

Andrea Brucculeri Writing Samples

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Creative Writing

Salt Water Heart

“Hurry,” Luke Roe stood with his hand on the handle of the front door, shifting this weight from foot to foot, watching Gideon struggle to pull his Velcro shoes on. The sun would set in an hour, maybe less, and Gideon had already insisted that they pack his blue Power Ranger backpack with flashlights and sour gummies before going. Sometimes, Luke found it hard to forgive his little brother for being a six-year-old.

“Dad is going to be mad,” Gideon said, pushing himself off the kitchen tile and walking gingerly toward the front door, looking back like he might have forgotten something important. Their father owned the most popular seafood restaurant in their tiny coastal island— Amara’s— named after their mother. She had drowned two years ago in a diving accident, and the family had rarely touched Atlantic waters since. But the licks and salt of the ocean waves were the closest thing Luke had to a mother now. They brought her back to him.

Nine minutes earlier, twelve-year-old Luke was begging his father to come home over the phone. “You promised you would take us out on the boat today. You *promised*.”

“I’m so sorry Luke,” his father was shouting over the boisterous excitement of Amara’s restaurant. “You and Gideon should come to the restaurant tonight. We will have jalapeño crab cakes. You can eat as many as you want, everything you want *with* soda. There will even be fireworks! Remember we’re celebr—”

Luke hung up, bottom lip trembling. His dad was always like this. Always working. He treated Amara’s like it was Mom, like it would bring her back, like the seafood restaurant is what she had loved. But he loved the restaurant. She loved the sea.

Eight minutes earlier, Luke had decided to go to the ocean. And now, Gideon was holding him up.

“Dad’s busy,” Luke said, grabbing Gideon’s arm and pulling him outside.

The Roe’s house was of the typical kind for homes so close to the water— pale yellow and raised up, with a low-ceiling garage beneath that was covered in sand despite the most persistent sweeping. There wasn’t much of a yard, just a gravel driveway and some brown patches of grass that always seemed to be dying but never dead. There was enough open space for Luke to play a pretty fun game of Frisbee with his dad. The location was perfect for the family— only a few minutes from the beach, and a few minutes from the restaurant, just in opposite directions.

When Mom was alive, Luke loved to walk down the beach with her and look for the little pink and cinnamon-colored shells that peeked out of the sand. She had taught him how to float on his back in the water by spreading out his limbs and being very still and calm, letting his body bob up and down in the waves. He remembered seeing her sunny golden hair glowing out in the water like a halo, and the way she was so gentle in the water. Luke used to think that meant the water would be gentle with her, too.

The boys trotted down creaking wooden stairs with brown paint terribly chipped from years of enduring the beastly storms that rolled off the Gulf of Mexico. They raced past the stilts and began tugging their favorite toy from the dust and grit of their garage—a red two-seater inflatable kayak. Dad would sit in the back and Luke would sit in the front, and they'd paddle way farther out in the water than Luke was brave enough to go. When it wasn't too hot, Dad would cast the fishing line far out into the water and then let Luke hold the pole, and any time Luke caught a fish his dad would let him take full credit, even if he needed a lot of help reeling it in. But Luke's favorite memories on the kayak were the calm days when he and his father would just float and watch the tiny people far off on the shore, and they'd talk about big things and small things and things that made it seem like even the ocean was listening close, leaning in, nodding slowly. Luke had also used the boat dozens of times by himself, but never without his father watching.

"I'll carry the boat, you grab the paddles," Luke said, glancing back at his brother, and then pausing, noticing father's spearfishing gun leaning against the wall. Luke had only used it once, and it was when his father took him snorkeling in shallow water for his eleventh birthday. Other than that, he hadn't even seen his dad use the thing since his mom had died. Mom used to love snorkeling and spearfishing, except she always felt bad killing the fish. Especially the green ones. That was her favorite color.

"What are you doing?" Gideon asked as Luke ran back into the garage and picked up the gun. Gideon looked just like Mom in so many ways, with the wavy blond hair and big blue Disney eyes. This was one of the times that he sounded like her too— asking a question but letting his voice lower at the end like a statement.

