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THE BROADSHEET



Seniors pose with inductees to Sigma Tau Delta

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FIFTH ANNUAL ENGLISH AWARDS CEREMONY CELEBRATES SHARED SCHOLARSHIP, AWARD-WINNING VERSE, AND SENIORS PREPARING FOR GRADUATION

By The Broadsheet Staff

Approximately fifty faculty, staff, students and family attended the fifth annual English Awards Ceremony held on April 12 at 4 pm at the Merrimack College Writers House. The event consisted of a robust agenda, which included the induction of eight new members into the Sigma Tau Delta International Honor Society, the distribution of graduation cords to nine seniors, a slide show from four of the five English majors who presented original scholarly and creative works at this year’s Sigma Tau Delta annual convention, the awarding of cash prizes to the three place winners in the Rev. John R. Aherne 2018 Poetry Contest, and a reading by poet Tanya Larkin, Tufts University Lecturer in Creative Writing and author of two collections of original poetry, *My Scarlet Ways*, winner of the 2011 Saturnalia prize, and *Hothouse Orphan*.

The program also included readings by Aherne Poetry contest winners Bridget Kennedy (“Where I’m From,” first place), Dan Roussel (“Things I’ve Never Done,” second place), and Dakota Durbin (“Deer” and “Lucy Brook,” which tied for third place in the contest voting). In addition to her reading, Larkin shared her thoughts about why poetry remains crucial to emotional wellbeing. Professor Steven Scherwatzky, current English Department chair, (continued on next page)

An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published four times during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department’s role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

served as master of ceremonies, and Professor Ellen McWhorter, founder and faculty advisor of the Merrimack chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, spoke about her experience with Professor Scherwitzky chaperoning Dakota Durbin, Kiera Duggan, Bridget Kennedy, Ashley McLaughlin, and Christina DiMartino to the Sigma Tau Delta Conference, which was held this year in Cincinnati, Ohio. Senior Ashley MacLaughlin was unable to attend the awards ceremony and participate in the conference overview with her fellow presenters. Poet and Writers House director Andrea Cohen hosted the event.

After providing background information regarding the mission of the Sigma Tau Delta Honor Society, Professor McWhorter commented on the high quality of the annual conference and on the competitiveness of the process by which reviewers select literary analyses and creative works for inclusion on the conference program. Playfully, Professor McWhorter remarked that this year students provided her with no material with which to roast them, an activity that has become a tradition at the awards ceremony to which she looks forward. Instead she found herself forced to acknowledge their exemplary behavior, praising them for being “lovely, professional, attentive, and easy to work with beginning to end.”

Apparently, though, one or two challenges did emerge during the excursion to Ohio. The most significant hurdle involved getting off the ground at Logan Airport. An imminent storm caused a last minute flight cancelation, but the students, McWhorter said, remained calm throughout the tumult. They impressed her by taking the initiative to secure quickly tickets for an earlier flight and they notified her of the move immediately. Ironically, friction turned up at an unexpected point of origin, though. Professor Scherwitzky, who approaches travel planning as though it were a draft of deadly nightshade, (understandably) failed to respond to Professor McWhorter’s frantic texts and phone calls during the flight-cancelation crisis. In desperation, McWhorter said, she saw no alternative but to phone Professor Scherwitzky’s wife, Jennifer. Jennifer responded immediately to the notices and managed to book Professor Scherwitzky on the same flight as the rest of the group. They arrived in Cincinnati without further incident.

The Sigma Tau Delta conference presenters showed slides from their trip and were effusive in their enthusiasm for describing what it felt like to enter larger scholarly conversations and to share observations with peers from other institutions who possess their passion for reading and writing about literature. Slides featured group photographs from the conference, along with images of Cincinnati’s local cuisine and culture. The presenters said they were especially impressed by the “welcoming feel” of the city’s Rhine District, many of its buildings graced by colorful murals. Chrissi DiMartino characterized it warmly as a “hipster place to be.” The students recommended Graeter’s restaurant among the many at which they ate, gushing about the servings of French Pot ice cream they ordered.

Readings performed by the Aherne contest winners captivated the audience. The students demonstrated awareness of rhythm and pace, allowing auditors opportunity to follow along comfortably, notice verbal patterns and linger momentarily over an image. The sensitivity to form and performance they displayed testifies to the hard work of Writers House poet and director Andrea Cohen, and to associate director and poet Danielle Jones-Pruett, who organizes regular Writers Circle meetings and designs writing prompts and exercises that help students develop their craft and come into their own as creative writers.

