

Spring 2017



HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY



Morpheus





Staff

Rachel Peters, Co-editor

Haley Sterling, Co-editor

Anna Freidin, Social Media Director

Rachel James, Layout Editor

Tanner Gitcheff

Kasandra Christner

David Kimmel, Faculty Advisor

Special Thanks To Erika Kaimer For Our Cover

Contact Us:

Email: morpheusliterarymagazine@gmail.com

Facebook: Morpheus

Twitter: @HUMorpheus

When I leave By Haley Sterling

“Apartment” By Young The Giant

“After leaving my apartment
I feel this cold inside me
It howls away all through the market
It calls your name”

I’ve always kind of hated
The walk to your apartment.
It’s always cold
I’m always alone

“On my way to your apartment
I write for fear of silence
You carved a boat to sail my shadow
Now I walk alone”

On my way to your apartment
I like to write notes
Knowing you’ll never see them
It makes me feel better
Don’t worry, it’s never about you

“I hit the sidewalk and this is how it starts
Hide in a raincoat when things are falling apart”

I keep my feelings to myself,
Always hiding them from the world,
Hiding them from view

“After leaving your apartment
I hear the coast by nightfall
So sure to keep you dreaming
You understood
Oh, I know you understood
Yes sir, it shows I was no good”

I know you’ll find out
You’re bound to eventually
You know me all too well
You understood me

You always do
You're too good for me

"I hit the sidewalk and this is how it starts
Hide in a raincoat when things are falling apart"

Hiding away is all I can do for now
It's all I have left
Please trust me when I say;
I'll tell you eventually

"Cause sooner or later this is bound to stop
Come on, let's savor what we're falling for"

Sooner or later
This will all stop
You'll be my savior
For now
I cherish your peace

"After leaving your apartment
I hear the coast..."

Hopefully soon my walks won't be so silent
For now
I hear the coast
As I fall for you

ODA A LA FINCA DE AGAVE ODE TO THE AGAVE FARM

By Katie Carey

Una finca en Oaxaca, México
Y el granjero moreno
El hijo de un granjero, el nieto y bisnieto de gran-
jeros también
Señala a un agave agachado en la tierra
Y me dice con sol en sus ojos:
Esto va a ser nuestro regalo de jubilación
La paciencia y afecto por la planta en su voz me
llama a orar
Así
Le ruego a la planta-
¿Puedes hacer esto el domicilio de mi vida?
¿Puedes hacer mi corazón Náhuatl y Mexicano?
Si te doy gotas de mi sangre, ¿es suficiente?
El Agave solo se ríe.
Agave, debajo de su exterior espinoso
En la matriz dulce y sustancioso
Creas mucho:
Pulque, suave y espeso y voluble.
Tequila, un sabor a estudiantes americanos y
burros y tela tosca adentro.
Pero Mezcal, su primo, el que tiene más sabiduría
Mezcal, la medicina indígena
Escucho como una meditación
En el sonido de las burbujas
En una jícara tranquila
Mezcal, una medicina del mundo moderno tam-
bién porque,
aunque no tengo sangre mexicana,
Cuando pasamos y compartimos la jicarita
Ellos no se preocupan por mis ojos azules ni pelo
rubio
Con el fuego del agave en los vientres,
Solo estamos aquí
Y es todo
Me siento encantada con las arrugas en las esqui-
nas en sus ojos
Y pienso en las arrugas en mi propio mapa
Cuando me dicen-
Besitos, güerita,

A farm in Oaxaca, Mexico
And the dark farmer
The son of a farmer, the grandson and great grand-
son of a farmer also
Points to an agave crouched in the ground
And says to me with sun in his eyes:
This is will be our retirement gift
The patience and affection for the plant in his
voice call me to pray
So
I beg the plantCan
you make this the home of my life?
Can you make my heart Nahuatl and Mexican?
If I give you drops of blood, is it enough?
The agave just laughs.
Agave, beneath your prickly exterior
In the sweet, sustaining womb
you create much:
Pulque, soft and thick and fickle
Tequila, the taste of American students and don-
keys and course clothe inside
But Mezcal, his cousin, that which has more wis-
dom
Mezcal, the indigenous medicine
I listen like a meditation
In the sound of bubbles
In a calm jicara
Mezcal, a medicine of the modern world too be-
cause,
although I do not have Mexican blood
When we pass and share the jicarita
They do not worry for my blue eyes nor blond hair
With the fire of the agave in the bellies,
We are only here
And that's it
I feel myself love the wrinkles in the corners of
their eyes
And I think of the wrinkles in my own map
When they tell me
Besitos, Güerita,

Lo toma a besitos
Y quiero tomar todo con besitos- Oaxaca, la luna,
amantes, y días igual
Todavía, veo un cacto, siento una brisa seca
Y puedo sentir el sol en los hombros y un espíritu
lleno
Riendo, hasta nuestras arrugas son las mismas
Y envío gracias, en la forma de besitos
A los agaves

Little kisses, blondie
I take it with kisses
And I want to take everything with besitos-
Oaxaca, the moon, lovers, and days alike
Still, I see a cactus, I feel a dry breeze
And I can feel the sun on my shoulders and a
full spirit
Laughing, until our wrinkles are the same
And I send thanks, in the form of besitos
To the agaves

M-theory¹

By Rachel Peters

Energy –
Iridescent, yet invisible.
Always there –

Everywhere.
Atom to atom,
Star to star.

