

Saint Mary's College of California

Saint Mary's Digital Commons

The Undergraduate Spectrum

1-1-2013

The Undergraduate 2013

Saint Mary's College of California

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/undergraduate-spectrum>



Part of the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Saint Mary's College of California, "The Undergraduate 2013" (2013). *The Undergraduate Spectrum*. 20.
<https://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/undergraduate-spectrum/20>

This Issue is brought to you for free and open access by Saint Mary's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Undergraduate Spectrum by an authorized administrator of Saint Mary's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@stmarys-ca.edu.

The Undergraduate





SAINT
MARY'S
COLLEGE
of CALIFORNIA

The Undergraduate

The Undergraduate

Published by

Center for Writing Across the Curriculum
Director Tereza Joy Kramer

and

Collegiate Seminar Program
Director José Feito

accessible online at the "Seminar Writing" Moodle site for instructors
and the website of the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum:
www.stmarys-ca.edu/center-for-writing-across-the-curriculum

Printed by Coast Litho, Oakland California

Editor
Tereza Joy Kramer

Managing Editor
Kevin M. Reyes

Associate Editors
Reyna Olegario
Brittany Wason

Assistant Editors
Audrey Agot, Jillian Bockenkamp, Katherine Crawford, Hector
Berber, Sarah Diaz, Jamie Douglas, Nicole Enos, Katherine
Ford, Vina Giang, Bria Harrell, Bridget Hanna, Darlyne Ibarra,
Juana Isais, Somel Jammu, Kayla Riley, Shireen Jan C. Satti, Vita
Guido Serrano, Desmond Vanderfin, Caitlin Wire, Elizabeth
Zaragoza.

Writing Advisers working with Newman Essay Finalists:
Madeline Bell, Carly Bobo, Mollie Clark, Jeff Chon, Anna Ha,
Bridget Hanna, and Daniel Horan

Layout and Design
Kevin M. Reyes

Cover Photography
Sara Vander Zwaag

Cover Design
Reyna Olegario and Kevin Reyes

Faculty Judges:

Saundra Alassio

Brother Mel Anderson

David Bird

Paul Flemer

Caralinda Lee

Frances Sweeney

Writing Adviser Judges:

Madeline Bell

Mollie Clark

Bridget Hanna

Reyna Olegario

Sam Ricci

Sara Vander Zwaag

23rd Annual Newman Award Winners

GIUSSEPPE CARMASSI

WILLIAM CONABLE

YETZENIA LICEA

KAITLIN ROTH

CAITLIN WIRE

Honorable Mentions

"The God Complex" MADELINE BELL

"A Creative Exploration of Antagonism in The Aeneid" RYAN KEANE

"To Write is to Overcome" NYSSA MUHEIM

2013 Newman Award Nominations

Nicholas Anichich	Yetzenia Licea
Ali Archer	Shannon Malone
Maxwell Balbin	Jeffrey Matthews
Michelle Bedolla	Reid Miller
Madeline Bell	Nyssa Muheim
William Benson	Joe Murphy
Trevor Bushong	Joakim Norstrom
Chelsea Carlay	Julianne Odin
Giuseppe Carmassi	Jasmine Preciado
William Conable	Kaitlin Roth
Lily Coyle	Elizabeth Sande
Nicole Daisa	Shireen Satti
Mary Eschen	Heidi Shaw
Faith Fermin	Abigail Smith
Scott Fowler	Jillian Susie
Kelsey Freeman	Robby Tabor
Vita Guido	Simon Tryzna
Melissa Jaballas	Leah Weidman
Dane Johnson	Caitlin Wire
Ryan Keane	

Contents

From The Editors	vii
The 2013 Newman Award Winners	ix
Mercy Me <i>Yetzenia Licea</i>	11
Virtue and Vice: A Seminar of Sorts <i>William Conable</i>	17
Women in The Aeneid <i>Kaitlin Roth</i>	27
The Great Debate: Dante and Augustine on the Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms <i>Guisseppe Carmassi</i>	33
Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bennet <i>Caitlin Wire</i>	41

From The Editors -

Welcome to Saint Mary's 2013 *The Undergraduate*! This 23rd edition finds Saint Mary's College publishing five essays showcasing a breadth of excellent writing in Collegiate Seminar. We invite professors and students to use these pieces as models for discussion, examples of written discourse, or sources for inspiration and reflection.

This year, because of the evolution of the Collegiate Seminar program, *The Undergraduate* readers might notice changes to the format and this publication. Instead of three winning essays, representing excellence in Greek thought (Homer or Drama) and 19th-20th Century thought, there are five distinct winners. This year, judges reviewed with an eye for analytical astuteness, creative composition, and deductive discourse. The award-winning authors produced engaging writing as well as interesting and significant use and exploration of Seminar texts. The five essays published here represent work from a range of levels throughout the Seminar program not limited to a particular course or type of essay. They also represent a range of style of writing. We hope these models will inspire other students to explore, to create, to stretch, to think, and to write.

We extend deep appreciation to all the professors who submitted their students' writing produced during the 2012 calendar year and for all those who gave their time as judges for the awards.

The 2013 edition marks *The Undergraduate's* twenty-third consecutive year of publication and the second edition from the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum. This year, the publishing process continued to evolve and to involve more and more students. A new practicum course, a section of Communication 190, was created through which students could learn principles of magazine copy-editing and design and then apply those principles by producing this journal. We appreciate the collaboration of the Communication Department, particularly Chair Ed Tywoniak, in shaping this new course. And we appreciate the students of Communication 190 for all their work ensuring a quality publication that reflects well on the college.

This was the second year of a staged editing process for finalists, mirroring what occurs when writers work with professional publications. We invited each finalist to meet three times with a CWAC Writing Adviser to review issues at both the idea and sentence level, and then to submit the revised piece. Winning texts were selected from among the resubmitted pieces. We appreciate all the hard work of the finalists

and the Writing Advisers.

We also asked the winners to write Author's Notes, to share their idiosyncratic experience of writing, submitting, and revising, in order to inspire others to keep working toward the most skillful use of language and the most expansive exploration of ideas. We are including some of the notes from our authors at the closing of their essays.

There have been so many people involved in this contest and journal that the list of people deserving appreciation is long. In addition to those already mentioned, there were many other people involved in making this contest and journal a reality. CWAC Administrative Assistant Jen Herrington managed the critical details. SODEXO catered a fine banquet for the awards ceremony. The Print Shop printed our program last-minute, perfectly and without complaint. Coast Litho in Oakland was an excellent business partner for the second year in a row. And the entire staff of CWAC contributed in small and large ways.

We offer this journal with deep appreciation for the work of all the student writers, professors, and staff members who make Collegiate Seminar a longstanding tradition and a core of Saint Mary's development of excellent students, thinkers, and citizens.

— Kevin M. Reyes and Tereza Joy Kramer

The 2013 Newman Award Winners

Seminar 123: 19th and 20th Century Thought - Virginia Smith

"Mercy Me"

Understandably, America after the Civil War was not in a harmonious state; Toni Morrison depicts the bloodshed and brutal dehumanization of slaves in her novel, "Be-loved." But in her own exploration of the text and its tangent truths, Licea conveys deeper meanings to the struggles. Through the twisted elements of Marxism found in slavery, and through the influences of Malcolm X's ideas of progressing, Licea proposes the more hopeful notion of being able "to let go and let live."

YETZENIA LICEA

Seminar 110-03: Classical Christian and Medieval Thought - William Halpin

"Virtue and Vice: A Seminar of Sorts"

What readers and writers alike struggle with is the ability to bring a text with them into their own lives. Conable successfully does so, rendering a seminar, true to his title, of the virtues and vices of everyone from Immaculee to Barbie.

WILLIAM CONABLE

Seminar 21: Roman, Christian, and Medieval Thought - Ben Klein

"Women in The Aeneid"

Analyzing the archetypes of female characters typically goes as far as realizing and letting them be where they are. Roth, however, takes a more universal angle, questioning and drawing a holistic portrait of women in a paper very holistic itself.