Anchoring the program, Tanya Larkin read from a long narrative poem called “The Path,” which focuses on her experience raising a young son. The poem builds on the central trope of a walking trail she and her son travel for recreation, and it draws out their encounters with a host of ordinary but nonetheless life-shaping circumstances that involve, among many things, familial connection, otherness, mortality and racism. After the reading, she read from an essay she has composed that identifies the reasons why reading and writing poetry “will keep you sane.” Larkin recalled that literature helped her navigate what turned out to be a “too long adolescence,” remarking that she “might have died” had she not discovered the poetry of Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens. She observed that so many of us today maintain the “shakiest holds on our own mental health” and that the speed of our culture makes it “almost impossible to slow down and bestow on ourselves the smallest kindnesses.”

Reading and writing, she believes, have the capacity to rescue us from these liabilities. The processes involved in writing and in reading poems capture something precious and intimate, specifically the writer’s voice—his or her “innermost private one”—she noted. And this gift makes poetry, for Larkin, the most intimate of acts. She concluded her remarks by equating the transmission of poetry to the passing of a note to a “crush” that sits on the other side of the classroom. Every person who reads the note in transit leaves his or her fingerprints on the missive, enriching its profile and compounding the personal nature of the document. In a similar way, poetry builds intimacy and maintains the power to link us more steadfastly to ourselves and to one another.

The awards ceremony lasted approximately 75 minutes and concluded with refreshments, informal conversations, and photographs



Professor McWhorter



Professor Scherwatzky

GUEST SPEAKER TANYA LARKIN GUIDES MAJORS ALONG AN IMPORTANT PATH

By Bridget Kennedy

Award winning poet Tanya Larkin teaches at Tufts University. She visited the Writers House as guest speaker for the annual awards ceremony and read two pieces that show us why our major is so important. Her writing reminds us that life's narrative path remains ours to imagine and live, despite the harsh realities of social pressure telling us who and where to be, what to study, and which "milestones" we should accomplish.

Larkin's prose poem *The Path* struck me, because my about-to-graduate brain interprets this as encouragement, as I continue down a path far less familiar than the one Larkin describes. It serves as a reminder that the new path will become familiar and there will always be questions and new stories, as her son proves everyday along their journey. The adventure is different but still important. The poem features the daily excursions conducted by a mother and her son. We all travel that same path somewhere or somehow.



Despite seasonal changes, the path remains true. A reminder to engage all possibilities—remember to be a curious kid! "Look every passerby in the eye." Her son sees everyone, and everyone sees him for better or worse. He is curious and open to possibility and the tangibility of that prospect, because "everything one says on the path sounds real." The imagery in the poem works to make these stories as real an experience for the audience as it is for Larkin and her boy. He plays innocently in icy puddles in just sweatpants under swim trunks, an image that instantly transported me to their side as she picked him up and tucked his cold bare feet around her waist for the frigid walk home. The following event on that same particular trip shatters the peaceful innocence of this moment, or rather tears through it the way the boy's muddy boots and wet socks fell through the bag in which she had initially placed them just before a man yells something racist in their direction. The innocence of the boy's playtime is torn for his mother, who knows her son will one day realize he will likely have to deal with understanding what those comments mean for a black boy, and eventually a black man, with a white mother.

The son won't always carry a stick that becomes a magic wand, or a sword, or a gate keeping the path safe as he imagines on his travels. He will eventually grow too tall to be carried in the warmth of his mother's jacket. He too will have to find refuge in routine and feel the security of that, but acknowledge that it isn't impenetrable, and not everyone he crosses paths with will let him through as easily as he lets people clear his imaginary stick-drawbridge as a toddler.

The poem explores the refuge of the path in the context of everyday issues, addressing parenthood, race, class, taxes, and mortality. Larkin writes, "We are at war nearly everywhere beside the path," which fits with the rest of the story about finding solace and refuge in the ritual of a daily walk along the same course with her son and the constant opportunity to exercise agency even if it's just in a boy's imagination.

Larkin's second piece was a shorter essay on mental health and poetry. She conducts a poetry workshop at a local jail and she underscores the value of poetry and writing as a tool for navigating pressure.

This essay, focusing on the relevance of mental health to poetry, outlines the problem of social pressures and honestly admits that she felt it too at our age. “Much has been made of the fragility of the youth. . . I’m telling my story so you know you are not alone in your pain.” There is a ton of pressure on us now, but Larkin’s essay maintains that literature helped her pilot through that pressure. People serving jail time, in particular, need a way to express themselves in a safe, healthy way. Culture is the air we breathe, and so the pressure it puts on us all is nearly inescapable.

“We live in a fast, competitive culture. . . it’s hard to slow down and think of kindnesses—to read and write not to escape life but to attend to it closely and feel it more deeply” she observed. Any creative means of expression preserves our humanity, even those individuals who feel dehumanized by incarceration. Life goes on regardless of location—on a path in the woods, a lecture hall, or behind bars.