A string,
A connecting strand,
A membrane

Inside us all,
Impaling us all,
Linking us all –

Parasite to human,
Planet to star,
System to universe.

God is the universe.
The universe is God.
Hail the membrane –

Lord Vishnu.²

1. M-theory explains that the big bang started when two membranes of energy rippled and touched. M-theory combines all string theories and holds that the membrane's energy flows in our universe.

2. Lord Vishnu is a Hindu deity said to be more of place than a person. He is everywhere.

The Card Reader

By Rachel Peters

Each morning, she grabbed her purple tarot deck and asked the universe what she needed to know.

She listened to her own steady heartbeat as she queried whether or not she would survive the week – even the day – or if her mind would still be as cluttered and self-destructive as that brooding Nine of Swords.

She shuffled the smooth cards diligently, letting God – or whatever it was that would answer her – fill her soul and flow into her cards, mysterious as the black velvet of space which filled and flowed through the universe she worshipped and called upon.

The Tower, the Four of Wands, the Sun –
Past, Present, and Future.

She stared at the watercolor images until they seeped into her soul and brain. Her racing thoughts came to a halt.

She did not want to believe, but the cards never lied to her. Earth may be full of liars but the stars never lied to her.

Demons

By Rachel James

They were always crawling about
Rattling inside her head--trapped--
Trying to get out.
Biting at her skin, feeling like fire ants--
Until she had to scratch at them.

They whispered things in her ear,
Making her walk a little straighter,
Looking around for an invisible enemy.
Every single stumble, they remembered
And wouldn't let her forget.

They chased away her friends and family.
No one could get to her
Through the thick fog.
And her fingers had long stopped
Trying to reach out for help.

She would try to control them,
Drowning them out with a bottle of spirits,
But they just floated.
Swimming around in her mind.
They couldn't be subdued.

Insomnia

By Sarah Miller

Clouds for making dreams in –
Sinking in them, cocooning.
Barrier from humanity.
Hide away from pain. The reality.

Waves for tossing and turning –
Swimming in them, drowning.
Comfort after the brutality.
Rest after the harshness. The insanity.

Sinkers hooked to your eyelids –
Shining crimson, leaden.
Filters from society.
Blinders to the stress. The anxiety.

Thoughts to keep you company –
Ceaseless noise, deafening.
Slide down into calamity.
Doorway to the world. The monstrosity.

What is Pain?

By Sarah Miller

It's that shade of green.
The light teal-like patterns on the gown.
It's the buttons on the inside of an elevator.
Seeing yellow roses.

It's a tone of voice in a phone call,
Leaving work in a panic.
It's the last text you sent me –
Saved on my phone.

It's not knowing how to help you.
Watching you waste away.
It's seeing him fall apart –
Blaming himself.

It's thanking people for coming –
Strangers saying you remind them of her.
It's going through your clothes,
Wearing your old sweater.

It's the first Christmas afterward,
Baking your cookie recipes.
It's never wearing the black dress again.
The smell of flowers and latex.

Where are the children?

By Sarah Miller

Man's heart, away from nature, becomes hard: [the Lakota] knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too.
– Luther Standing Bear (c. 1868-1939)

The woods are empty.
Forests mourn their loss
And bleed as they are cut,
Shrinking daily.

Virtual fields of crops –
A million internet farmers
Who don't know how to tell
Straw from hay.

Where are the children?

Obesity is on the rise.
One in every three U.S. children
With too many hours spent
In front of a screen.

Helicopter parents strike.
Overprotective, suffocating –
With fears of storms,
Strangers, snakes.

Where are the children?

The woods are empty –
Their voices are missing;
Trapped in an alternate reality,
Unaware of the destruction.

Where are the children?
They are not outside.

Rebirth is a Forest Fire

By Sarah Miller

Rebirth is a forest fire –
A menacing wall of red,
That purges all you knew of life
And leaves you mostly dead.

Crackling through the underbrush
It eats away the green –
Smothering with a cloud of ash
And crushing every dream.

It claims all life in its path
It rushes, rips and roars
It gorges itself on the feast
It's usual matter of course

Rebirth is a forest fire –
A blanketing wall of gray,
That cleanses all you knew of life
And gives you a new way.

Renewing all it has destroyed
It burns away the dried,
Restoring what at first it took –
And you thought you had died.