KAITLIN ROTH

Seminar 21: Roman, Christian, and Medieval Thought - Rashaan Meneses

“The Great Debate: Dante and Augustine on the Existence of Evil
and Omnipotent Physical Forms”

In an absolutely brilliant intertwining of both Dante and Augustine’s texts, Carmassi offers a modern means of understanding and reflecting upon the philosophies of both.

GIUSSEPPE CARMASSI

Seminar 122: 17th and 18th Century Renaissance - Cathy Davalos

“Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bennet”

Creativity is taken to a new level in this piece. As a fictional yet thoroughly academic and authentic letter written from one feminist to a seemingly non-feminist, Wire writes a whole new story of her own, analyzing the complexity of the two characters at hand.

CAITLIN WIRE

- Abstracts of Winning Essays Composed by Somel Jammu

Mercy Me

Yetzenia Licea

Understanding the present often requires people to look in the past to find answers to pressing questions. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* entails the journey of a woman's attempt to move forward in order to avoid being consumed by her past. Morrison, however, weaves social elements into the story, raising even bigger and more serious questions regarding civil rights and the way people view one another based on background. In Morrison's book, elements of Marxism emerge as a way to explain the systematic flaw within slavery, and parts of Malcolm X's "The Ballot or the Bullet" serve to suggest a plan of action.

When looking through a Marxist capitalistic lens, slavery is an easily objectified concept. Marx defines labor as the effort given by the individual and looks at labor as something to be traded. If this is true, "labour-power is then a commodity, no more, no less so than is sugar. The first is measured by the clock, the other by the scales" (17). In Morrison's book, weighing with scales can be taken in a literal sense because slaves were publicly weighed at auctions. With the introduction of slavery comes the need to establish a set value for a person. Usually that value is found in labor as a tool to sustain a standard of living: "what he produces for himself is wages; and the silk, the gold, and the palace are resolved for him into a certain quantity of necessities of

life, perhaps into a cotton jacket, into copper coins, and into a basement dwelling" (19). In this, Marx explains how the direct fruit of one's labor is insignificant. What is important is their ability to survive based upon what they get as a result; thus, the need to monetarily compensate an individual for their time.

Providing for workers is not limited to monetary compensation: it also implies that workers must be healthy and strong. In Morrison's book, a slave explains to his master his reasoning for stealing food:

Sixo plant rye to give the high piece a better chance. Sixo take and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and feed Sixo give you more work.' Clever, but schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definition belonged to the definers-not the defined (Morrison 224).

Sixo's frame of thought coincides with what Marx believed: in order to keep the system working, the workers must be provided enough to carry out the tasks at hand. In a physically demanding agricultural industry, Sixo is in need of proper nutrition to be a productive worker. In the instance of slavery, it is the responsibility of the slave master to provide because the slaves are not making wages so they could provide for themselves. The mishap here lies in that the master failed to uphold his responsibility and caused the slave to fail as well.

Marx's explanation details how this mishap within slavery can still be justified in terms of labor. Furthermore, he explains the loophole in the system of capitalism that allows for individuals to be absent of ownership over themselves by analyzing, "The slave, together with his labour-power, was sold to his owner once and for all. He is a commodity that can pass from the hand of one owner to another. He himself is a commodity, but his labour-power is not his commodity" (Marx 20). By making an individual a commodity, there is a sense of distance that goes along with it. It creates room to allow for objective, general decisions or judgments to be made, particularly when they involve an entire group of people.

By taking the sole thing that a person can trade away from them, the individual is left with nothing to offer the world besides themselves and, consequently, their souls. Morrison describes the innermost fears of Sethe, a runaway slave, and all of the freed people around her by saying:

That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore.... And though she and others lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. (Morrison 295).

Sethe could not stand for her children to be subjected to what she had endured as a commodity. She makes the utmost sacrifice a mother can make by killing her own child, Beloved. At this point in the story, the slave

masters own Sethe, and technically they own her child too. Sethe refuses to give into her owners by releasing her baby to them. The idea that slavery can drive a mother to act so heinously directly reflects how taking away a person's commodity of labor can adversely affect them in the most horrific way possible.

Malcolm X and many others use racial slurs to negatively affect a group of people or call their attention. In Malcolm X's speech "The Ballot or the Bullet," there is a sarcastic jab towards those in office who deceived voters. In the middle of his speech, he preaches, "They'll get all the Negro vote, and after they get it, the Negro gets nothing in return. All they did when they got to Washington was give a few big Negroes big jobs. Those big Negroes didn't need big jobs, they already had jobs" (Malcolm X 80). Although not a new strategy, Malcolm X uses the word "negro" repeatedly in this phrase to call attention to the race card. Over-emphasis of the word makes it sound as if the word is neither his term, nor the past political proposals his solutions. The amount of repetition of a slur creates an uncomfortable sense of aggressiveness and hostility. It encourages the reader to become aware and act urgently upon the feelings the repetition of the word creates.

Given the amount of violence and defiance in the book, there are many instances throughout Morrison's writing which reflect similar diction choices by Malcolm X. Throughout Morrison's writing, she uses a sarcastic mockery of terms accompanied with repetition by saying, "Enough nigger eyes for

now. Little nigger-boy eyes open in sawdust; little nigger-girl eyes staring between the wet fingers that held her face so her head wouldn't fall off" (177). In this portion of the book, Morrison uses the phrase "nigger" in a sense that the idea it portrays is not her own. It is the voice of a slave master who does not care about the violence in the scene, which describes reactions to the death of Sethe's baby. Morrison's tone indicates how to the slave master it is just another body to discard, but to Sethe it is the end of her world. This repetitious tone has the same effect as Malcolm's speech in that it calls attention to issues and evokes a combative attitude. Both Morrison and Malcolm X's use of racial terms reminds people of how these words can be used in a sense of pity and discrimination and should not distract them from what is happening.

Not only do Malcolm X and Toni Morrison use repetition as a strategy to convey their arguments but they also use imagery as an effective tool in their work. Malcolm X states that, "This is our contribution--our investment. This is our blood. Not only did we give of our free labor, we gave of our blood" (84). The image of

When people fight, the first thing they do is find someone to blame it on.

of warfare and violence creates a deeper connection because it is easily relatable. Morrison also takes the image of bloodshed and builds upon it by illustrating the effects on future generations through the use of symbols of blood and milk. Morrison narrates, "Sethe was aiming a bloody nipple into the baby's mouth... So Denver took her mother's milk right along with the blood of her sister" (179). Beloved and her blood are symbolic of the past trauma endured by her ancestors. Conversely, Denver, the other daughter of Sethe, is juxtaposed in order to represent a future. In this scene, Denver is still young and requires nutrients from her mother. By continuing to feed, Morrison shows how a person should strengthen and move on despite the terrors that may occur. However, Denver's consumption of her sister's blood symbolizes how the past can remain with an individual. As Malcolm X's imagery suggests, remembering the blood of our ancestors is important in understanding the investment. Morrison uses that investment in order to be more equipped for what is still to come.

Understanding investments helps to point out the justification of racism and violence, as is apparent in Malcolm X's message and in the story of *Beloved*. Malcolm X is encouraging people to react against oppression and stand up for what is rightfully theirs. If while doing so violence is introduced, it should be met with nothing more than an equal amount of force: "They are not representatives of the law. Any time you demonstrate against segregation and a man has the audacity to put a police dog on you, kill that dog, kill him, I'm telling you kill that dog" (84). Malcolm X presents an attitude that is consistent with the problem of an

overactive imagination that Morrison presents. Morrison writes, “White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle...It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew... it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it” (Morrison 234). In Morrison’s story, slave masters are so petrified of becoming the victims of rape and violence by black people, that they themselves become the rapists and abusers. This paradigm shows how the initial violence against white people in the story is imagined, but the consequent mistreatment of blacks is a reality. It is no wonder how activists like Malcolm X reasoned for a more aggressive approach when provoked. The reciprocal relationship between fear and retaliation make for the reasoning of violence on both behalves.

Malcolm X did not believe that the solution to the violent civil issues at the time would be resolved by restoring faith in people other than his own. In order to make change, he believed that the solution lay within the people of his own community:

You can’t change his mind about us. We’ve got to change our own minds about each other. We have to see each other with new eyes. We have to see each other as brothers and sisters. We have to come together with warmth so we can develop unity and harmony that is necessary to get this problem solved ourselves (Malcolm X 90).