As quotable (and relatable) as I found Tanya Larkin herself, her commentary included remarks from others that resonate with the pieces she read and underscored the timeliness of her reading. One of these observations included a comment about how writers live more deeply, in “a place of pure concentration.” Another reflected, “Poetry is what you say to yourself when you’re alone in the hopes of being overheard” (this one feels like a personal callout). A metaphor posited, “Children are made of heartland because they have everything ahead of them.” This last insight resonates with the energy of *The Path*, invoking images about her son’s imaginary adventures and his youth that suggest he can probably accomplish all of them in some way. Larkin also connected this to the audience of English majors. In a way we are still children and have so much more ahead of us along our paths; anything we imagine remains a possibility.

As I mentioned before, my pre-graduation brain found these pieces both comforting and inspiring. It reminded me that English is *the path* I chose: the journeys real and imagined from poetry and prose, the refuge and the learning experiences. As Professor Scherwitzky loves to remind us on Career Night, our English degrees prepare us for just about anything. Maybe that knowledge represents the magical stick that transforms into whatever I need or want it to be, and will guide me through every icy puddle, unique outfit choice, and confrontation with reality I experience along my way.



(left) Dakota, Kiera, Chrissi, Bridget, Colleen (center) Dan Roussel reads “Things I’ve Never Done” (right) Carey Bradley, Calvin Evans, and Emma Leaden.



Sigma Tau Delta Conference 2018

By Kiera Duggan



On March 21st, five Merrimack students accompanied by Professor McWhorter and Professor Scherwatzky left snowy Boston to present papers at the annual Sigma Tau Delta conference, this year held in Cincinnati, Ohio. This



was my first time presenting, and though I had read *The Broadsheet* articles on last year's conference and talked to Bridget and Dakota about their experiences, it was still difficult to know what to expect. We submitted our papers in October, and each of us had been notified of our acceptance in December, but even with the months of preparation before our trip in late March, I was still feeling somewhat overwhelmed. Ultimately, I had a great experience, both at the conference and outside of it.

Despite my initial nerves, the planning portion of our trip went on without a hitch--at least until the very last moment. We had booked our flights and hotel several weeks in advance, and were set to arrive at the airport early for our 1pm flight Wednesday afternoon. At 11pm Tuesday night, Delta informed us our flight had been cancelled because of weather, forcing a scramble to rebook. After a flurry of texts, some quick re-scheduling and unfortunately in Chrissi's case a late night customer service call to Delta we were set to fly out the next morning. Before yet another snowstorm hit Boston, we left for cold and windy Cincinnati, and arrived at our hotel--the former Cincinnati Enquirer building--safely.



Chrissi, Ashley, and I were the first to present, all scheduled at 3:30pm on Thursday, with Bridget following at 9:30 Friday morning and Dakota at 2pm Friday afternoon. Each Merrimack student wrote a paper on a completely different subject, but the influence of our various English professors was clear in our topics and analyses. Though we recognized that our behavior would reflect upon our

institution, our papers also served to represent the department and the personal interests we've cultivated in our classes over the past three to four years. For example, Chrissi wrote about *Frankenstein* themes in Marvel films, a paper she had originally written for Sophomore Seminar with Professor Vatalaro, while I similarly developed a paper I had written for a class on the Gothic with Professor Scherwatzky. Dakota presented on Whitman's "Modern Man," a paper from Professor McWhorter's Modern American Poetry course, and Bridget's paper, which focused on analyzing pop- (continued)



punk lyrics as poetry, was originally slated to serve as her capstone topic. Ashley presented an original poem, inspired by a prompt Dakota had come up with during Writers



Kiera presenting

Circle, in a session for creative fiction prose. In our own way, our papers were collectively somewhat of a microcosm of the department itself.

While reading before an audience represented a new and exciting experience, listening to the other students proved just as rewarding. Just like our group, the other attendees were representing their colleges, their professors, and their own skills and interests while at the podium, and hearing what English majors across the nation find interesting and important to discuss fascinated me. The conference program covered well over one hundred panels, a multitude of genres, time periods, and media.

Though the classes that Chrissi, Ashley, Bridget, Dakota, and I take at Merrimack often enroll predominantly English majors, listening to and interacting with people our age who share similar passions for what they do was both really enjoyable and really validating. Even as juniors and seniors, I don't think we often get the chance to engage with material in such a way, by essentially replicating on a smaller stage what our own faculty experience at professional conferences. Students tackled a wide variety of topics, such as women's roles in *Frankenstein* and subversive themes in the musical *Hamilton*; one memorable paper focused on Marxist themes in *SpongeBob*. The students and professors who attended the



Ashley presenting

panels remained involved and engrossed in the presentations, and often asked insightful questions that prompted discussions between panelists and auditors. During my own panel, one audience member and the panel chair posed questions in response to my paper, and realizing that other adults in the field who don't know me on a personal level demonstrated enough interest in the topic and material informing my presentation—enough to approach me about it—was special for me. That opportunity to share my thoughts and interpretations definitely made the nerves of being a first-time attendee, particularly one with an aversion to public speaking, worth it.