It promises a second chance
It lets you right all wrong
It gives a chance to start anew
It teaches a new song.

Queen of Wands *

By Rachel Peters

First Place Poetry Contest Winner

You can find her
In a field of sunflowers.
Seek her for advice –
She will hand you a bouquet.

A fire engulfs her spirit,
Makes her glow. Come close,
Be blanketed in warmth –
Admire the powerful queen.

Cross her and become filthy,
A pile of ash that scatters
In the wind. Her black cat
Sniffs and sneezes – the feline

Is more than a shadow. It knows
As much as its mistress, wants
To claw your eyes out
Before you burn.

*A court card in the Rider-Waite tarot deck.

Husband Hunting

By Anna Freidin

Second Place Poetry Contest Winner

Glistening houses hugging the emerald sea—
I wish I lived in one of those houses.
A city of men who looked like Bond—
I wish I was in Casino Royale.

Carnations lining the streets of Monte Carlo—
I partake in the husband hunting ritual.
Watching polo at midday sipping a cocktail—
I study the mothers selling off their daughters.

Mother bring along a sweaty man in polo gear—
I complement the weather, re recounts the almanac.
Mother reprimands my singleness, I should be engaged—
None of these men will do. I refuse to marry for money.

Night falls, the lights turn on, the city wakes—
I stroll along rocky Larvotto beach feet in the water.
Music spills from the dozen yachts off shore—
I wade further in to know what is happening.

Young men spending their parents' money—
I believe thousands, yes, thousands in just one night.
Swimming in a sea of champagne and caviar—
I hate the taste of baby Beluga, a waste.

Future husbands on those boats—
Will one of them be mine, shall I live that life?
Diamond necklaces heavy on the chest—
Will they one day be mine, all mine?

If my future husband is on that boat—
He can find himself another wife.
Life is better left a fantasy in a dream—
I know that life—that life is not for me.

Down the Rabbit Hole

By Rachel James

Third Place Poetry Contest Winner

Come with me down the rabbit hole,
See sights you've never seen.
A caterpillar with his foggy air
Spouting nonsense philosophy
And munching on mushrooms.

Come with me down the rabbit hole,
Be amazed at the creatures
A hatter with his tea party
Telling of murdering time
And reciting on riddles.

Come with me down the rabbit hole,
Laugh at the court proceedings ,
A queen with her many guards
Ranting and raving of rules
And bent on beheading.



Clipped Wings

By Anonymous

They found Claire on the bathroom floor, two large slits drawn into either side of her back. The razor rested next to the sink. She was alive, but barely. When she awoke in the hospital and felt the stitches, she let out an unearthly scream. The doctors found her trying to rip them out. That was when they decided to send her to me.

The first time she came into my office, her hands kept fidgeting with a rosary in her pocket. “From my dad,” she mumbled.

I asked why she was here, though I knew about the suicide attempt. She shrugged, and said, “Because God doesn’t love me.”

“Why do you think that?”

She didn’t respond.

Looking at her file, her mother had stated that she was an honest, sweet girl, and that she couldn’t understand why Claire would do this. Typical parent answer. Kids serious about dying rarely announce it. Looking farther, I noticed that her dad was deceased. He was a cop, marked KIA in 2008. She would’ve been seven at that time. No wonder she holds onto that rosary so close.

Every day, while walking to my office, I see Claire in the ward’s chapel (if its even dignified enough to count as one). She kneels behind a bench, looking up at the shabby garden statue of Mary we keep in there. If she isn’t there, she’s sitting alone in her room, counting her rosary beads. I brought this up in our next session.

“Do you always spend this much time counting those?”

“Yes.”

“Why is that?” I questioned.

“Because I am loyal to my faith.” Strange words to hear from a sixteen year old.

“Any other reason?”

She paused.

“Your dad?” I asked cautiously.

Claire nodded, “He took me to church on Sundays, and told me all the stories from the Bible. He said, one day, I’d be a beautiful angel in Heaven.”

“Did you like that idea?”

“Yeah.” She said without hesitation.

“What about after your father passed?”

She froze, and looked at me, her eyes wide.

“I’d like to go back to my room now. I’m really tired.”

“Okay,” I said, “I’ll see you at our next session.”

She darted out of the room, and I sighed. Just when I was getting her to talk, and she clammed up again. What was with this patient?

I sat at my window, forgetting my cup of coffee. The rain outside clattered against the roof, and subdued all it touched to an echo of what it was. The blue glow of my computer faded as I closed it,

stepping away from the table. My watch said 3:46 A.M. It was this time of night that was my favorite. Everyone was asleep, and the world didn't expect anything of me yet. I could flip through old pictures or doodle, and no one would ever know. I could ask stupid questions without being judged. I picked up the habit in grad school, and though I had been out for a year, I still took this time for myself.

I climbed into my bed, deciding I should try to get some sleep. Tomorrow it would be back to treating Claire, a task I was not sure I could handle.