As his work continued, Malcolm X wanted his people to rise up and become their own business owners, lawyers, and doctors. He wanted his own people to unite with themselves, to not linger on the past but rebuild a future for one another. Morrison ties in the same sort of ideologies as Sethe begins to make sense of her life. In Sethe’s conversation with her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, Baby Suggs says, “There’s more of us they drowned than there is all of them ever lived from the start of time. Lay down your sword. This ain’t a battle; it’s a rout” (Morrison 287). Baby Suggs is trying to tell Sethe that because she was putting all of her energy into resisting slavery that she had lost sight of the life she was fighting for so desperately. If Sethe wants to truly be free, only she has the ability to accept the circumstances of her past and find the path that best suits her future. Taking Malcolm X’s advice, she has to learn to accept herself and trust in her community to help her to get back on her feet.

When people fight, the first thing they do is find someone to blame it on. Children blame siblings, teenagers blame parents. Adults blame the media or the “system” for their financial and emotional stress; however, as Morrison illustrates, blame does not go very far, particularly for those who have no mercy on themselves.

It is easy to find a philosophy that can explain injustice, just as Marx does with slavery. It is also just as easy to misunderstand the roots of anger and violence, as demonstrated by Malcolm X. Every individual has the ability to lay down the swords, let go, and let live.

Works Cited

Marx, Karl. Wage labour and capital: Value price and profit. New York: International Publishers, 1933. Print.

Morrison, Toni. Beloved. New York: Random House Inc, 1987. Print.

X, Malcolm. "Ballot or the bullet." Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Thought. United States: Saint Mary's College of California, 1965. 109-125. Print.

Virtue and Vice: A Seminar of Sorts

William Conable

When I first went to sea, choosing to take my own measure rather than having others take it for me, my Grandfather told me, "Never trust a man who doesn't drink, boyo." As he spoke his eyes became hard, hard like the wind that blows off the ocean in winter. Jack Conable sailed around the world by the age of twenty three. He stood watch on his nineteenth birthday as the bow of his ship rounded Cape Horn. Learning of my decision, my grandfather called to arrange a dinner with me. Sitting at his table, in the kitchen he built with his own hands, his wisdom carried on: "I have no respect for those who've never toiled for a meal, felt the thunder of a hangover, been terrified and failed because of fear. Anyone who stands the watch, endures the bowels of the engine room, and refuses a drink in port is not to be trusted. The character revealed in loss, in conflict, is how you judge a person." Now, a decade after our whiskey soaked conversation, Jack Conable's advice remains valid. Indeed, it is because of my grandfather's lesson, because of the virtue of his wisdom, the vice of his whiskey, that I was able to understand the story of Immaculee Ilibagiza and the failings of Barbie.

The two greatest friendships of my life were sculpted by ten years at sea. Following the advice of my grandfather, not only did I come to know John and Thor as shipmates, I came to know them as good men; men

who can test the validity of an idea. The true proving ground for such a task is neither the halls of academia nor the hollow chambers of business. True virtue descends into the muck and mire, and it sits elbow to elbow, works shoulder to shoulder with those of the hardest hands, the poorest means only to remain unsullied. Such is the world of Thor, John, and Immaculee.

Now, I find myself lost studying alongside those who hold business acumen as ideal. Virtue has become an object, an exercise in inquiry, something to be read, marketed, and sold. Virtue no longer lives: it is dissected. The fine china of privilege, with gleaming knives and white table cloths, dulls the razor of conversation, softens the iron of proof. What do the rich know of hunger? The free know of liberty? The young know of lust? They know nothing because they have not lived. And so, with whiskey and will I turned to those I trust most: those tested in the waters of the Bering, the doldrums of the South China Sea, the surgery of the Panama Canal; to learn their thoughts on Immaculee, Barbie, and the Ancients. That John and Thor know Athena, Aphrodite, and Monica; that the names Dido, Helen and Calypso are familiar, does not surprise me. Going to sea gives a sailor time to read, to think. As for Immaculee, neither has heard the name. Barbie draws a laugh. As we begin to speak, virtue, like a beacon on

the point, lights the way.

Genocide no longer shocks us; the word tastes like cardboard. Its potency has been lost with overuse. Because of the word's omnipresence in headlines and history books, even numbering the dead fails to convey meaning. Eight hundred deaths a day for one hundred days inspires disbelief rather than sorrow. Body count alone inspires doubt rather than outrage. We are unwilling to admit humankind is capable of such horror. Make no mistake, whether through action or inaction, we are all too capable of such crimes.

Sometimes tragedy is best understood through the eyes of one instead of thousands. Over our first drink, as tobacco haze gathers above us—the bar keep

believing no den of vice should be absent from the scent of tobacco, California Law be damned—I begin to tell Immaculee's story. I speak of seven women in a bathroom for ninety-one days. Words describing terror and starvation, give me control of the table talk: "She went in weighing one hundred and fifteen pounds, came out weighing sixty-five. While hiding she taught herself English using a Bible and a dictionary. She prayed the rosary everyday." My friends, men who have seen the world, continue drinking, listening. "When she came out, a man was standing just on the other side of the threshold, ready to kill her. He clutched a machete. In Rwanda, the machete was the weapon of choice

for genocide. That man, after one look at Immaculee, dropped the machete and fled. Later, Immaculee—whose name is somehow fitting—forgave those who murdered her family." *Silence.* John, our Prometheus, strikes a fire and squints against the smoke of a wooden match. He breathes deep from his cheap cigar, a habit picked up in Ecuador when he failed to find Pall Malls.

"I would've killed every one of the bastards. Every one of them," he said.

John missed my point. I go back to the story, trying to explain the power shown by not taking revenge. Both John and Thor's

eyes question me. Am I still the man they remember? Has college quenched the fire in my belly, the rage in my pen?

Unconditional love takes time to explain, especially to men who have seen the worst the world has to offer.

Whether curiosity or respect motivates them, they say nothing. A moment passes; a second round is poured. I delve deeper, and I try harder.

"You're looking at it all wrong. Immaculee's story has nothing to do with revenge or with hate. Sure, we ought to forgive our enemies because nothing will offend them more, but that's not the point. Listen." I begin again, trying something different.

Words fail to define virtue, they are too clumsy. Rather than linger in the language of ambiguity, giving examples allows me to communicate meaning. Moving away from Immaculee, I steer my friends to names they know well. I speak of Athena's courage. Thor

and John know courage well. I was there when both swallowed their own fears to save the life of another lost in the ice pack, just south of the Arctic Circle. They understand removing doubt does not make someone brave. Courage is choosing to act in spite of fear. I tell them Immaculee was courageous. Imagine the fear, the filth, the stench, the hunger she survived. Can you hear the cries of the slaughtered thousands outside her sanctuary? Those were the voices of her mother, her sister, her father. What courage did Immaculee find within herself to remain in that room, praying, teaching herself English while her family and her people were massacred. To cling to life, to fight for every breath means something. In reminding my friends of Athena, they come to see Immaculee's courage.

When Thor speaks, others listen. He is a big man. His mother named him well. When I quit talking, he rocks back in his chair and says, "Courage is fine, but it ain't everything. Was it just courage that got her out of that hell? There's gotta be more to it than that." So I speak of love.

Aphrodite claims the throne of love; a love of passion without reason. Her love is the love of heart-breaks and moonlight. But Thor knows her failings well. He has a tattoo on his forearm because of those failings. A tattoo and a memory. When the moon shines right and when the wind blows a certain direction, Thor talks about his tattoo. But this is my story, he listens to me now. I explain to him Immaculee's love is not Aphrodite's love. Immaculee's comes from a deeper place. She

loves in a measured way, a forgiving way.

To love when faced with hate happens only when love marries itself to courage. While Aphrodite would allow a war to be fought for a pretty face, and let men die on a beach for passion, Immaculee would forgive. She learned forgiveness when she discovered her character upon leaving that bathroom. "Immaculee loves humankind - not like Aphrodite's love but like Monica's love for Augustine."