Fountain Square

Watching good friends present their papers became an additional highlight of the conference. Over the years we've known each other and learned a lot about what interests our classmates, but seeing my peers share their well-written papers in such a professional environment made me feel especially proud of their hard work and the community we have built at Merrimack. Bridget's paper on pop-punk generated a lot of genuine interest among audience members attending her panel, which was focused on popular culture, with other students presenting on television shows like *Skins* or *SpongeBob*. Dakota's panel, called "Liberating (continued)



Bridget after presenting

Revelations in 19th-Century Literature,” was perhaps the most traditional of us all, and he fielded some difficult questions about Wordsworth in an impressive way that spoke to the depth of his interest in the subject. While it’s certainly less nerve-wracking to be an audience member rather than a presenter, even just listening to the other students enriched and enlightened me, with regard to both the presented material and to English programs representing a host of national institutions.



In between our presentations, we did a fair amount of exploring in Cincinnati.



Lunch at the Hotel Diner

Having never been to the city before, we were all interested to learn more about its history and flavor. We learned immediately upon landing and entering the airport that Cincinnati is right on the Kentucky border (the airport, incidentally, is even called the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport). The drive to the hotel brought us



Mural in Over-The-Rhine District

over the Ohio River, the boundary between the states, and past some varied and interesting architecture. Though less snow covered the ground than we had seen at home, the wind, at least on the first day of our trip, chilled us and forced us to wear our winter jackets. We surveyed a variety of different restaurants, from a Mexican place to a bar named after Jekyll from the famous Stevenson book, and the group enjoyed most, perhaps, our somewhat spontaneous walk to the Over-The-Rhine district, named for its early residents of German descent. An easy stroll from our hotel, our entry into the district introduced us to a noticeably different atmosphere. Large and colorful murals decorated nearly every brick wall we passed and a number of diverse restaurants lined every street. After asking a passerby for recommendations, we decided randomly on an American place we had noticed and by pure luck ended up enjoying one of the best meals of the trip.



Over-The-Rhine District

Even though the thought of presenting at a conference initially stressed me out, I’m so grateful I had the opportunity. It’s definitely not easy to get up in front of a room full of strangers to read your work, but these kinds of challenges make us stronger field practitioners. Being able to spend time with my peers and professors in a rigorous academic environment complemented by such a welcoming setting lodged the experience in my memory, and I look back on the experience knowing I learned a lot but really enjoyed myself at the same time.



Mural in Over-The-Rhine District

The Cryptic Manson of *Heaven Upside Down*

By Dakota Durbin



Marilyn Manson is one of the most enigmatic musical artists to come out of the 90s and, despite waves of criticism and controversy, he has continued to release music to this day. His band achieved immense popularity with its second studio album release, *Antichrist Superstar*, in 1996 and then its follow-up, *Mechanical Animals*, in 1998. Both albums dealt with similar themes, specifically social alienation, conformity, religion, drugs, sex, and government corruption. They spoke

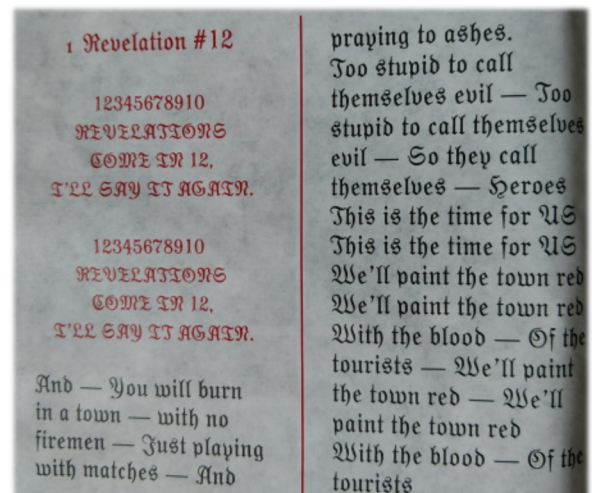


to a large population of angry young people who then looked to Manson as an icon of social change and revolution. Marilyn Manson, legally known as Brian Warner, responded to the calling of his fans and embraced the role of an artist intent on disturbing and shocking the world. Outcry from concerned parents and politicians only fueled the flames of the iconoclast, granting him a larger stage and audience to spread his message and beliefs. Now, over 10 years later, Manson continues his pop cultural and musical legacy with the release of his 10th studio album, *Heaven Upside Down*, which appeared in October 2017.