It was her third week in the hospital, and I hadn't made any progress. Claire hardly talked in group therapy, and didn't participate in any of the activities the nurses organized. She was eating, but other than that, it was like she was only doing the basics to keep herself alive.

8:30 A.M. in my office, she looked as though she'd nod off to sleep right there.

"You sleep alright?" I asked curiously.

She shrugged.

"Okay..." I wondered, "Um... I'm gonna make myself a cup of coffee. You want any?"

She peeked out from under her hair, a glint in her eyes.

"They don't have coffee for you guys, right?"

"No," She sighed, "They think we'll burn ourselves."

"You promise not to do that if I get you some?"

Claire snickered, "Why would I waste coffee like that?"

I smiled as I used my office Keurig to make the drinks; one for me, in my "Trust me, I'm a doctor" mug, and another in a styrofoam cup I passed to Claire.

"Thanks," She said, "Sugar?"

I tossed her a few Sweet n' Low's from the stash in my desk drawer.

"I miss coffee," She confessed while dumping a packet in.

"Yeah, I don't think I could live without it," I confessed.

"Me neither."

I didn't make much progress, but seeing her happy, even if it was only coffee, worked for me.

She trudged in, her eyes gazing at her feet intently. I turned to say hello, but she did not look at me, only taking a seat in one of my office chairs. She took a deep breath.

"The nurses said I should tell you," Claire began, but then paused.

"I am here for you to talk to. You don't have to tell me anything you don't want to, but know that what you say won't leave this room." I responded, desperately hoping that she would tell me.

"Okay..." She began, "Well, a few weeks ago, some guys in my class were saying things. I wanted to be a nun, and they thought that was weird. And one day, after class..." She stopped.

"Do you want to pick this up another time?" I asked, though I wanted her to talk.

"No, no. I need to face it sometime. They... um... touched me."

"Sexually?"

"Yes." Her face flushed, and she fidgeted with the rosary.

"Without your consent?"

"Yes."

I paused, trying to think of what to say.

"They told me I couldn't give myself to God, since they..." She trailed off, unwilling or unable to finish.

"Okay. Is that why you tried to kill yourself?"

Claire had started to cry, "I couldn't b-be an angel like my dad sa-said. I failed h-him." She started breathing irregularly, and more tears fell from her eyes.

“None of this is your fault. You didn’t fail your dad. This was something beyond your control, and you should never feel guilty about it,” I regurgitated the lines they told us to say in grad school, hollow, worthless.

She didn’t seem to believe me either.

Our next meeting was bizarre. She had some coffee the color of caramel in a styrofoam cup, and took small sips.

“How have you been doing?” I asked.

She shrugged.

“Any news on a discharge date?”

She shook her head.

“Does the food still suck?” I said jokingly.

She cracked a small grin at that.

“How do you know?”

I paused, realizing what I had admitted. None of my previous patients knew, and I preferred to keep it that way. But, maybe, I could use it to connect with Claire, and get her to open up more.

“Well, I spent some time here too... as a patient.”

She looked up, curiosity piqued.

“Yeah, I was about 14. I wasn’t doing well in my science class, and that really upset me. I was used to getting good grades, so this was kind of a shock. My parents got really mad. They didn’t hurt me, but sometimes I wish they did. Then me coming here would be easier to explain.”

“Yeah,” Claire stated.

“I tried to hang myself... with a shower curtain.”

She broke out laughing at that.

“Well, it made sense at the time!”

“You- can’t hang- won’t- your weight!” She gasped out between giggles.

“Imagine my mom when she saw the shower rod ripped off of the wall.”

She was in a fit, guffawing at the top of her lungs. I snickered too. It was pretty ridiculous, even I could see that.

“You’re crazy.” She declared.

On that, I had to agree with her.

For the first time, I looked forward to meeting with a patient. My drive to work was slower than I ever remember it being. I didn’t bother getting a granola bar from the vending machine. While I worked at my computer, I spun in my swivel chair until I got dizzy.

Claire walked in and took a seat, not nearly as stressed as the first time I saw her. She looked at me, and said, “I want to talk about my dad.”

“Okay,” I was slightly confused. She hadn’t said much about him, only that he gave her the rosary and told her she’d be an angel, “Where do you want to start?”

“Well, he died when I was little.”

“I read that in your file. A police officer?”

“Yeah,” Claire confirmed, “An armed robbery. They never caught the guy.”

“Oh,” was all I could say.

“We went to church because he believed that God protected him, and I thought that too. When I had my first communion, he gave me my rosary as a gift,” She held the cross of it to her heart, “He said that, as long as I had this and believed in God, nothing could break us apart.”

“Do you still think that?” I asked.

“I... don’t know,” She confessed, distraught, “I want to, but why would He take my dad away, and let those guys hurt me? What kind of God does that?”