"Who? Who's Monica?" John has never been sentimental. From Boston, I secretly believe a Nor'easter stole whatever heart he may have had.

"Monica, the mother of Saint Augustine. You know, she prayed for him to find God but she died before Augustine found Him." John sips his whiskey. He is close to his mother, calls her every Sunday, though he'll never admit it.

"You've got my attention."

Unconditional love takes time to explain, especially to men who have seen the worst the world has to offer. Time spent in the Palawan, on the docks of Acajutla, and in the port towns of Central America changes the meaning of unconditional. Nothing comes without conditions - everything comes with a contract. Faced with the challenge of John's cynicism, I attempt an explanation.

"See, Immaculee had a choice to make in that bathroom. Hiding, trembling in the dark, living in a way I can only picture as minute to minute, never knowing if the next knock on the door would be the cause of her undoing,

Immaculee chose to live without conditions. What virtues carried her through such horror, I'll never know. But what I do know is Immaculee chose to look beyond the wrongs done to her, her family, and her people. Instead of meeting hate with hate, she came out of that room and said, 'I do not care who you are, what you have done. You may have killed my family, slaughtered the innocent, nearly killed me but those things do not matter. I choose to love regardless of those things.' The only woman I can think of who has done that sort of thing is Saint Augustine's mother, Monica. Even as her son went further and further into sin, she loved him with something more than a mother's love. She loved with an unconditional love."

Our corner of the world has gone quiet, for not many people make their way over to this part of town. Oakland feels like a working man's town; a proving ground. She has a grit to her most people don't find palatable. Oakland has character. She has an edge, a cut to her conversation. If nothing else, Oakland is authentic. I can see Odysseus, Hector, and Achilles in this town; I see Immaculee walking Telegraph Avenue, dodging traffic in the crosswalks. Thor and John see Immaculee as well. They have a specific look now, the look that comes after a fruitful conversation. Thor orders another round. While waiting, he feeds the jukebox—a real jukebox with real music. Nina Simone, all blue velvet and soul, starts to play. Miles Davis is soon to follow.

When Thor returns hands full, his next question strikes a chord.

"So what's she doing now?"

Immaculee has become a motivational speaker. She travels the world telling her story to those who will listen. I tell them her website has retreats for sale. John and Thor are not too keen on the idea of selling tragedy for profit. Workingmen who have never trusted business find marketing personal struggle for personal gain pretentious. Immaculee's choice to sell her story does not sit well with me either. I wonder if she has become like Dido: a woman whose temperance and good governance was ruined because of a bad choice. Has Immaculee, in the role of Dido, replaced Aeneas with Wayne Dyer? My heart does not want to believe this has come to pass. I still have hope, unlike John.

I share my thoughts with the table. As all good friends do, they listen long and drink deep. Neither of them offer an answer. Some conversations don't need answers, just room to breathe. However, John is a poet. Hard to believe such a thing when looking at him: boxer's nose, boatswain's gnarled hands, and a face only a mother could love. Finishing his whiskey he offers us Dante:

We are like those with squinting sight.

When things are far away we see them clear

The lord supreme still grants us that much light.

Our minds are dark when things are close, or here.

As for the present, we know nothing but

What we are told about your human sphere (The Inferno 10.100-5).

Thor senses the mood has become heavy. Always the joker, he reminds me of the other woman I wanted to talk about: "Wait a minute. I thought you said something about Barbie."

"I did."

"Let's talk about her. She's the sort of woman I could get behind."

"What? Plastic?"

"No. Long legged, blonde-haired, and blue eyed. Just the way I like them."

Thor's wife is a brunette. She stands about five feet even and her family comes from Sardinia. I remind Thor of this, and he changes his tune. He asks why Barbie? Why talk about her?

Barbie is an enigma. On

one hand she represents every failing of the beauty myth forced on young girls across the world. Her body is anatomically impossible. Her platinum hair, blue eyes, and WASP friends send a racist message. When thinking of Barbie, two women from the past jump up and demand to be counted with her. The first is Helen of Troy. Helen with her whorish ways, symbolizes everything wrong with the world of Barbie. Whether it is because she celebrates her objectification by men, or that we never experience an older Helen or an older Barbie, both women mirror each other for all the wrong reasons.

In the past few years, Barbie has attempted to change her image. She has become more

inclusive, more ethnically diverse. With these attempts at change, Barbie reflects the past vision of Helen. Just as Helen goes back to her husband after the Trojan War, shamelessly admitting her whorish ways, so too has Barbie attempted to reconcile her faults. Whether or not Barbie succeeds depends on history. Helen's legend has nothing to do with her return and everything to do with her infidelity. The traits of lust and desire are all we remember of the face that launched a thousand ships. In years to come perhaps we

will look back on Barbie only to ask, "What were we thinking?"

The second woman who Barbie calls up from memory is Calypso.

Calypso lost the interest of Odysseus because of her perfection and Barbie has lost the interest of the consumer for the same reason.

As the world becomes more interconnected, Barbie has been left behind. Like Calypso and her island of seduction, the island of Barbie, featuring thousands of dresses, no longer holds the interest of those she once lured to her shores. Calypso lost the interest of Odysseus because of her perfection and Barbie has lost the interest of the consumer for the same reason. Olympus warned Calypso of her faults, and the dollar, Barbie's god, demands she changes her ways. If she fails to heed the warning, Barbie will soon be lost to irrelevance as more worthy heroines captivate the minds of young girls.

Barbie and her ancient counterparts share another common trait: good looks.

Helen was the trophy wife of Menelaus and the trophy mistress of Paris. Odysseus could not love Calypso because she was perfect. Barbie is the perfect trophy. She symbolizes the unattainable for young girls, however the paradigm has shifted. Barbie's "beauty" is no longer what strong women want. Instead, women crave independence, freedom of thought, non-conformity. Barbie stands for none of these virtues. Her measure has been taken and found wanting.

The failings of Barbie are simple: she never revealed a virtuous character. However, Immaculee started from the worst of all possible worlds only to discover herself, unlock her virtue and claim a rightful place in the conversation. Immaculee's future remains to be seen. Barbie, because she began in a place of excess, because she began as a privation, may never earn a proper place at the table. She has become the bad example rather than the good.

Over the last few hours, the twists and turns of our conversation have made the three of us hungry. While the last of Thor's songs play out on the tired jukebox, we make plans to grab a burger. Outside, a fog has settled over the city. What little traffic there is whispers by on damp asphalt. In the distance we see the halo cast by Giant Burger's ridiculous sign. They are the only place open at this time of night. Finding a twenty-four hour burger joint presents a special sort of treasure. Like discovering a good friend, no matter the circumstances, never let it slip away.

We order our food and eat on the stone

steps of the First Baptist Church across the street. Our ritual started seven years ago when we all reported to the ship at the same time. Our wives will be worried. But sailors' wives, sitting at their looms, weaving our dreams, have learned the art of infinite patience.

"So, I don't know how to tell you bastards this, but, Dianne's pregnant."

I know John and Dianne have wanted a baby for some time now. Lately, with college and my writing, keeping up with all the news has been tough. Thor hasn't been in town for months. Just back from hopping a freighter to Hong Kong to make some quick cash for Christmas, he is even more behind in the headlines. A surprised, "You're kidding" is all I can manage in the 2am gray.

"Nah. We wanted to keep it quiet until we knew for sure."

Thor, in his clumsiness asks, "Well, what is it?"

"A kid, I hope."

"Yeah, I know that. I mean a boy or a girl?"

For a moment John's eyes catch the halo through the fog. He can't keep a secret to save his life, and that's why I trust him. "Twins. A boy and a girl."

"Well congratulations, boyo. Who'd've thought you could do something right."

"Thanks, Will. You know something—I couldn't find a better friend in prison."

"You ready to be a father?" For a big guy, Thor has a nervous streak.

"Well, I'll tell you what, after tonight at

least I know what to teach the girl. The boy's thinking Athena might be a good idea. gonna be a different story. With role models What do you think?" like us, I have no idea what'll happen."

I tell him there's no need to worry; I still And so it goes on into the night. The have two more semesters of Seminar and, odyssey of our conversation—ebbing and despite our best efforts, the world does flowing as it always has; as it always will. not seem to be running out of whiskey. "Thinking about names yet?"