Heaven Upside Down qualifies as one of Manson’s most ferocious albums to date; it showcases an energy and mission critics believed had been missing from some of his former releases. This album features a powerhouse of heavy instrumentation and cryptic lyrical content which, when mixed together, create a musical experience that qualifies as original yet still uniquely Manson. His deft use of theatrics and symbols to craft concept albums exploring social mores and the human condition in such a seemingly subtle yet abundantly open way makes Manson a spellbinding and provocative artist.

Manson’s lyrics generate layers of meaning. Some ride the surface; others travel deeper. This element makes exploring his lyrical content much like confronting a foreign puzzle map; however, in this case, the puzzle pieces often appear to fit in more than one location. I approached *Heaven Upside Down* with this in mind and found myself confronted by a conundrum that seemed to have not one solution, but many and the analysis I offer represents just one of the many someone could apply to his most recent work.

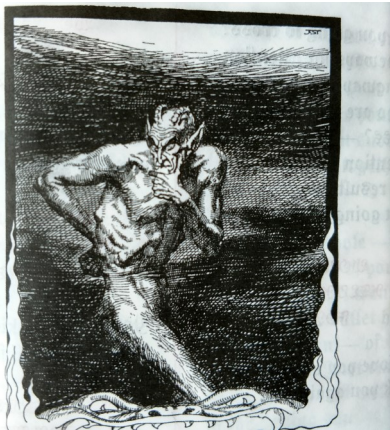
The album introduces itself with the track “Revelation #12.” The track sounds more like an air siren warning than a song, beginning with Manson counting from one to ten and claiming “Revelations come in twelve, I’ll say it again.” He repeats this chant and the experience begins to feel more like a countdown in reverse. Manson characteristically includes religious allusions and concepts in his music and with that in mind it seems fair to forge a connection between this track and Revelation 12, the final chapter of the Book of Revelation, which foretells the coming of the apocalypse. The message of destruction migrates into the first verse, as Manson warns, “you will burn in a town with no firemen, just playing with matches and praying to ashes.” There is no help coming, Manson seems to think, for we have started a fire and lack the means for saving ourselves from it. By alluding to the Christian Bible and specifying that prayers will turn to ashes, Manson cuts away at religion and its institutional effectiveness. It remains impotent at curtailing destruction.



Manson sets the track in America. The pre-chorus screams out, “This is the time for US”, with a capitalized “u” and “s” (according to the album sleeve’s lyrics), declaring an imminent apocalypse looms before “us” living, ostensibly, in the U.S. Other repetitions in the track are “too stupid to call themselves evil / so they call themselves heroes,” a reference to the duality of all people, commonly finding expression in delusion, hypocrisy, and manipulation of others. However, given that Manson has identified the U.S. and that, in a recent interview by Lorraine Ali in the *Los Angeles Times*, Manson stated that this record was “very political,” I wonder whether or not he’s aimed accusations of deceitfulness and stupidity at a more specific target. During the 2016 election, in an interview with the *Daily Beast*, Manson, regarding his reason for not voting, said, “I don’t think that, as an artist, I can make as much of a difference voting as I can [by way of] the commentaries I make in music.” While Manson hasn’t targeted specific politicians, it seems clear that he had politics on his mind when crafting the lyrics and contemplating the potential impact of *Heaven Upside Down*.



Myriad symbols and subtleties, particularly by way of numbers and disorienting locutions, inform *Heaven Upside Down*. Two of the other tracks on the album include numbers in their titles, “Kill4Me” and “Say10.” Additionally, another track title makes use of the dollar sign, “Je\$u\$ Cri\$i\$”. While phonetically the common listener makes out these phrases with relative ease, a certain sense of oddness or confusion persists when confronting them written out before you. Manson intends this estrangement. He uses language on this album to force listeners to stop and question what they hear and what they read. His technique elucidates a direct connection between interpreting something in your head and then hearing it out loud. I had to articulate “Say10” out loud in order to draw his intended pronunciation of “Satan” and I believe Manson wants his readers to perform regularly that exercise when attempting to process his lyrics.



So why might Manson resort to such cryptic ways of delivering his socio-political commentary in music? If his goal is to expose the failure and corruption of organized religion or force corrupt politics out of the shadows, why not do so more accessibly? Why the smoke and mirrors, Manson? I would argue that he has designed this lyrically complex and disorientating album to illuminate the state of disconnection and disarray that jeopardizes our society, our personal lives, and our political climate. Fake news reports, divisive racial classifications, warring political parties, splintering ideologies, and violent demonstrations pervade our atmosphere. Communication has become disjointed, dysfunctional, and damaged. Manson captures this stressful and dark reality on *Heaven Upside Down* and indulges symbol and code as the means to drawing attention to the intricacy and slipperiness of language and other signs, the building blocks of worlds and realities.