“I can’t answer that for you.” I confessed, “That’s something each of us has to work out for ourselves. I... still don’t know what I believe.”

“Really?” She asked guardedly.

“Yeah, and that’s okay. I don’t need to know everything right now, and neither do you.”

Once again, canned lines, but this time I felt they had some worth.

Claire relaxed, and smiled, “Thanks. That’s good to hear.”

She was scheduled to be released the following Tuesday, after being here for a month and a half. We had made some great progress, and her mom was excited to have her daughter back. Claire just said she was looking forward to getting some decent food. I told her to treat herself to something nice, before grabbing my things and leaving for the day.

I sat at the window that night, looking out onto the slumbering world. I was going to miss her a bit, but I was still happy that she’d get to go back to her normal life. An airplane flew overhead, and I watched it until it disappeared into the unknown, beyond the sky.

The call came at 2:16 A.M. I was already up, staring down at the sidewalk below. It wasn’t the first late night they called me in for, so I didn’t think much of it, until the nurse on the other end said, “It’s Claire.”

I threw on some clothes and grabbed my keys, heading for the hospital.

When I got there, the paramedics were cleaning up. They filled me in. She had wound the rosary around her neck until it cut off her air supply, and proceeded to suffocate. The body was gone, and her mother was being contacted. I stood there, unable to say anything. Then I started snickering. Then laughing. My sides hurt after a while, but I couldn’t bring myself to stop. All I could think of was how ridiculous it all was. Everyone stared, but I didn’t care. A rosary, a shower curtain, what did it matter? She was dead, and the means didn’t matter. I began to cry at the thought. Dead. I was led away by the nurses, and left in the waiting area.

The next morning, I went to the morgue with her mother to identify the body. No doubt it was her. Before I left, the man doing the biopsy handed me a piece of toilet paper, asking me to give it to Claire’s mother. I was going to, but I felt the need to look at what was inside. I regretted it instantly. There was a small message written on it, barely legible. It read:

Do you know why I cut my back open? So I could grow wings.

Personal Essay

By Ian Brolley

For the tail end of my years of elementary school, I went to Prince of Peace Montessori. It is a very small Catholic school in the middle of downtown Covington. It was a bit of a clash concerning stereotypes, because after all it was a private Montessori school; however, by other Catholic schools in the area it was considered “ghetto,” because it also had a “traditional” schooling program. There was a misconception by some of the Montessori parents that the students in traditional were trouble. The school’s budget was small, the teachers acted like they felt the walls closing in, and there was an obvious divide between the two sides of the school. A lot of the Montessori parents dropped their kids off at the front door in a late model Lexus, while pulling in as they left was a tatty Honda with duct tape holding the bumper in place. In this way, I got a taste of the separation that people commonly see between city schools and county schools.

It was my first day at Holmes Middle School, a city school in an independent district. It had a strong basketball program and had the International Baccalaureate program. The IB program is a lot like Advanced Placement program that many schools have, with a bit more focus on in-depth understanding rather than retainment of large amounts of information. The real reason I went was because my best friend from the sad little catholic school was going there—his parents had gone there as well. The building was old, but very large, and it looked like a castle. Respectively, some of the classrooms were a lot like dungeons. Oh, but you absolutely cannot forget about the Ron Clark classrooms. Ron Clark, a revolutionary educator who started an extraordinary academy for underprivileged kids in the Atlanta area. He was spreading his principles to city schools around the country by decorating the walls of a few classrooms in schools. The extent of the decoration was paint; each room got painted to match a theme, but not necessarily one that matched the teacher’s curriculum. My social studies teacher had a theater-themed room, while my algebra teacher had a castle-themed room—unique from the appearance of the school itself. It was a situation that seemed to me that a struggling school was showing a bit of desperation. They were infatuated to an idea of this exciting new educational outlook, because they are trying to “keep up with the Jones,” or rather, chasing the Jones. It reminded me of a stories my dad told me about his mother from when he was young. He would tell me about these strange new items that she would bring home from grocery shopping. He would talk about how excited she would be about the fact that she bought something that just came out, something that other families might not have. One day, she brought home these “nifty little things” called cowboy buns. They were simply hot dog buns, but instead of opening up all the way like a book, they just had a hot dog-shaped indentation in the top of the bread—incredible. People will do weird things to keep up with the times. The point is that Holmes was a struggling school, and they were trying to keep up with the times.

The Ron Clarke situation sort of epitomizes the sense of mild desperation at Holmes, but it was not the only attempt at improvement. Other things were changed that, again, might have been “innovative” or “neat,” but ultimately did not much affect the overall dynamic of the school’s education—for example, there were a few cars of iPads added to the available technology that teacher could sign out ahead of time in anticipation of using them for a fancy new lesson plan. It ended up being like a new-age rematch of teachers back in the nineties arguing over who got to use the VCR for class. Other than technology, teachers would ante up their lessons to try and involve more hands-on activities. It

did not work for most teachers, because high school students know better. Any teacher who says they don't know what a blank, "Yeah, yeah, we get it. When's lunch?" stare looks like is lying.