"Dianne hasn't said anything, but I'm

Works Cited

Alighieri, Dante. *The Inferno*. Trans. Michael Palma. Ed. Giuseppe Mazzotta. New York: Norton, 2008. Print.

Augustine. *The Confessions*. Trans. Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Penguin Group, 1996. Print.

Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. London: University of California Press, 2007. Print.

Writing is about the work. One of my heroes, Samuel Beckett said, "Try again. Fail again. Fail better." Those are words I try to remember every time I sit down to write. Mr. Beckett's words are tacked to the wall next to my desk, on a yellowing notecard, where I am sure to see them. Whether writing an essay, a short story, a play or a letter to my grandmother (who refuses to use email), I know from the outset what I want to say, and what I end up writing are worlds apart. "Virtue and Vice: A Seminar of Sorts" was no different; the essay was, and is, about the work.

The uniqueness of this essay—if it can be called an essay—stems from it being my first departure from strict formal writing in class to something more creative. I owe all my daring at attempting such a thing to my Professor. His assignment was simple, his final words a gauntlet thrown, "Write something someone might want to publish.

doing something
wall...go for it." So
scared. And, in
my essay one of
muddled pieces of

**Hemingway said, "There is
nothing to writing. All you do
is sit down at a typewriter and
bleed." I like knowing others
had it just as hard as I did.**

If you feel like
completely off the
I did. And I was
truth, I considered
the weakest, most
writing I have ever

produced. My biggest challenge came in letting go, in opening myself up to the possibility that my prose might have something more to say than a direct thesis driven essay. On the final day of class, before turning in our papers, we were asked if someone had done something "outside the norm" of Seminar writing. I did not raise my hand. Every student knows not to reveal something too soon. I thought it a far better option to let my professor learn for himself, when I was miles away from Saint Mary's, what I had done. In short, I thought I had failed. Turns out some thought I failed better.

A Monday night email told me of my selection as a Newman Award finalist. Two things are important to know: I had no idea I had been nominated and I had no idea there was more work to be done. Three editing sessions in the two weeks of school is daunting. Having never been to the Center for Writing, I came with some trepidation. My first editing session, when Mollie told me I had to read my

work aloud, was the hardest part of the process. It was at that moment I decided if I was going to do this I might as well go all the way. Choosing to be harder on myself than anyone in the room would dare to be, I attacked my own work. Mollie laughed as I slashed, crossed out, and wrote "do better" in the margins of my own paper. Where she was supposed to be my editor, she switched roles and became my supporter. That is not to say Mollie did not push me. Both Mollie and Reyna taught me the all too painful lesson that the author is never present. They helped me tighten the language, clarify the message of the text. They worked with me to unify the piece. Where I owe the initial success of the essay to my professor, I owe what the final product to Mollie and Reyna.

I started this "Author's Note" by stating writing is about the work. I have never subscribed to the "waiting for inspiration" school of writing. If I was to wait for inspiration the semester would end before I submitted anything. Writers write. Students write. We write then we edit, then we revise and then we do it all over again. The Newman taught me the work is never done. Even now, knowing my essay will be published, satisfaction has not arrived. There are sections of the text that still need improvement. Hemingway said, "There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed." I like knowing others had it just as hard as I did.

- William Conable

Women in *The Aeneid*

Kaitlin Roth

Roman texts are filled with archetypal women: the bitter spinster, naïve maiden, wicked temptress, and grief-stricken widow all emerge again and again. The journey of Aeneas, for example, is seemingly driven by the rivalry of Juno and Venus, two Roman goddesses pitted against each other because one received a golden apple both lusted after. On a superficial level, Virgil's epic, *The Aeneid*, appears to present women as weak; however, a close examination of the female characters reveals the Roman poet's portrayal of women as strong, powerful leaders. They exhibit traditionally masculine qualities which our society favors over feminine ones as evidenced by our quintessential hero, Aeneas, who exhibits strength, influence, and leadership. With these women, Virgil shows that attributes typically considered masculine are actually qualities of all humankind. He presents many facets of women rather than a distorted conception of women as emotionally weak and unable to lead. Juno and Venus contribute to the foundation of the Roman Empire while Dido and Creusa, two other women from the text, exhibit great personal strength in order to benefit their societies. Together they completely represent the aspects of women.

Although the basic plot of the poem concerns a feud fueled by the vanities of

competing goddesses, Virgil also interweaves political motives which make the characters Juno and Venus much more complex. Their competition is not simply a contest in beauty or spite; more importantly, what's at stake is the establishment of the Roman Empire. Virgil states Juno hoped for her favorite city Carthage "to become the capital of nations if the Fates would just consent" (I.28-29), and it is important to note that Carthage was the well-established rival of Rome for centuries. Venus, on the other hand, favored Rome, for Jupiter decreed that her son Aeneas would "wage tremendous war in Italy/and crush ferocious nations and establish/a way of life and walls for his own people" (I.367-369). The phrases "capital of nations" and "tremendous war" imply that the outcome of this rivalry will be the success of one society and the ruin of the other. These words imply that the battle between Juno and Venus is urgent and perilous, not frivolous. These goddesses are, in fact, attempting to further the triumph of their favored cities, rather than win a petty dispute over beauty. Their actions are the product of well-deliberated plans. Virgil conveys the significance of the dispute between the goddesses to add depth to both goddesses, for both consider the political consequences of their actions.

Virgil further characterizes the goddesses

as powerful females through their ability to dominate others -- a traditionally masculine quality. Venus' cunning is evidenced by her use of her son Aeneas throughout Books 1-6, while he remains unaware. She disguises herself as a maiden who happens upon him and inquires about him, asking "But who then are you?/

From what coasts have you come? Where are you going?" (l.522-523). Slyly, she invites him to reveal his struggles so that

Although Dido's plummet into grief-induced madness implies that Virgil considers women ultimately weak (under an unyielding love spell Dido impales herself on a sword), Virgil deliberately includes bits of her past to reveal that she also demonstrates the qualities of a strong leader.

she may reassure him that he and his crew will be safe. Venus shows her dominance over him in that she coerces Aeneas and earns his trust. At other points in Aeneas' journey Venus takes a more active role and she persuades her other son Cupid to use his powers to interfere with Aeneas' course, "You are my only strength, my only power... I flee to you/for refuge," Venus beseeches (l.928-931). As the goddess of love and beauty, Venus is clearly not limited to Cupid as her sole resource. Rather she suspects that Juno, the patron deity of Carthage, would instigate the citizens to deter Aeneas' journey, so she asks Cupid to "girdle Dido with a flame," that is to strike her with a poisoned arrow, causing her to fall in love with Aeneas and immobilizing her city's defenses against him (l.943). Venus thinks that if the Queen of Carthage is entranced by Aeneas, she will not only prevent the citizens

of Carthage from impeding Aeneas, but also assist him in his journey. In these two instances specifically, Virgil portrays Venus as cunning and influential in controlling Aeneas' path to Rome.

Like Venus, Virgil also portrays Juno as a compelling authority. Whereas Venus persuades her sons Aeneas and Cupid to act in her interests, Juno uses her influence to incite the assistance of other gods.

When she asks Aeolus, god of the winds, to produce a storm that will devastate Aeneas' ships, he replies, "O Queen, your task/is to discover what you wish; and mine, /to act at your command" (l.110-112). His subservient reply suggests that Juno has authority over him. When one considers the often stubborn and cross nature of the Roman gods, his reply is even more indicative of Juno's influence. Through her interactions with other gods, Virgil exhibits Juno's power, despite being a female character.