“Tattooed in Reverse” made this particular narrative mission stand out to me. Another conundrum, the song prompts one to wonder, how does one get tattooed in reverse? Locating the answer to this question continued to plague me and the lyrics didn’t help—in fact, they obfuscated the solution even more. “F--- your bible and your Babel, I made this psalm into my dirty bomb” spits Manson, as the track explodes into a mix of thick guitar riffs and electronic crunches. Typically, he makes various (continued next page)

religious references but one that particularly caught my eye was his mention of “Babel,” no doubt punning on “babbling” and summoning the story behind The Tower of Babel. The building of that structure resulted in a divine punishment that fractured human language and made it difficult for individuals to understand one another and work in harmony. For the Judeo-Christian God, the Tower symbolized human arrogance, even though it initially served as a testament to humanity’s ability to communicate and cooperate toward a common goal—just one Biblical example of a communication misfire of divine proportion. The fact that Manson references this fable is no coincidence. Manson’s music enacts the same disconnect, but at the same time bridges a gap for those paying attention to what he says.

Heaven Upside Down presents a real challenge to the listener. The album remains replete with brainteasing symbols and cyphers, and when listening it can be easy to get lost. But I believe Manson wishes his listeners to struggle toward meaning and clarity. At its core, the album fundamentally engages with how people perceive and interpret language and correspond amongst themselves. A multitude of symbols, messages, and threads of thought persist on this album and they can be traced through the album’s context. I urge those of you itching for a challenge (and seeking an amazing music experience) to check out Marilyn Manson’s newest masterpiece, *Heaven Upside Down*, and see what insights you can uncover.



Marilyn Manson Performing Live at the House of Blues Boston—
Feb. 12, 2018 Photo by Dakota Durbin

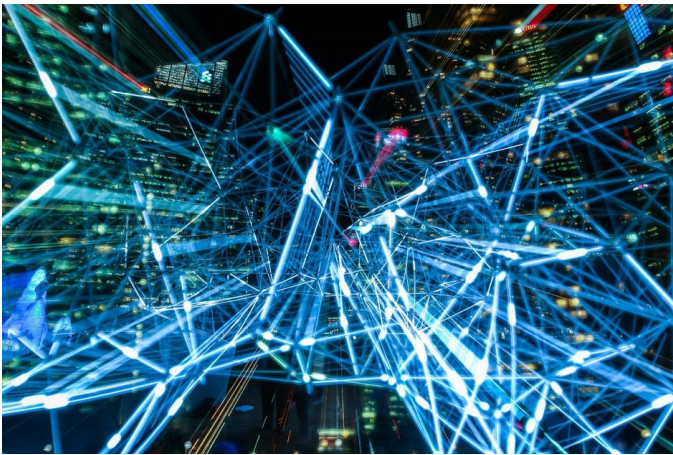
Living with a Purpose in Our Automated Future

By Rachel MacKelcan

In a recent article focusing on the future of the job market and the not-so-gradual growth of Artificially Intelligent technologies, world renowned entrepreneurs Mark Cuban, Elon Musk, Jonathan Rosenberg, and physicist Professor Stephen Hawking have sparked a conversation about what might happen when 60% of the world's occupations become automated. In this feature they discuss the potential of liberal arts majors to rise from the ashes, reborn in this new world where they and only they possess the skills that make them anything but expendable. So despite what most job marketers have predicted regarding your future, the Cuban article testifies to the appreciating currency of our training.



The article opens by quoting from remarks made at a recent industry conference by international tycoon Mark Cuban. He states that if he could go back and do it all over again he would choose a liberal arts degree over an Accounting degree. Though Cuban does not elaborate on why individuals trained in English, Philosophy, the social sciences and world languages will rise above those equipped with today's popular pre-professional degrees (he identifies only the general skill "critical thinking"), the transferable skills he undoubtedly has in mind involve close reading of text, questioning received knowledge, understanding the complexities of our common humanity, and exploring vistas created by creative thinking and creative expression—all of which might deepen and enrich life in the coming machine age. But even as we approach the threshold of this future, I have found that these skills remain precious now more than ever. In a recent job interview an employer inquired about my ability to write critically, having noticed that I have chosen a three-course degree concentration (in a ten-course major program) in creative fiction. I acknowledged that I have studied and written creative narrative, but that I have also been trained to think critically, to identify nuance and persistent patterns in writing and to reprocess technical and dry narrative to suit the needs of a particular audience. Creative expression relies on an understanding of rhetorical and generic convention and textual analysis requires creativity. In this regard, majors in English distinguish themselves.