These realizations came to me mostly as I came up through Holmes High School, which was not much different from the middle school, because they were both on the same campus and the latter was attached to the former. A lot of the technology on both parts of campus was out of date, and the overall infrastructure was deteriorating a bit. I also realized, although you may find it hard to believe based on my observations leading up to this point, that some of the changes that were the least significant seemed to have the biggest impact on students. Public school lunches tend to be sub-par to say the least, and Holmes was no exception. They had tried several times to improve the quality of the food, but nothing was helping. Finally, they changed the cafeteria to the layout that you see in most schools nowadays. There is a line for that day's hot meal, a line for pizza, a line for salad/soups/sandwiches, and then maybe another line for some sort of dessert if it was a good day. Students were excited, until they realized that it was simply multiple lines of the same slop they had been eating for years—but one food item rose above. About once a week there would be heavily processed, fried chicken patty sandwiches as an option, and amazingly, they were average. They still were not good, but hey, nowhere to go but up.

I would transfer from Holmes in the middle of my junior year. I did not wish to play basketball there any longer and the International Baccalaureate program did not crack up, so there was no point of me going out of district to attend. I decided to go to Dixie Heights High School, in the Kenton County district, just about half a mile from my home. I was a colonel. My first day I was greeted by smiling faces, both of students and staff. On my tour, I saw the elegantly decorated auditorium, which was only a few years old. The gymnasium was also very nice, with a recently finished basketball floor, and the computer labs were well-furnished with very nice desktop computers. I thought to myself how nice it was that they pulled out all the stops to persuade me to attend. It was finally time for lunch—oh geez. The cafeteria was very large, with lots of windows that looked out on the astro-turf football field and the outside eating area. There were several options of food to choose from. There were sub sandwiches, some soup, salads, and pizza, along with the daily choice of hot food which I believe was some sort of beef sandwich. But wait, they also had chicken sandwiches, which were a reliable choice. I grabbed one and found a seat. Perhaps the extremely positive visit clouded my sense of taste, but it tasted really, really good—almost Chic Fil A good. It didn't make sense at first—but of course, I thought...the chicken sandwiches always taste better at the county schools.

The Search for New Knowledge, the Path to Hell

By Anna Freidin

In 1604 and 1616 *The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus*¹ by Christopher Marlowe was published posthumously (Shuman), at the height of the discourse surrounding the discovery of what would become known as Heliocentrism. This essay will concentrate on the original text of 1604 rather than the 1616 edition which was updated by someone other than Marlowe. Doctor Faustus reflects a deep ambivalence about the search for new knowledge through the protagonist's rejection of scholarly classical study in favor of new areas of study, a choice that results in his devastating damnation to the underworld. The play represents a choice faced by Marlowe and his contemporaries: scholarly classical knowledge or powerful new knowledge. Faustus chooses new knowledge and is damned, leading the audience to believe that scholarly knowledge is superior. The deep ambivalence about the search for new knowledge in the text reflects the sentiment of Marlowe and of his time towards the discovery of Heliocentrism along with the continuing search for new knowledge it represents.

In *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus abandons the life of a scholar and the pursuit of classical knowledge for the prospect of new knowledge which, he believes, will grant him divine power. He makes this choice willingly because he is frustrated by the realization that classical knowledge is limited and will not grant him immortality. This is shown when he states, "Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man. / wouldst thou make men to live eternally/ or, being dead, raise them to life again" (Marlowe 1.1.23-5). Faustus realizes he cannot achieve divine power so long as he remains mortal; however, the abandonment of classical knowledge can only result in the selling his soul, his damnation, and ultimate failure to gain the knowledge he desires.

The beginning of the play illuminates the plays and society's ambivalence towards the search for new knowledge through Faustus's rejection of classical scholarship. The chorus opens with "the fruitful plot of scholarism graced, / that shortly he was graced with doctor's name" (Marlowe Prologue.16-7). Faustus has achieved the highest honor for a scholar and has mastered "the traditional four academic areas of divinity, law, physic, and civility" (Golz 449). Faustus abandons these classical fields when he rejects the books which he has studied and to which he has devoted his life. The abandonment of each book is detailed in the text as Faustus moves from one book to another, discarding what he now views as useless. Faustus states that one could "live and die in Aristotle's works" (1.1.5), emphasizing that one could start and end their education with the work of Aristotle. Faustus glances one last time at Aristotle and proclaims "read no more; thou hast attained the end. / A greater subject fitteth Faustus' wit" (1.1.10-1). Faustus believes he has learned all he can from Aristotle and that he is better suited for something else. He then proceeds to the work of Galen but states there is no point in medicine if it cannot raise the dead or make man immortal because he is "still but Faustus [man]" (1.1.23). Subsequently, Faustus turns to the Bible, "Jerome's Bible" (Marlowe 1.1.38), and when

1. To be referred to as *Doctor Faustus* from this point onwards.

Faustus rejects the Bible he symbolically abandons God in his pursuit of knowledge. With Faustus's abandonment of each book, he rejects logic, God, and medicine (Golz 444-445) allowing himself to be consumed entirely by his quest.