Although Dido's plummet into grief-induced madness implies that Virgil considers women ultimately weak (under an unyielding love spell Dido impales herself on a sword), Virgil deliberately includes bits of her past to reveal that she also demonstrates the qualities of a strong leader. Readers may reconsider Venus' encounter with Aeneas where she

disguised herself as a young maiden and invented a persona to accompany her façade. Venus tells Aeneas that she is a citizen of Carthage, a city founded by Dido after she escaped the tyranny of her avaricious brother, a “monster in crime” who murdered her beloved husband Sychaeus (I.490). Virgil uses this to explain Dido’s past and build her character as one who has had to prevail over several obstacles. Dido’s conversation with her sister, Anna, also reveals details of her past. Anna, who has long encouraged her sister to remarry, reminds Dido that “until Aeneas came, there was no suitor/ who moved your sad heart” (IV.44-45). After her husband’s death, Dido vowed never to remarry. Dido’s resoluteness



in sticking to her vow to not remarry shows her strength. This detail refutes the assertion that because Dido falls victim to the frivolous antics of Cupid, she is a powerless woman. Further reading of Anna’s entreaty suggests that Dido is, in fact, a remarkably strong ruler. Prior to her strike by Cupid’s arrow, she exhibited strength by carrying on her vow. While imploring her

sister to consider marriage, if not for love then for the prosperity of Carthage, Anna asks if she has forgotten the surrounding threats, the “unbridled/Numidians... and barbarous Syrtis” on one side and the “Barcaean raiders,/ raging both far and near” on the other (IV.53-54, 56-57). This reveals her strength, not

only as a faithful wife but also as an unwavering ruler. She resists proposals that would ensure the safety of the city at the expense of her personal vow because she knows she can defend herself against nearing dangers. When one recalls that Carthage was the trading epicenter of the region at the time, Dido’s strength is only amplified. Virgil’s

utilization of details of Dido’s past refutes claims that her death qualified her as a weak female character.

While Venus, Juno, and Dido exemplify power as major female characters in the epic, Virgil also employs a minor female character to show how women exhibited influence. After a mob of Greeks slay Aeneas’ wife

Creusa, her spirit appears before him to comfort and urge Aeneas to continue on his journey to found Rome. She asks Aeneas, "Is there any use/in giving way to such fanatic sorrow?/For this could never come to pass without/the god's decree" (II.1046-1049). Even though slaughtered, Creusa is composed while Aeneas, weeping and grasping for his wife in vain, is so distraught he wishes he could somehow evade his fate. After Creusa vanishes Aeneas finds that more supporters have come to follow him on his journey. Again a female character influences Aeneas, guiding him in his voyage to Rome. Even with Creusa, who only appears briefly in *The Aeneid*, Virgil presents women as influential.

In fact, these female characters are the driving forces of the poem. Although they have different motives, all women influence Aeneas' path. While Virgil contends that Aeneas' journey will end with his founding of the Roman Empire, the women guide Aeneas so much that he does not actually

further his journey himself, but simply fulfills the prophecy.

Virgil's portrayal is an interesting alternative to the archetypal females in Roman literature. The widow, the spinster, the maiden, and the temptress will probably always exist. This distorts the image of women and tarnishes and degrades what is considered feminine. However, like Virgil, perhaps readers can come to regard women as strong individuals who are not simply competing for a golden apple or some other symbol of vanity, and instead are like Venus, Juno, Dido, and Creusa, women invested in the welfare of their societies. These women concurrently exhibit qualities traditionally reserved for men, such as leadership and political skill, as well as qualities attributed to women, like emotional strength and compassion. Together, these women exemplify the many facets of women, a representation this society needs to advance.

Works Cited

Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Trans. Allen Mandelbaum. Berkeley: University of California, 1971. Print.

A Note From The Author -

I waded through all of my thoughts and feelings about The Aeneid, what I liked about it, what I thought was boring, what I did not understand. I remembered the story of Dido, Queen of Carthage. In comparison to the rest of the epic, Dido's story seems minor—after all her whole life is limited to a few pages of the epic. In class when we discussed Dido I felt that she had been discredited. Some argued that she was weak, claiming her suicide was a surrender. They said that her story was defined by the actions of the male characters—her husband's death, Cupid's deception, Aeneas' carelessness—but I did not see her as weak. In fact I thought that she, a character thought up by a Roman poet in the first century BC, epitomized women in contemporary society. I used my passionate defense of Dido to write my paper...The editing process was helpful in that I realized that writing is not about producing a perfect paper in one draft or using eloquent academic vocabulary. I realized that articulating my thoughts is hard, but that only way to organize them is to write them.

- Kaitlin Roth

The Great Debate: Dante and Augustine on the Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms

Giuseppe Carmassi

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy

Dear Mr. Alighieri,

I am Augustine Aurelius, but you may know me as Saint Augustine. Your reputation as a poet brought me to read your *Divine Comedies*, of which I must admit I am quite impressed with your descriptive voice and flawless metre. However, your superb poetry is impeded by your skewed philosophy. I am of the opinion that just as darkness does not exist (darkness is simply the absence of light), neither does evil (evil is the absence of good). How could the Lord our God, who is the supreme good, choose to create a place as blatantly evil as the Inferno to be a realm for Satan and his demons? You must be writing metaphorically, as you cannot possibly believe that these things exist. Please explain your metaphor to me, as it has proven difficult for me to understand.

Sincerely,

Saint Augustine

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (2)

Dear Saint Augustine,

I am deeply honored to hear a man of such high status acclaim my writing. But, I assure you that the content of *Inferno* is not to be taken lightly. While *Inferno* is an epic poem, the imagery that I described accurately depicts horrors that are more tangible than you can imagine. For God created the Inferno with a gate that reads: "Justice urged on my high Artificer; my maker was divine authority, the highest wisdom, and the primal love" (Dante 20). The Inferno is where sinners pay for their disobedience to God, who punishes them according to the magnitude of their sins. For, surely if you believe in heaven, you must believe in Hell. Would you simply have all departed souls share God's kingdom, a place meant only for those who are not tainted by such evil? Surely, a renowned Christian Saint, such as yourself, could not possibly be so naïve.

Yours truly,

Dante Alighieri

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (3)

Dear Mr. Alighieri,

I would advise against discrediting my philosophy which, as a side effect of my Sainthood, is flawless and unequivocal. You are foolish for thinking that your poem can compare to the painstakingly crafted memoir of my life. Perhaps someone who contradicts me should not hold such an esteemed political office as yourself. Rome needs men who are not so mired in their own fantasies as to throw away sound logic for their own selfish needs.

Saint Augustine

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (4)

Dear Saint Augustine,

I would sooner resign from office, recall my poems, and leave Rome for the rest of my days before renouncing the truths that I meticulously describe in *Inferno*. Had you not been admitted to heaven, you would have resided in the second circle of hell for your all your lustful affairs (Augustine 53). If reading your memoir has informed me of nothing else, it has indicated to me that you were once a sinner. A stay in the *Inferno* must be what it would take to convince you of its existence, as clearly you are unable to grasp that the realm called Lucifer is undoubtedly real.

Dante Alighieri

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (5)

If you are truly willing to sacrifice so much to stand by what you believe, then what kind of man am I for not doing the same? If your poetry conquers my deep contemplation in good-natured deliberation and you convince me that the *Inferno* truly exists, I will reside in the second circle of The Lustful for one full year. Conversely, if my memoir remains supreme, you must keep true to your word by resigning from office, recalling your poems, and forever being exiled from your beloved Rome.

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (6)

Although I will feel great pity for you whilst you are buffeted by the violent storms of the Second Circle for an entire year, I will meet your challenge. Alas, if only Virgil were here to guide you just as he did the Dante of my poem. You too would see the fires with your own eyes that have been obscured from your vision by your own self-righteousness.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (7)

Very well. Let me begin by sharing with you a revelation that I had as a young man. Evil is a word that represents an entirely human concept. The word exists because the true explanation of what appears to be "evil" is too complex for the simple mind to comprehend. The truth is that "in the parts of the universe, there are certain elements which are thought evil because of a conflict of interest" (Augustine 125). Therefore, nothing is inherently evil. So, what you call evil is actually the lesser of two goods as perceived by a specific individual. If evil does not exist, then neither does hell or the devils that you describe.