"I'm just going to shoot it once," Luke said, carefully setting the gun down in the boat before grabbing the handle of the kayak and continuing to drag it along. His father would be horrified if he knew Luke was using his gun, but Luke decided that his father deserved it for being so selfish. He had *promised*.

Gideon pulled two paddles off the wooden rack, saying nothing. Luke often took him on sneaky adventures, like to the back of Amara's where bricks of melting chocolate were kept with plastic wrap stretched around them, or to the dunes where they would romp in the soft sand hills and catch little crabs with their bare hands. But this felt different.

The boat dragged with a hideous grinding sound against the gritty concrete, and the noise only lifted when the patchy pavement faded into sand. The wind gliding off the water pushed back Luke's dark, corkscrewed hair and spit sand into his face, but he loved it, and he breathed in the salt and humidity and felt his chest swell with something that felt like the sun. Stretched before him lay the sand of ten-thousand sand castles, hundreds of memories of the tawny glow of the setting sun, and a billion waves crashing and sucking on the shore, forever.

"C'mon!" He began to run toward the water, feeling the air ripple in his faded Zelda T-shirt and burnt-orange swim trunks. He felt limitless, exhilarated, awed, like he was running towards God.

Luke hit the water and kept his pace despite the drag of cold liquid against his shins. Gideon's quick steps were slapping the wet sand behind him, and there was a persistent clanking from the flashlights jostling in his Power Ranger backpack. Luke had nearly forgotten that his little brother was behind him, only thinking about how the water and sky faded together in the far distance, like there was no line between earth and heaven.

When Luke was about waist deep in the water he grabbed his brother's hand and help him into the boat. "The front," he said. "The better paddler needs to be in the back. So you should sit in the front. Careful with the gun. Careful Gideon!"

Three minutes later they were settled, paddling slowly into the darkening sea, bobbing in docile waves, quiet. Two yellow and white buoys rocked in the water to their left, reminding Luke of the sunny-side-up eggs his father would make him in the morning before school. Every day, breakfast was a treat— maybe tomorrow would be pecan pancakes with Irish butter and Vermont syrup, or maybe sesame bagels fresh from the market with honey ham and eggs inside. Dad packed the best school lunches, too. He'd fill thermoses with minestrone soup or butternut-squash bisque, and it was still hot by the meal period at 11:46 a.m. On rainy days, he would pack a little treat, like freshly dipped chocolate strawberries, almond raspberry macarons, or a whole chocolate orange to share with his friends. Sometimes he would even bring Luke's favorite meals from Amara's with everything from the sesame calamari to the ginger scallion lobster. On special occasions, he always got his favorite jalapeño crab cakes.

Gideon twisted around in his seat to look back at his brother. He was still wearing his light blue button down and khaki pants from school, having been rushed out the door too quickly to change. "Aren't we kind of far away from the land?" Gideon made a special effort to act brave around Luke, but Luke could always tell when his little bother was nervous.

"Well," Luke looked over his shoulder. They had moved much farther than he expected. "I guess if you're scared, we'll stop paddling out. Now help me find some fish."

Leaning over the sides of the kayak, the boys squinted into the shadowy waters. It was difficult to see anything, never mind the fish. Luke felt a flash of frustration, certain that this

would have been easier if they had just left the house earlier while the sunlight was stronger. “Gimme one of those flashlights,” he said without glancing up, snapping his arm toward Gideon with his palm up and his fingers splayed out.

It was useless. The flashlight not only failed to effectively illuminate the water, but Luke was pretty sure that the light was scaring away the fish. He flicked the clunky metal thing off and tossed it onto Gideon’s lap. “Never mind. Just try to be super still and quiet.”

Luke began to load the gun. He forgot most of what he knew about how to shoot it, but he knew he had to hold the thing to his chest and pull the rubbers back. It was much harder than he remembered, recalling that his dad had helped him load the gun underwater. He remembered the way the wetsuit cushioned the hard back of the gun against his chest. This all seemed somewhat unnatural in comparison, but as he clicked the cable into the spear notch, he caught a glimpse of movement under the water.