This fatal pursuit of supernatural knowledge about the cosmos can now continue. Okerlund explains that Faustus discards his scholarly education in order "to embrace magic as the proper study for his intellect" (260). Additionally, when Faustus decides to pursue such knowledge he requests that Mephistopheles give him new books. Mephistopheles "gives Faustus a book" (2.1.155), but they both only "look at it" (2.1.155). The fact that neither read the book finalizes Faustus's abandonment of classical, scholarly knowledge. Faustus asks Mephistopheles if he could have a book "where [he] might see/All the characters and planets of the heavens, / that [he] might know their motions and dispositions" (Marlowe 2.1.165-7). Here Faustus is asking Mephistopheles to confirm or challenge Heliocentrism. Additionally, Golz proposes that in requesting such a book, Faustus is implying that he wishes to have "a special relationship with the heavens" (444). Consequently, Faustus' aspiration to divine knowledge becomes apparent and as the chorus states "his waxen wings did mount above his reach. / and melting heavens conspired his overthrow" (Marlowe Prologue. 21-2). The quote alludes to the tale of Icarus who built wings of wax to fly, but soaring too high, against his father's command, he plunged to his death as the sun melted his wings. Faustus becomes Icarus when he makes his deal with Lucifer in his search for new knowledge. God and his search for new knowledge (the sun) lead him to his damnation (see Marlowe footnote 21, 6). Faustus's divine aspirations lead him to draw "conclusions predetermined by desire" and to "hear...and see only the evidence that confirms his pre-established vision" (261). A consequence of his bias is the eventual corruption of his logical self in his pursuit of more knowledge, leading to his death (Okerlund 261). Faustus's search for new knowledge is subsumed by his interest in the radically changing ideas of the cosmos which during Marlowe's time were hypothesized and challenged.

Ideas about the cosmos changed radically when Copernicus theorized that all of the planets revolved around the sun in 1543, a theory finalized much later by Kepler which became known as Heliocentrism. The opening of Doctor Faustus states that Faustus went to university in Wittenberg which was "a critical site for the acceptance of Copernicus's text by academic astronomers" (143, Marcus 35). The University of Tübingen, in Wittenberg, is also where Kepler "wrote his dissertation supporting Copernicus's" theory in 1593 which was "so unconventional he was not permitted to defend it" (Sugar 143. See Rosen). Additionally, Høg notes, that Galileo further increased new knowledge in 1609 with his invention of the telescope which made studying the cosmos in greater detail easier (225). This, in turn, facilitated further discovery of the cosmos, producing more evidence in support of Copernicus's theory (225). Another major figure in the debate was Tycho Brahe whose "observations of the planets...came to make the strongest impact on science and civilization" (228). Galileo made several new discoveries and Kepler finished his three laws in 1619 after Marlowe's death (Høg 228).

The debate between those that believed that the Earth was the center of the universe and those that believed in Heliocentrism occurred before and after Marlowe's death in 1593. Marlowe would have been aware of Copernicus's theory and may have known about Kepler's dissertation but would not have known the theory was proven. Doctor Faustus was used as a possible means to explore what happened to people when they sided with Copernicus rather than with generally accepted opinion. The theory of Heliocentrism was not accepted immediately and challenged classical knowledge as well as religion. With this discovery Earth was no longer the center of the universe; Earth was no longer favored by God, leading people to question both new science as well as man's relationship with God.

The search for this new knowledge drives Faustus to make a pact with Lucifer leading to his death. In one section of the play, Faustus engages in an exchange with Mephistopheles in which he attempts to debate the ideas of the cosmos in hopes of gaining answers. Sugar explains that through

the debate between the two “Marlowe acknowledges the heresy implied by this new [Heliocentric] vision of the world by connecting this emerging Copernican consciousness with the devil” (141-2). Furthermore, by connecting Heliocentrism to the devil, Faustus clearly believes that the truth about the cosmos cannot be gained by reading books (141-2), indicating that Marlowe believed the only way to confirm or deny Heliocentrism was by an otherworldly source because there were no methods readily available to view the heavens. Faustus, despite this belief, soon realizes “that even the devil is unwilling to divulge information about the new universe that opposes traditional views” (Sugar 141-2). In the hopes of coercing the truth Faustus first asks “have [planets] all have one motion, both situ et tempore” (2.3.44-5), but this question of how and why the planets move is never answered except in Ptolemaic (classical) terms. Mephistopheles answers only, “all jointly move from east to west in twenty-four hours upon the poles of the world, but differ in their motion upon the poles” (Marlowe 2.3.46-8). Sugar claims that within this brief exchange Faustus “describes a Ptolemaic universe composed of a hierarchy of concentric spheres with the earth at the cent[er]” (144) with the expectation that Mephistopheles will argue against this idea. Contrary to Faustus’s expectations, Mephistopheles agrees with Faustus’s account of a Ptolemaic (geocentric) universe and seeks to convince Faustus (144). Therefore, Faustus only receives answers “he already knows” (Sugar 144) and which are common conceptions at the time.