While preparing for the interview I never imagined that my writing ability would become a focal point, but my ability to work with that question gave me the sort of confidence that an artificial intellect might never have or appreciate.

What I learned from this experience mirrored perfectly the Cuban article. I learned that these skills,



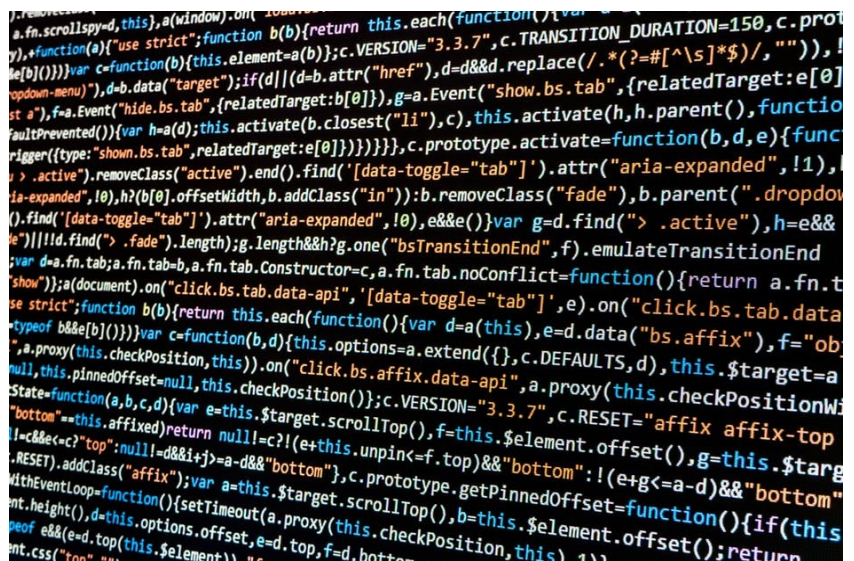
which are already highly valuable in the workplace, will only increase in value as we enter an age in which so many jobs have become automated, especially our capacity to identify signs and interpret verbal patterns. We will be able to critically assess and perhaps complement the critical skills of our artificially intelligent partners. The same skills will likely preserve us in a world dominated by ones and zeroes— itself a product of semiotic creativity. The blend of creative and imaginative thinking might be something no programmed entity or device can match. Just as a calculator cannot always understand the innate complexities of a radical equation, a thinking machine might not be able to replicate the human mind. Liberal arts majors excel at

grappling with rational (as well as irrational) concepts, formal expressions, and placing them into historical and relevant contexts. Whereas engineers understand how, English majors comprehend what it all might mean.

In the future, 60% of jobs will become automated. That means 60% of the world will remain unable to earn an income. In the second half of the article Musk and Hawking identify this flaw. Together they come to the conclusion that, without a proper income, a new welfare system will emerge. Musk and Hawking predict that, in a future where there is no need for “workers,” governments will be forced to accommodate those from whom progress has stripped vocations and rescinded civic purpose. What will that world look like? Will it be as dystopian as most writers today imagine it to be or will it offer liberation and greater opportunity for creative expression?

At 22 I cannot imagine a time when I would not be working, thinking, or inventing. In a way I have trained myself to be the machine that scientists are trying to replicate. And while my mother always raised me to believe I am an individual, I cannot say that I am not scared about a future that might eventually master the program that makes me what I am.

For now, at least, this article suggests that I am safe, that I am free and valuable. Visionary individuals have forecast that my type of learning will not go extinct, but the funny thing is I have been practically trained to know what to do and how to act when I do not have work.



An English program has prepared me to function in a world constructed by language and by signs, to remain aware of the shaping power of social and historical contexts, to consume slowly meaningful lessons given to me by everyday circumstance; however, some of my friends are not so lucky. Some of my friends who study Math and Accounting and even Engineering might one day find themselves lacking resources requisite for living a meaningful life. So, while I am grateful for the reassurance Cuban, Hawking, Musk, and Rosenberg have offered, I worry that in this new world many of us will feel undervalued, generating fear, anxiety, and levels of self-esteem so low they defy calculation by current standards.

Beyond the current horizon some of us might face obsolescence. Those individuals will need help navigating this transition. The “product” of liberal arts training might become vital for survival, but also for happiness. Being able to communicate with one another is crucial, but being able to communicate with artificially intelligent entities will challenge us all. Problem solving abilities—call them problem recognition skills—will help us cope with alternative intelligence. Individuals will need to stretch their powers of imagination in order to cultivate unconventional modes of thinking and discover new conceptual vistas.

