turn out, but we must trust in God and keep the hope of heaven.

The third verse describes Christ's forgiveness of our sins. It is the most emotional verse in the song. Feeling seems to be overtaking Spafford, for his language is not as concise as in the earlier verses: he takes half of the verse to say, "Jesus took all of my sins." In the last praise session I attended, this verse is the only one in the song for which the other singers got noticeably worked up. This is the verse that people raise their hands for, and it doesn't even include the classic images of the first verse. Even though I'm not a member of the hand-raising echelon, I cannot ignore this stanza's formal purpose: as the verses progress, Spafford has become increasingly specific about his reason for trusting God with his life. He has already told us that Jesus has bled for us, but now he hits the exact reason—the comprehensive atonement for sin on the cross. He can trust God in all circumstances because God has saved him from sin, a more destructive force than any ocean wave.

Spafford has been building the emotion throughout the hymn, and it is only logical that the emotion should climax at this point, for the singers are now able to assert that God is not merely trustworthy, that he did not merely suffer for us, but that his unutterable debasement and suffering has triumphed over our sin. Christ's suffering was far greater than ours was, is, or will be, so we can rejoice in him. His suffering also cost him far more than ours costs us: costly as it is to give our lives to Christ, his taking of our sins far outstrips our short earthly trials.

The singers can feel victory in the music as they come to the final verse, in which Spafford describes the glory of Christ's return, the event that will end Spafford's suffering.

The verse develops the eschatological imagery of Revelation 1:7, suggested by "Even so" being in quotation marks in the hymn text. The Scripture verse comes at the end of a reminder that Christ is coming again grandly. "Amen" follows the "Even so" in Revelation. So when Spafford writes, " 'Even so'—it is well with my soul," he is again proclaiming his acceptance of—saying amen to—God's will. What trials God has let into his life will pale before the glory of the Redeemer when he returns to save the writer (and the singer). "Even so. Amen." "Even so—it is well." *Let your will be done, Lord*, is Spafford's plea. As the congregation returns to the chorus for the last time, one can hear Christ (the soprano part) calling to his saints and the dead in Christ rising and replying (the less prominent alto, tenor, and bass lines). As the Christians meet their master in the sky, they continue to sing, and their voices come together with Christ (the melody line of our lives, not just the chorus) to form one voice. The church is united with the Bridegroom. Every tear is wiped away.

We must always be careful how we use a written work. I was disturbed by a "testimonial" in a poetry anthology accompanying Robert Browning's poem "My Last Duchess." A woman wrote that this poem, a dramatic monologue written from the point of view of a materialistic Italian nobleman, helped her get through her divorce because it mirrored the heartless acquisitiveness she saw in her ex-husband.³ Browning, however, happened to be a profound Christian with a gift for capturing the evil in man's soul. His happy marriage is still famous.

I think the divorced woman may have missed the greater theme of Browning's work. She imputed her own experiences to the poem instead of letting the work speak for itself. As C. S. Lewis would put it, she was using the poem, not receiving it, at least in the context of Browning's canon. If the divorced woman had only read one poem of Browning's, her error is understandable: he handles Christian truth more explicitly in other poems.

We all have a tendency to get caught up in the familiarity of our favorite Scripture verses when we read them; it's

³ *America's Favorite Poems: The Favorite Poems Project Anthology*. Ed. Robert Pinsky and Maggie Dietz. (New York: Norton, 2000), 34.

easy, for example, to forget the rest of John 3 when we get to its sixteenth verse. Likewise, we cannot sing “It Is Well with My Soul” for the emotional charge of the third verse or read “My Last Duchess” for spite and self-justification. If our worship is all about emotion—the song’s effect on us—we too easily focus on ourselves instead of God; and if we do that, our worship treads the line between glorying in God and (to use Paul’s terms) cymbal clanging. “It Is Well with My Soul” properly includes emotion, but sentiment must never overpower the hymn’s greater meaning.

This hymn is a powerful testament to the perseverance of the saints. Horatio Spafford certainly did not interpret things the way he may have wanted to see them; he did not try to fool himself into thinking that “it is well with my soul” has the same meaning as “all is well.” He recognized that God exists, not to take the edge off life but to save us from our death in our transgressions. Life can be hard, but God grants “peace like a river” even “when sorrows like sea-billows roll.” Spafford could not belittle suffering—he had lost four daughters at sea—but he could see that God’s grace was sufficient for him. He could see that the sorrows of our fallen, earthly life do not cancel what we have in Christ—love, forgiveness, and the hope of heaven.

Philip Gruber is a sophomore English and Communications double major.