Gideon gasped, eyes glowing with excitement, pointing at a small dark mass floating just a few feet away. Luke hastily took aim, shooting Gideon a hard look, paranoid that his brother would mess this up.

They waited.

One seagull was crying in the distance. Most of them had quieted down by now.

Gideon bit his lip, glancing at the sky.

Then Luke fired the gun.

Everything happened really fast after that.

Luke screamed. There was a snap and a deep whooshing noise as the boat buckled and gave out beneath them. Gideon was pale and trembling, repeating, “are you okay,” over and over. Water was getting into the boat. Luke had dropped the gun. It was so dark now that he could barely see it laying half in the water, half in the deflating part of the boat.

“I don’t know,” Luke managed, hugging himself, closing his eyes tight as a monstrous ache burned in his shoulder and chest.

He did know. He remembered now. The spearfishing gun was supposed to be shot underwater. It wasn’t even meant to be loaded on land. The spear must have sprung back and sliced open the kayak. Must not have hit the fish.

“We’re sinking. Luke, we’re sinking,” Gideon grabbed Luke’s arm, his voice high and tight with panic.

“I know!” Hot tears welled in Luke’s eyes. “Just start paddling you freaking idiot!” His voice was rough with the pressure of holding back his crying.

“Wh... Which direction?” Gideon was hugging his paddle, moonlight glistening in his eyes.

“What?” Luke looked around. He didn’t remember the sun setting.

It was dark. All the space around them looked the same, the same strokes of midnight blue and black. There were glitters of light— maybe from boats, or buildings, or just stars reflecting off the water. Land could have been anywhere, or nowhere.

The kayak didn't completely sink. The left and right half of it were inflated separately, and only the right side had been impaled. The boys shifted onto the remaining floating bulge of the kayak. Luke's chest felt like it was hit with a steal bat from the kickback of the gun. The spearfishing gun was gone now. It could have sunk, or maybe it floated away.

Luke tried to remember which direction the sun had set, tried to remember if the sun set to the west or the east. Gideon had one flashlight in each hand, swiping them around like he could use the light to rub away the darkness.

Luke looked at Gideon. The night had bathed them in silver. Everything was quiet, except for the waves against their half-sunken ship.

Luke swore the waters were watching him, with eyes peering down from space.

Then there was an explosion of light. Green and white light, bursting and shattering in the air.

Fireworks.

"Go! Go!" Both of the boys were shouting and paddling at once, frantically thrusting their watery raft in the direction of the blasts. Fire blazed through Luke's body as he fought against the torture of using his right shoulder, the half of him that had taken the brutal impact of the spearfishing gun.

He shoved his paddle into the frothy waves and yanked back, over and over again, until he was gasping and straining against the water that streaked his face and made his hair stick in cold clumps to his scalp. He could hear Gideon groaning in effort and felt a pang in his heart for the six-year-old. Gideon could be a pretty tough kid, sometimes.

By the time the firework show ended, the shore was clearly outlined. The paddling had become so exhausting that the boys ditched the paddles and laid their chests on the boat, kicking their legs weakly to propel forward. It was so cold, and so slow. Luke went with one arm around Gideon, who was shivering like a pot lid on boiling water.

Luke had never felt any kind of relief like he did when his toes sank into the slimy, squishy murk of underwater land. It was like being the first moment of air-conditioning after a scorching Texas day. But this was different, this was something he felt much deeper than his skin — relieved, triumphant, and broken, all at once.

"Thank God. Thank God for Dad's stupid fireworks," he whispered as they trudged out of the water, abandoning the boat, the paddles long gone.

"Yeah," said Gideon. "Good thing it was mom's birthday, or we never would have gotten home."

Red Lights

Zach patted my back as I stepped into the prostitute's room. "Go get 'em tiger."

Dad would never forgive me if he found out. He was the head pastor at The Village Church in my hometown back in Pearland, Texas. He had forbidden me from joining a fraternity for fear that I would be surrounded by too many sinful temptations, and I only earned my monthly allowance if I attended a weekly young adult service. I couldn't stop imagining my dad's deep brown eyes stricken with horror and disappointment, all his fragile trust and pride in me shattered. We had just gotten back on good terms after the Bud Light incident, when he had found a single can crushed at the bottom of my trashcan after a New Year's gathering with my high school friends. But I knew my dad was beginning to trust me again when he allowed me to study abroad in Haarlem, a Netherlands town a short train ride away from Amsterdam. I prayed that he wouldn't track my phone and see me in the Red Light District, but then realized I probably shouldn't be asking God for help with this.