One suggestion: we need to start building more training in creativity into core curricula. This will not only benefit the liberal arts, but the critical thinking jobs as well. Take engineering for example. An engineer is trained to design a system and address problems that might compromise that system, but there is never only one way to fix that problem. Someone once observed that Benjamin Franklin failed 1,000 times to make the lightbulb, to which Franklin responded that he merely found 1000 ways not to make a lightbulb; he only needed one way to make it work. The example serves as a metaphor of our future. In the machine age there will be countless ways not to make a life for oneself and there might be a million ways to fail, but we only solution need work. The future isn't black and white. It doesn't taste like metal; the skies aren't black and plumes of smoke don't fly from every rooftop. Despite what dystopian writers think, the future isn't mired in different shades of grey. Our future is the one we write into existence.





Bridget reads "Where I'm From."



Sigma Tau Delta Conference presenters put their trip into perspective.



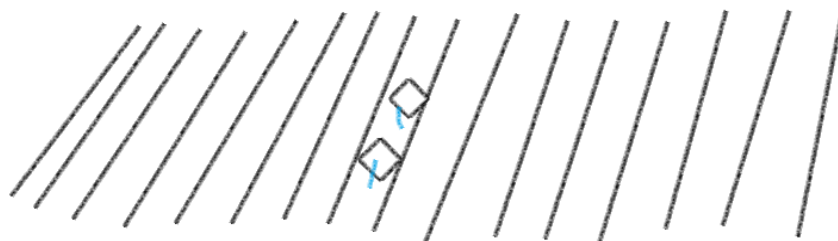
Comfortable at the podium once again



Dakota reads "Deer" and "Lucy Brook."

CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!!

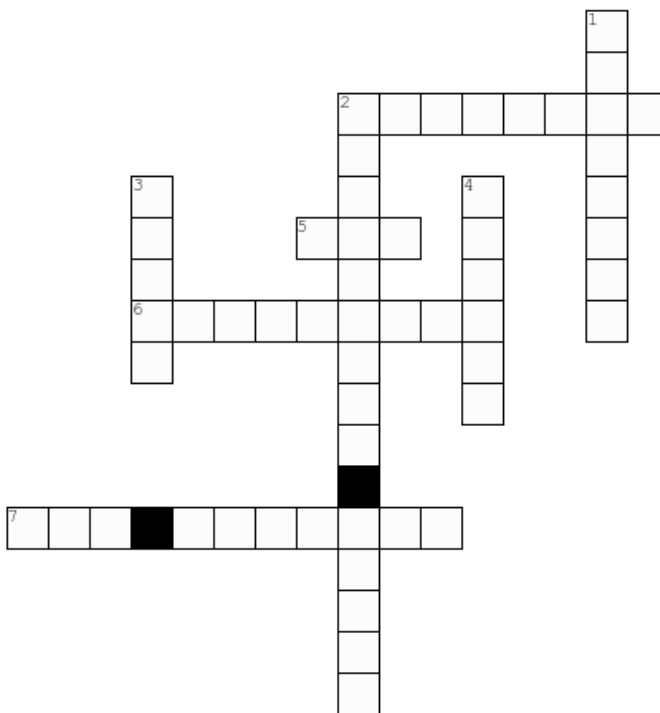
Penny: "psst. Big Brother is watching."



Pendleton: "Penny... I'm an only child"

Literary Fun in the Sun!

Complete the summer reading themed crossword below.



Created with TheTeachersCorner.net [Crossword Puzzle Generator](#)

Across

- 2. What is the home state of the Joads?
- 5. The color the handmaids wear?
- 6. Paulo Coelho's Classic
- 7. Who's always watching?

Down

- 1. Mr. Darcy's estate.
- 2. A Cape Cod Classic
- 3. The author of The Book Thief.
- 4. The Firemen turned reader in Fahrenheit 451.

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Please unscramble the summer reading themed words below.

Created on TheTeachersCorner.net [Word Scramble Maker](#)

- | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. nwpekeas | Language of 1984 |
| 2. pedri dna urdeciepj | Jane Austen's most popular novel |
| 3. sahemat | Home of the National Seashore |
| 4. ibneksect | Author of the 1939 classic |
| 5. theda | Narrator of The Book Thief |
| 6. replpu rani | Great Prince song |

Crossword Answers:
 Across: 2. Oklahoma, 5. red, 6. alchemist, 7. big brother
 Down: 1. Pemberly, 2. Outermost House, 3. Zusak, 4. Montag
 Scramble Answers:
 1. Newspeak, 2. Pride and Prejudice, 3. Eastham, 4. Steinbeck, 5. Death, 6. Purple Rain