WHEN I SHOULD BE READING FAULKNER

HÄNNAH SCHLAUDT

These Words on old wrinkled pages say that
In everything rejoice and be thankful—
I, you, she must. The pattern of footfalls
In the hallway marks the passage of hours
As they scurry: class, lunch and back again.
My coffee is cold and these words are just
That. Fifteen pages left and I forgot
Who “he” is again and my socks are gone.
Did you see them? No, they’re lost like all the
Rest, all the things you thought necessary
And perpetual, wholesome, good. Oh, yes,
Things are like that—they’re fickle and soon gone.
But rejoice is not a word or even
A feeling. Giving thanks insists on a
Surrender of complaint, a hunt for
Socks instead of whimpering about it.
So I’ll keep reading these words, give myself
To the story and finish it in time.
The socks don’t matter; I can laugh because
There’s sunshine and quotidian graces.
The Word isn’t hollow and prayer is the
Refining of surrender, hallowed in
Time past by faithfulness proven to broken
People like me. His Word, The Word, doesn’t fade.

THE MATHEMATICS OF PHILOSOPHY

BILL ROBINSON

This statement is false.

You probably realize immediately that the above statement is actually neither true nor false. It has no truth value. A similar paradox, one which is more mathematical, refers to the set S which is defined to include as its elements every set which does not contain itself as an element. *Does the set S contain itself?*

You might observe that these paradoxes are little more than mind games, questions to baffle your nephew some day, which have no real *meaning*. However, consider one more self-referential statement: *This statement is not provable*. Note that this statement cannot be false, because that would imply that one could prove it, and you cannot prove a false statement. The statement is in fact true; you cannot prove that it is true, for then you would have contradicted your own proof; therefore it is a true but unprovable statement. This explanation is not a formal proof, in the sense that it does not follow from any axioms or deduction. It is intuitively true. We observe its truth using metamathematical¹ language.

While this type of statement has been around for millennia, the idea of self-referential statements played a large and dramatic role in an important proof presented by Kurt Gödel in 1931, a proof which has as many implications in philosophy as it does in mathematics. To aid in understanding what follows, we present a few definitions:

• Axiom—A foundational statement which is assumed to be true in a mathematical system.

E.g. $x - x = 0$.

E.g. Through a point not on a straight line, there passes exactly one straight line that is parallel to the first.

• System—A set of axioms, from which theorems may be derived using the rules of logic.

• Consistent System—A system in which no validly deduced theorems are contradictory.

• Complete System—A system in which every true statement contained in the system may be logically deduced from the axioms.

The result which Gödel demonstrated was quite startlingly both mathematical and metamathematical. He proved mathematically that any mathematical system, even one as simple as arithmetic, is *incomplete*. There are true statements which may be expressed within the system, but which are not provable within it. Take a moment to let that sink in, because it is important in what follows.

What does this incompleteness mean for mathematics? Is not mathematics immune to the uncertainty that inhibits all other disciplines? Literary types and philosophers have long doubted the adequacy of their primary tool, language. But mathematics is supposed the language of nature itself, the fundamental branch of knowledge. Have we thus dethroned the queen of the sciences, yet another casualty to our postmodern abandonment of certainty? Have we uncovered the inadequacy of mathematics, and thus rejected absolute truth?

Gödel would have answered that question with an emphatic negative. He himself was a Platonist, and believed that science was the study of the perceptible realm, and mathematics and logic the study of the imperceptible. The difficulty for this form of Platonism is in how to explain the means by which these imperceptible realities may be perceived, and Gödel ascribed it to some form of intuition. But regardless of philosophical problems, his beliefs clarify

¹ Metamathematics engages in philosophical statements about mathematics, particularly in the realm of epistemology.



a crucial point: in disproving the completeness of mathematical systems, Gödel did not discount the notion of truth. In fact, he was a firm believer in the absolute reality of mathematical truth. What his proof forces us to do is to acknowledge our limitations in the apprehension of truth, even in the clear-cut realm of mathematics.

Some of the implications of Gödel's results have been discussed by the philosopher Alain Badiou in *The Concept of Model: An Introduction to the Materialist Epistemology of Mathematics*. Badiou uses the idea of *model* in this way: "A structure is a model of a formal theory if all the axioms of that theory are valid for that structure."² We could say that a model is an instance of a theory. Thus, a model is *not* used in the sense of an abstraction or generalization of a system. Somewhat imprecisely, compare Badiou's usage to the idea of an atomic model in the history of science; one previous model compared the atom to a plumb pudding, in which subatomic particles are imbedded. More current models present a nucleus surrounded by an electron cloud. These models sustain certain of the functional rules of the atom (analogous to axioms), but each is only one expression of what an atom is. Note, of course, that in science, a model may be inaccurate; past models of the atom were proved faulty and discarded.