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (8)

Citing only your memoir does not advance your argument; rather, it merely confirms your bias. I will not deny that your argument is rightfully convincing to most, but your evidence is faulty because you fail to draw from sources other than yourself. If you had read Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, you would know that there are things that are inherently evil. In fact, there are three: incontinence, violence, and fraud (Needs citation?!??). Hell is arranged in such a manner that perpetrators of these evils are given appropriate punishment (Dante 344). No matter what philosophical perversions you apply, there is no denying that these things are evil. Evil, therefore, exists.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (9)

I pity you, Dante, for you are restricting your mind and, consequentially, restricting your perception of God. You should know that once “I thought it better to believe that [God] had created no evil—which in my ignorance I thought not merely some sort of substance but even corporeal, since I did not know how to think of mind except as a subtle physical entity diffused through space—rather than to believe that the nature of evil, as I understood it, came from [Him]” (Augustine 85). Even if incontinence, violence, and fraud are inherently evil, how could they have come from God, the creator of only good?

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (10)

While it is true that God is the creator of everything good, this does not mean that he created only good things. You stipulate that, because people have free will, they can choose the lesser of two goods. If you concede that incontinence, violence, and fraud are evil, then a person can choose to indulge in them and, therefore, become evil by his own free will. If a person, who comes from God, chooses to be evil, then that evil inadvertently came from God. Similarly, this explains the existence of the devils of hell and of Lucifer himself. You wrote it yourself in your *Confessions*: “Moreover, let these from the heavens praise you: let all your angels praise you in the height, our God all your powers, sun and moon, all stars and light, the heaven of heavens and the waters that are above the heavens: let them praise your name (Ps. 148: 1-5)” (Augustine 125). You acknowledge the existence of angels. Like humans, God endowed his angels with free will. Those who chose evil became the devils of hell that serve Lucifer. You are unable to grasp the concept of Lucifer, just as you claim that I am unable to grasp the concept of God. The evidence of Lucifer’s origins lies in his appearance: “I marveled when I saw that, on his head, he had three faces” (Dante 312). It took me a great deal of contemplation to realize what those heads represented: they are an evil perversion of the Holy Trinity. People have been corrupted by an existing evil. The same happened to the angel Lucifer, who was once so close to God.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (11)

Again, you are restricting your mind by conceptualizing omnipotent beings as having physical forms. Once, “I believed that evil is a kind of material substance with its own foul and misshapen mass, whether solid which they used to call earth, or thin and subtle, as is the body of air”

(Augustine 85). The angels of whom I spoke are like God in that they cannot be described qualitatively. By your logic, if Lucifer has a body that can be seen and touched as you indicate in *Inferno*, then God must also have a body that can be seen and touched. As this is not the case, what you call "Lucifer," or "evil," is just the manifestation of a conflict of interest between people of varying opinions.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (12)

Before you reply, do you think it possible that neither of us is entirely correct? Or, could we both be correct in a way?

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (13)

If you are willing to concede such a possibility, then I suppose I will attempt to explain my point in a way that might satisfy both of us.

When I described Lucifer in *Inferno*, I wrote, "If he was once as handsome as he now is ugly and, despite that, raised his brows against his Maker, one can understand how every sorrow has its source in him!" (Dante 312). What if I was to say evil exists, but it does not oppose God as I once contended? Although it is strange to say, what if evil is a tool in which God uses for good in the form of punishment?

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (14)

That would mean that Lucifer and devils exist, just as God and angels do, but they are subservient to God and function specifically to serve his justice. In other words, God could destroy evil were it not for the purpose that it serves: to exact justice on sinners.

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (15)

All this taken into consideration: evil exists contrary to the way you indicated in your memoir,

and hell exists contrary to the way I described it in my epic poem. My friend, we may have reached the peak of the steep mountain that separates our thoughts.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (16)

Neither of us is entirely correct, I will admit. I cannot in good conscience continue to debate with you in a manner that might result in the misfortunes with which we initially wagered. You are as intelligent a man as you are a poet, Dante.

From: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

To: StAugustine@Confessions.com

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (17)

Likewise, your title of Saint is well earned, Augustine. We both have a part to play in furthering people's understanding of Christianity. We can only be successful if there is room for flexibility of opinions and openness of intellect. Your personal development as a man of great holiness, and my creative description of divine justice, may indeed compliment each other after all. For it is high heresy for either of us to think that we can explain the almighty Lord completely. And I'm sure neither of us wants to end up in the sixth circle, where the heretics reside.

From: StAugustine@Confessions.com

To: dAlighieri@Inferno.net

Subject: Re: The Existence of Evil and Omnipotent Physical Forms Discrepancy (18)

Dear Mr. Alighieri,

Thank you for responding to my email. I hope that it was as constructive an experience for you as it was for me.

Sincerely,

Saint Augustine

Ps: My mother was reading my email and sent you reply 12. I was nearly furious before I realized that every good debate requires a mediator. Thank you, Mother. Oh, and your most recent reply made me LOL. Now, I know why they are called the *Divine Comedies*.

Works Cited

Aristotle, and Martin Ostwald. *Nicomachean Ethics: By Aristotle. Tr., with An Introduction by Martin Ostwald.* Indianapolis, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962. Print.

Augustine, and Henry Chadwick. *Confessions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print.

Dante, Alighieri, Barry Moser, and Allen Mandelbaum. *Inferno.* Berkeley: University of California, 1980. Print.

A Note From The Author -

The challenging part of writing this paper was not formulating the arguments or compiling the evidence for the arguments; it was presenting them in a creative and engaging way.

My original idea for making the paper seem more modern was to write it as text messages between Augustine and Dante, but I had a hard time capturing the voices of the two authors in such a contemporary medium. This is why I chose email as the genre...Most of the editing process was spent searching for grammatical errors and making sure that all of the evidence was cited properly. This was the most extensive editing I had ever done to anything I had ever written. The most surprising part of the editing process was discovering just how many errors there still were in my paper after two peer edits and a final grade by my professor. I would never have detected these errors without the help of my editor.

I read my own work as if someone else had written it, and therefore was able to make alterations that make for a much more professional sounding paper...For me, the most rewarding part about the whole experience is knowing that something that I put a lot of time into was an enjoyable enough read to be considered for this award.

- Giuseppe Carmassi

Mary Wollstonecraft and Mrs. Bennet

Caitlin Wire

To Mrs. Bennet & the Undersigned Messrs.:

I have reviewed the documents you and your colleagues authored regarding the freedoms and appropriate natures of young ladies, entitled *A Vindication of the Necessity of Affluent Marriage, Ballroom Dancing, and Other Delicate Facets of Feminine Etiquette*. I am both astounded and relieved that you endeavored to post them to me for approval before their supposed publication.

My first and most resounding comment is this: If my writings in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Vol. 1 have naturally inspired what you deign the most appropriate guidelines for your young daughters, then I must retract all of its publications at once. My work serves a purpose entirely contradictory to yours; in short, I seek to demonstrate “that the minds of women are enfeebled by false refinement, that they are coddled and oppressed, pushed far below the capacity of their ambition” (Wollstonecraft 98). Your “vindication” not only affirms this fact; it embraces it to a sickening degree. In my letter to you, I wish to address the grossest misinterpretations of my writings I have discovered in your text thus far.

Your daughter, Miss Elizabeth Bennet, has written to me on numerous occasions regarding many of the issues I will discuss. I will reference situations pertinent to her numerous

troublesome familial and societal situations regularly as I analyze your statements, since I believe that Elizabeth’s insight into several of the topics I wish to discuss very closely mirrors my own.

The context of the disagreement between Elizabeth Bennet and Mr. Collins was particularly upsetting. Mrs. Bennet, you praise this Mr. Collins in your “vindication.” He is a man legally eligible to inherit your husband’s entire estate, yet you condone his sensibility, his aptitude for reason and logic, his understanding of taste and tradition. Elizabeth, however, tells me that your opinion of him is only favorable so long as you sense he wants to propose to one of your daughters. You relate that, while he is with your family at Longbourn, you began to realize that you “might soon have two daughters married,” and with that, “the man whom [you] could not bear to speak of the day before, was now high in [your] good graces” (Austen 70). It seems, Mrs. Bennet, that you are perpetuating female societal enslavement: the woman’s duty to marry. In the world we live in, it must be apparent to you that our status as members of the human race is determined by the status of the man we happen to be promised to; “meanwhile strength of body and mind are sacrificed to libertine notions of beauty,” a faceless and vain attribute that contributes

nothing in the way of female intelligence (Wollstonecraft 101). And all of these efforts are carried out in the name of marriage to a well-esteemed gentleman—whose deeper qualities may reveal he is anything but gentle.