The dynamics of the discussion change when Faustus realizes that Mephistopheles will not give him the answers he desires (Sugar 141-4). Nonetheless, he continues probing for new information, changing his tone. Faustus criticizes Mephistopheles in the lines “hath Mephistopheles no greater skill” (2.3.50) and “these are freshmen’s suppositions” (2.3.55). Frustrated at Mephistopheles’s apparent ignorance, Faustus asks him, “why have we not conjunctions, oppositions, aspects, eclipses, all at one time; but in some years we have more, in some less?” (Marlowe 2.3.61-3) Faustus is referring to retrograde motion which Copernicus’s theory “explained and dismissed” as simply being “an illusion, resulting from our position as overseers on a moving earth” (Sugar 145). Mephistopheles vaguely replies to Faustus’s question with an answer that the Ptolemaic model of the universe could supply which was “*per inaequalem motum respect totius*”² (Marlowe 2.3.64). Therefore, Mephistopheles suggests that confirmation of the new knowledge about the cosmos is information which neither those in heaven or hell are willing to disclose (Sugar 145). Faustus’s is unable to find his answers in books, so he turns to Lucifer and Mephistopheles who also leave his questions unanswered.

The text’s deep ambivalence towards the search for new knowledge is prevalent when Faustus is forced to accept that he will not gain new knowledge and understands that the search for new knowledge has ensured his damnation. Once Faustus chooses new knowledge over classical scholarship he is damned. In the conclusion of the play, however, Okerlund maintains that Faustus “becomes a man capable of facing his destiny and declaring his own accountability for it” (275). Doctor Faustus reveals its ambivalence towards the search for new knowledge when Faustus expresses regret over surrendering his classical knowledge for the knowledge which seduced him.

At the end of the play, Faustus dreads his damnation and tries to bargain with God but, alas, deems himself unworthy of redemption as he regrets his abandonment of classical knowledge. Okerlund suggests that when Faustus made “his bargain with Mephistopheles, Faustus bartered away his mind and its ability to reason” and slowly his ability to reason dissipates entirely (277). In his final moments, Faustus regrets his abandonment of classical knowledge when he proclaims, in agony, that he wishes he had never begun his search for knowledge. Faustus feels that once he had learned all he

2. translation: because of unequal motion in respect to the whole

felt he could he was seduced by the new knowledge of Heliocentrism. In this moment “the anguish of... [loosing] the knowledge so blithely ignored during the euphoria of his self-delusion” consumes Faustus (277). Here Faustus regrets his decision to pursue knowledge about Heliocentrism and wishes he had remained content with scholarly knowledge. Faustus’s ability to articulate his anguish soon dissipates into nothing but incomprehensible sounds made by a once brilliant scholar (277). At the moment of Faustus’s death “his intelligence must be irrevocably abandoned” and “a shriek...can be the only language left to him” (Okerlund 277). Faustus has lost his speech and reason; moreover, he lost the very essence of his humanity.

Marlowe closes the play with a chorus epilog after Faustus is taken by the devils to hell. Here Marlowe clearly warns the reader to “regard [Faustus’s] hellish fall” and not to seek more knowledge “than heavenly power permits” (53). Marlowe closes with the powerful message that Faustus’s life has ended sooner than it might have done if he had kept to classical teachings. The tale of Faustus is told in order to warn the audience not “to wonder at unlawful things” (Marlowe Epilogue 53). Marlowe says that the story may tempt the wise to try and understand the complexities of Copernicus’s theory. Furthermore, the epilog warns that the wise will be tempted by new knowledge, like Faustus, and warns them to exercise caution. Doctor Faustus closes with advice to the reader that if they are to side with Copernicus they will be damned by society for reaching beyond classical knowledge. Doctor Faustus expresses an ambivalence towards the search for new knowledge, a sentiment which continues into the modern day which warns against abandoning classical knowledge. Throughout Doctor Faustus, the ambivalence towards the search for new knowledge is reflected and warns against abandoning classical knowledge. In Marlowe’s time, the scientific discoveries and debates surrounding Heliocentrism were at the forefront of society, causing many to question their beliefs about religion and mankind. Marlowe’s text presents the view, through the eventual damnation of Faustus that the search for new knowledge is dangerous because it is an attempt to supersede the limitations of his humanity and gain supernatural divinity.