The crucial difference between a scientific model and a model in Badiou's sense is that in mathematics, one model of a system is just as valid as another one; it is usefulness rather than accuracy which distinguishes them. A perfect example of this is found in geometry. We take as our system *basic geometry*, which accepts the first four axioms of Euclid. *Euclidean geometry*, which is what we intuitively think of as geometry, is a model of geometry that includes Euclid's fifth axiom about parallel lines which we mentioned earlier. However, *spherical geometry* is consistent with basic geometry and yet uses a different axiom for parallel lines, and thus provides a distinct model of geometry. The existence of these two different models proves that Euclid's fifth axiom is independent of his first four.

Badiou's concept of model is useful for distinguishing between logic and mathematics. He argues that "an axiom

is logical if it is valid for every structure, and mathematical otherwise."³ Using the term *model*, this is equivalent to saying that logic admits all valid structures as models, while any mathematical system excludes some structures from being models. Most simply, logical statements are true in every situation, but mathematical statements are only true in certain settings, i.e. with certain systems of axioms.⁴ In this sense, mathematics can discover new axioms which are adopted as they are found useful. But there can be no discoveries in logic; logic merely enforces the rules of the game which the mathematician plays.⁵

This returns us to the philosophical problem that Gödel's Theorem introduced. In what sense, if any, did Gödel undermine the idea of mathematical truth? Badiou's distinction between math and logic clarifies the problem. The insufficiency is not in mathematics, but rather in the logical machinery that is used to generate mathematical theorems. Think of logic as an idealized computer, which may perform an infinite number of valid deductions for an infinite amount of time. This computer, no matter how long it grinds out truths, will not have exhausted the truth, and there are some truths that it will never reach. No logical machine can ever reach all truths. Hence, Gödel's work does not undermine truth; it merely forces us to acknowledge our inability to apprehend the truth completely.

Badiou's concept of model applies to some of the ideas that Thomas Kuhn treated in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (see "Science Humbled," *The Quad*, Winter 2009). Badiou writes, "For the epistemology of models, science is not a process of practical transformation of the real, but a fabrication of a plausible image."⁶ He is claiming that science does not give us a perfect and complete picture of reality. It is a "plausible image," which is useful but

³ Badiou, p. 35.

⁴ Consider the statement $A \supset (B \supset A)$, where " \supset " signifies logical implication. This statement is true in every possible logical system, so it is a strictly logical statement. But the statement $(\exists x)P(x) \rightarrow (\forall x)P(x)$ which states "If there a fact is true about an element, it is true about all elements," can only be true in a system consisting of one element. Therefore the statement is mathematical.

⁵ See Jaakko Hintikka's *On Gödel*, p. 43-45, for a fuller discussion of this topic.

⁶ Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, p. 16.

² Badiou, p. 34.



incomplete. Just as Kuhn argued, science is carried out in paradigms, which are articulated and demonstrated until a new paradigm is developed because of the inaccuracy or (in the case mathematics) inadequacy of the old one.

The concept of model is useful in this process. Badiou writes, "I propose to call *model* the ordinance that, in the historical process of a science, retrospectively assigns to the science's previous practical instances their experimental transformation by a definite formal apparatus."⁷ This describes the experimental articulation of the paradigm, after it has been accepted. So when Einstein introduced the theory of relativity, he offered a new paradigm. Then scientific models were created and used to confirm the adoption of this new paradigm. It is somewhat counter-intuitive to think of mathematics in this way, as something which is experimented on. But Badiou refers to axiomatic set theory, a relatively fundamental branch of mathematics, as the "experimental moment" in mathematical production of knowledge. He writes that "a formal system [such as set theory] is a mathematical machine, a machine for mathematical production."⁸ Just as a particle accelerator is a scientific apparatus where science is put to the test, so also is set theory a scientific apparatus where a mathematical result is put to the test, by the creation of a set-theoretic model of the mathematical concept. The concept of model, in mathematics, is primarily useful for demonstrating relative consistency and independence.⁹

The use Badiou makes of the concept of model aids in the understanding of Gödel's result, and in fact confirms that the famous theorem does not call into question our notions about truth. The theorem declares that no computer will ever deduce all mathematical truths, and rebuffs the aspiration that man can someday know all. But just as Gödel did, it is clear that Badiou actually affirms truth and our ability (at least in part) to apprehend it, for a