As I read through your account, I was further horrified to discover that you continued to petition for the marriage, even after your daughter Elizabeth flatly refused Mr. Collins' offer! "Lizzy shall be brought to reason," you state, "She is a very headstrong foolish girl, and does not know her own interest; but I will make her know it" (Austen 108). A pox on all mothers who believe themselves matchmakers for their daughters! Elizabeth is indeed a headstrong girl, but is that something to be contested? Why, I ask, "must the female mind be tainted by coquetish arts to gratify the sensualist, and prevent love from subsiding into friendship, or compassionate tenderness, when there are not qualities on which friendship can be built?" (Wollstonecraft 113). You state in your "vindication" that you are, in the end, glad of Elizabeth's refusal to marry Mr. Collins, since she has ended up in a much more profitable house, but again, I condemn the reasons that drive your happiness. Rejoice in the fact that your daughter has found a man she truly loves, rather than the fact that she has entered into a marriage arrangement that has bolstered your societal status.

I feel that I must also address the opinions of the "vindication's" undersigned misters on the definition of "accomplished" women. You commend a conversation recorded at

Mr. Bingley's Netherfield estate, in which several parties argue the definition of such a woman. Miss Bingley attests that a woman must possess the following qualities in order to achieve the esteemed status of accomplishment:

...a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing, and the modern languages, to desire the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved (Austen 39).

I was pleased to discover Elizabeth's cunning response to this atrocious evaluation, marked on the page where this speech was recorded in your "vindication;" she states that she is "no longer surprised at [Miss Bingley's] knowing *only* six accomplished women. [She] rather wonder[s] now at [her] knowing *any*" (39). Miss Bennet represents the enlightened woman I wish would manifest herself among *all* women of this age. She recognizes that the fanciful graces that men so desire in their women do not testify in the least to the integrity of the woman in question. I sympathize with Elizabeth's sentiments in this situation. We will become perpetual "subordinate beings" if we continue to allow men to assess us on such a trivial level (Wollstonecraft 98). Therefore, I condemn the appraisals of Miss Bingley and her company, and side with Elizabeth Bennet.

Thirdly, I wish to demonstrate the madness of the marriage of young Charlotte Collins to Mr. Collins, a union that both parties deem

advantageous and most profitable. In your “vindication,” Mrs. Charlotte Collins records several pages of notes about the practice of marriage, relating that she asks “only a comfortable home; and considering Mr. Collins’s character, connections, and situation in life, [is] convinced that [her] chance of happiness with him is as fair, as most people can boast on entering the marriage state” (Austen 123). It seems that Mrs. Collins has thoroughly calculated her chances at attaining the most trivial societal advantages through her marriage to the undeserving Mr. Collins. Elizabeth, continuing to serve as my intellectual ambassador, affirms that this is an ill-made match. She states that she could not imagine her friend “sacrific[ing] every better feeling to worldly advantage” (123). I address the rationality of passion and romance in my *Vindication*, and I am certain that Mrs. Collins has violated the principles of those two facets of human life. “Love,” I

It is important that we, as the disadvantaged sex, exercise our intellectual potential, and use that potential to demonstrate that we cannot be boxed into the realms of monotonous ballroom dances...

say, “is the common chance and sensation and reason, [and] is, the mass of mankind” This emotional only elements that sexes; therefore, it is discover that a young

girl with feelings and desires of her own should settle for a man in such a precise and calculated way. Had Mrs. Collins fully assessed Mr. Collins and *then* made her decision concerning his proposal, there is no doubt in my mind that she would have rejected him.

I also wonder how the temperament of Mrs. Collins will change as the years with her Mr. Collins progress, for women, “Whilst they are absolutely depended on their husbands...will be cunning, mean, and selfish,” mirroring the most pronounced traits of their male counterparts (123). I shudder to think of the implications of such a marriage for other young women under the discerning eye of the judgment and principles of the young Mrs. Collins.

I would lastly like to address a rather dangerous fantasy harbored by your youngest daughter Lydia. You have exiled this account to the final pages of your “vindication,” including it only to relate how much you wish that Lydia had directed her enthusiastic flirting *in the direction of men who had more gold to their names*. She invents a rather romanticized and sexualized version of her impending trip to Brighton by imagining the following scene:

She saw all the glories of the camp; its tents stretched forth in beauteous uniformity of lines, crowded with the young and the gay, and dazzling with scarlet; and to complete the view, she saw herself seated beneath a tent, tenderly flirting with at least six officers at once (Austen 224).

This fantasy of Lydia’s is reflective of a society in which women—and young girls,

especially—believe that it is their duty to become sweet to the male eye, to call up innate desire within the opposite sex by exploiting their own bodies and sacrificing their intellectual properties. Mrs. Bennet, I urge you to see the truth in this, as well as what it means in the way of subordination of the female. For “the institution which women have hitherto received has only tended, with the constitution of civil society, to render them insignificant objects of desire,” and we must—we absolutely must—guard against this, at all costs (Wollstonecraft 100). It poisons the minds and the constitutions of all women in civil society, simply because they allow men to objectify us and decide which characteristics are most amiable in a future partner. In this way, both parties are fooled, and “I need only observe, that when a woman is admired for her beauty...she sins against herself by neglecting to cultivate an affection that would equally tend to make her useful and happy” (124). A life of incessant exploitation and meaningless flirting is undoubtedly trifling. Mrs. Bennet, I urge you to commission your youngest charge to take up such activities that stimulate the mind intellectually; let her pursue the activities so coveted by her sister, Mary Bennet—who so loves to immerse herself in the contents of her father’s library— but with the freedom from tradition that has been achieved by Elizabeth. It is not enough for a woman to indulge in the literary world if the only texts she studies are steeped in the waters of female oppression. Lydia’s cultivation of such information and culture will help her realize her potential as a person, rather than an object, and will allow her to elevate the moral and rational standing of women in your society. That would certainly comfort my worried heart.

In this letter, I have only addressed the most pressing of issues I discovered in your disheartening “vindication,” Mrs. Bennet. Your work has counteracted the various aims of my own, and I find it ultimately perplexing that I inspired it in the first place. You may believe that we exist on different planes of the world, Mrs. Bennet—you on the end of fashionable dress and bouillon spoons and I on the end of radical feminism—but this is hopelessly false. We all dictate the fate of our gender in generations to come. I hope that you consider my lectures and refutations in my response to you, as well as its implications for the standing of women in modern society. It is important that we, as the disadvantaged sex, exercise our intellectual potential, and use that potential to demonstrate that we cannot be boxed into the realms of monotonous ballroom dances and “the idle chat of weak nurses” (122). We must take advantage, rather, of every opportunity to establish ourselves as an equally capable sex; equally capable as intellectuals, as vessels of power, and as the voices of new generations.

Respectfully Yours,



Mary Wollstonecraft

Works Cited

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. 1813. London: Penguin Books, 1996. Print.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, Vol. 1*. 3rd Ed. Acton, Massachusetts: XanEdu Publishing, 2011. Print.

Call for Submissions for 2014

Writing:

We accept essays from all four Collegiate Seminars, as well as Seminar 110 and 144, for the Newman Awards and publication in *The Undergraduate* 2014. In addition to recognizing the traditional argumentative essay, we will honor pieces in the form of a dialogue, letter, chapter re-written from the perspective of another character, or other alternative genres that require rigorous writing skills and sophisticated understanding of Seminar readings and that spring from the spirit of the great shared conversations students enter.

The essays must be nominated by a faculty member. Please submit your students' best Seminar writing as email attachments to waccenter@stmarys-ca.edu

Art:

We accept submissions of artwork for the cover and interior of *The Undergraduate* 2014. Please submit digital files of any medium of artwork, with your contact information and small bio, to waccenter@stmarys-ca.edu or in person to the Center for Writing Across the Curriculum, Dante 202. We welcome both portfolios and individual pieces.

Artwork may be submitted by any student or faculty or staff member.

*The deadline for both writing and art submissions is Dec. 31, 2013.
The work may have been produced any time during the 2013 calendar year.*