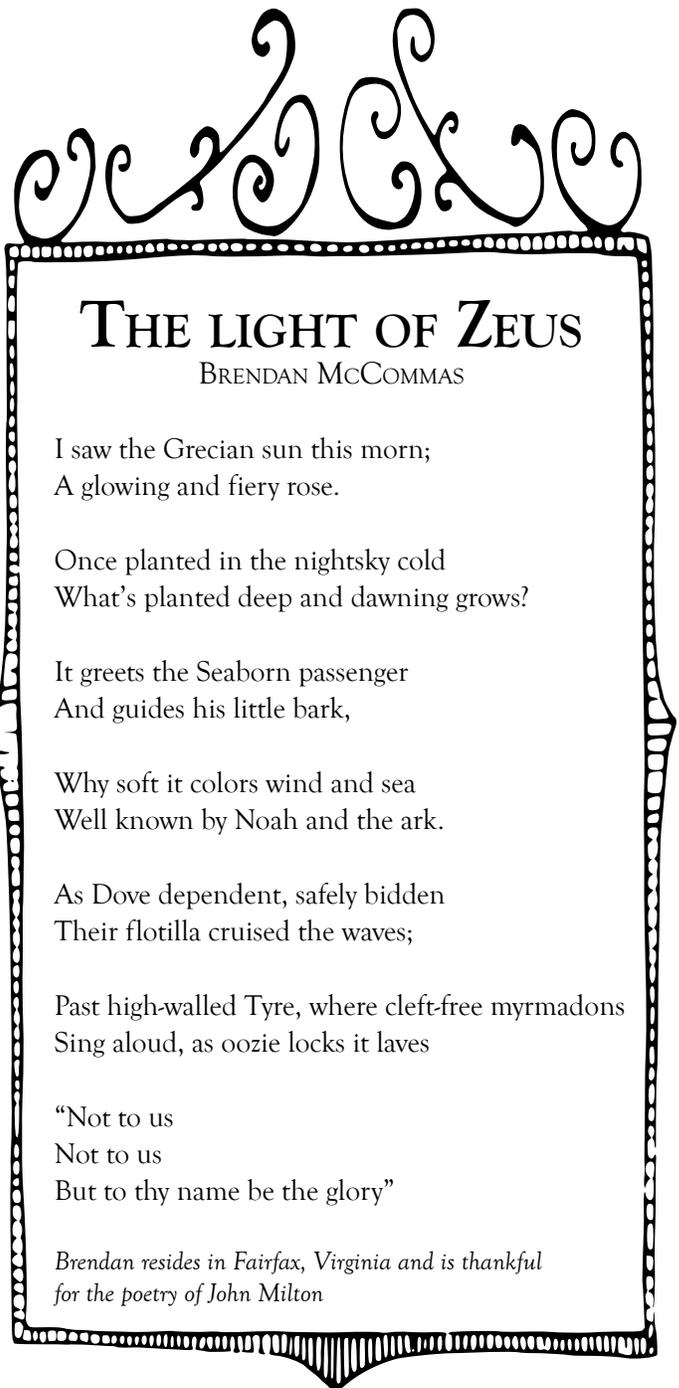
⁷ Badiou, p. 54.

⁸ Badiou, p. 43.

⁹ Refer to discussion above regarding the use of model in demonstrating the independence of Euclid's fifth axiom from the first four. Gödel used this type of approach in 1939 to show the consistency of the axiom of choice and the continuum hypothesis with the rest of set theory.

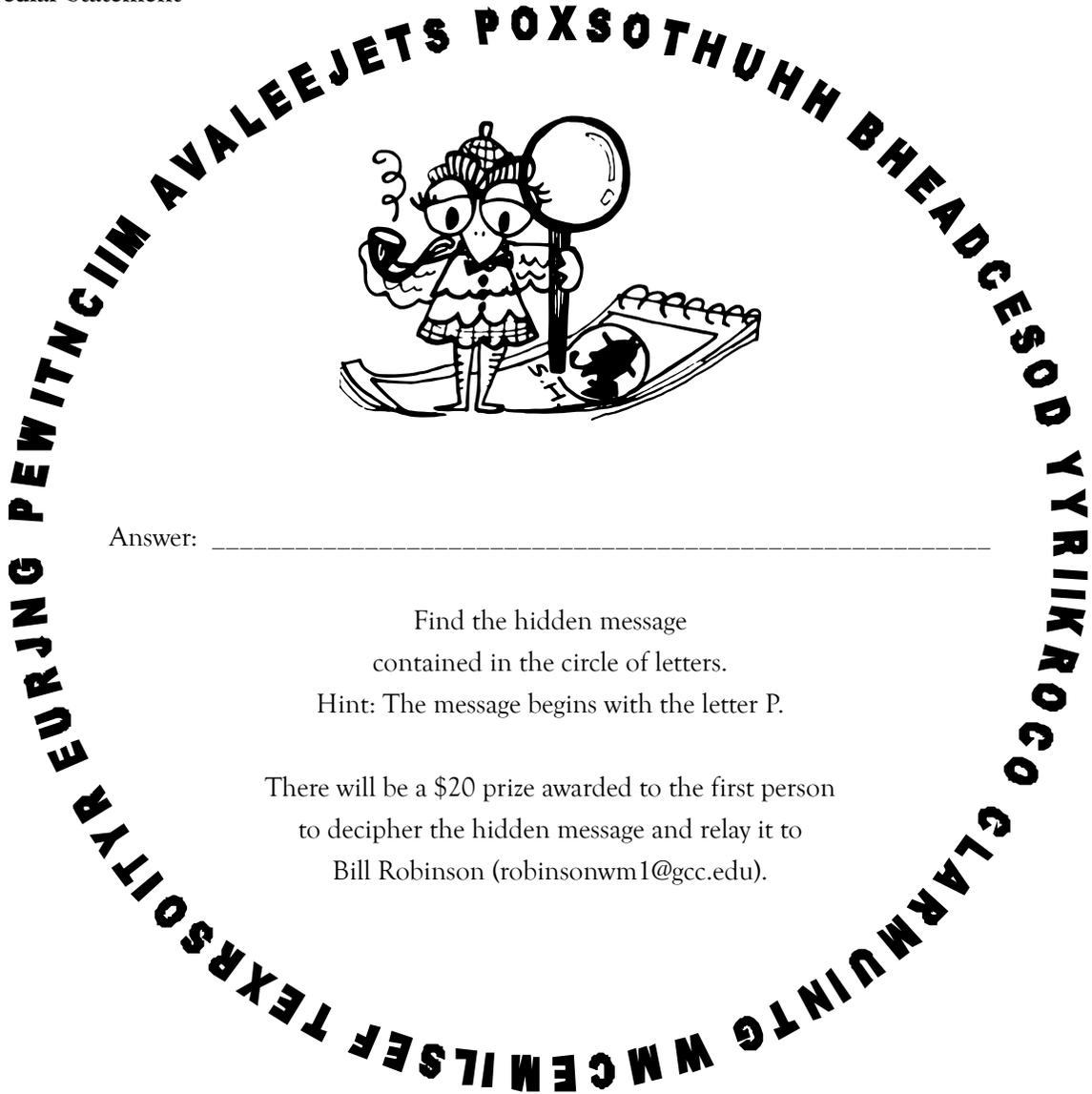
model is in fact a means of confirming truth. And though our pursuit of truth will not be completed through logical deduction, it is nevertheless a possible and profitable pursuit. Perhaps it is not out of place to moralize that knowing the limits of our ability to deduce truth ought to give us a more keenly felt gratitude for the Truth that is revealed.

Having seen the consequences of self-referential statements, the author refuses to talk about himself.



CONUNDRUMS

A Circular Statement



The graphic features a cartoon detective character with a magnifying glass, a notepad, and a small globe. The character is positioned in the center of a large circle. The circle's border is composed of a sequence of letters: P, E, W, I, T, N, C, I, M, A, V, A, L, E, E, J, E, T, S, P, O, X, S, O, T, H, U, H, H, B, H, E, A, D, C, E, S, O, D, Y, R, I, K, R, O, G, O, G, L, A, R, M, U, I, N, T, G, W, M, C, E, M, I, L, S, E, F, T, E, X, R, S, O, T, T, R, E, U, R, J, N, G. The letters are arranged in a circular path, starting from the top and moving clockwise.

Answer: _____

Find the hidden message
contained in the circle of letters.

Hint: The message begins with the letter P.

There will be a \$20 prize awarded to the first person
to decipher the hidden message and relay it to
Bill Robinson (robinsonwm1@gcc.edu).

Last Issue's Pet Store Problem

Congratulations to Bruce Stahl for being the first to give the correct answer to last issue's conundrum: there could be up to 110 satisfactory pets in the pet store.

Wanted: New Conundrumer

Due to the impending graduation of the current Conundrumer, *The Quad* is in need of a new person to devise a Conundrum twice a semester. Interested candidates please submit an original conundrum to Bill Robinson at robinsonwm1@gcc.edu.

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