I can't believe it. Ten years of Bible school and I'm still going to go to Hell, I thought.

It was my 20th birthday, and I was a virgin. I wasn't self-conscious about it until my high school friends started to hook up with girls in college. Now they talked differently around me, like my ears were too delicate to hear about their wild lives. Then the whole "waiting 'till marriage" thing started to feel pretty bogus last week when my unmarried young adult leader was caught having sex with two high schoolers in the church bus. He tried to pretend he was in love with them, like that would justify it. But I thought the whole point was waiting for just one person.

Zach told me that all the girls had lost their virginities by now, anyway. You won't believe it, but the ladies aren't exactly flocking around botany majors, and I didn't want another year of male nun jokes and cluelessness. Zach Lodger, a junior from my university, was the only friend I had made over the past week abroad, and he insisted that Amsterdam was the best place to "get some experiences out of the way." He was in a frat, so I figured he knew what he was talking about.

The woman closed the glass door behind me and pulled the red velvet curtain shut, providing some low level of privacy from the crowds of drunken tourists. The shouting and laughter from outside was muffled, but I still felt like I was standing in public. I heard the door lock with the deep thud of a deadbolt and my chest tightened with anxiety, wondering if God really could forgive anything. The room was half the size of my dorm and smelled like lime and cigarettes. The walls were the color of wine and strangely decorated with a mix of leather and feathered materials. The red lights that lit up her window gave the space a smokey crimson hue, like a filter over a casino picture. *Oh God, is it too late to leave?*

Holding my breath, I stared at the woman as she turned to face me. She appeared a little older than me, slender and relaxed, with blonde hair falling in long, loose curls over her body. The full, shell-pink lips under her little sloped nose reminded me of a Disney princess. Her eyes were the color of Mom's bluebonnets, and her skin was smooth and tan like my friend Marcy on the sand volleyball team. I began to sweat, trying to pretend she was wearing more than a gold silk thong and rhinestoned black stilettos, wondering if I was allowed to be aroused or if I was supposed to play it cool.

"You pay first," she said with a slight Dutch accent and a tone that reminded me of my mother's do-your-chores voice. I tried not to keep thinking of my mom as I handed her the 50 euros Zach had given me. Mom was so proud of me for going to Holland to study tulips. Her classroom-sized fruit and vegetable garden in our backyard sparked my interest in plant sciences years ago, and now she sends Better Homes & Gardens magazines to my dorm every month so we can discuss them like a book club. Shame was heavy in my stomach. If my Dad had just let me leave my smart phone at home, I'd have nothing to worry about. I could have bought a simple flip phone here, and my parents wouldn't be able to track my location. Free from any risk of disappointing them, I'd only have to worry about God's displeasure, which was somehow less troubling. But Dad had insisted on the smart phone, and now he seemed to lurk like a ghost of guilt in my pocket.

The prostitute counted my money. My phone buzz and I glanced at it quickly, nervous to take my eyes off the woman. It was a text from my dad. "**How's the Ann Frank House?**"

Regret kicked my stomach. *I shouldn't have lied to him*, I thought. I told him I was going into Amsterdam tonight to see the Ann Frank House. I should have just said I was going to check out the city, which was true. Now I had to keep up with this stupid lie. *Whatever*. I pushed my phone back into my pocket and looked back up at the woman, feeling a fresh rush of butterflies when I caught a glimpse of the little rose tattooed to her left butt cheek.

"Do you have a name? I'm Navin," I blurted, instantly mortified for asking such an absurd question. She was a hooker, not a plant. Of course she had a name.

"Venus." I don't think that was her real name. She smiled coyly as she tucked the cash into a dark green drawstring sack. Now she was on, like I had flipped a switch. "What would you like?" Her voice was light, thick, and euphonic all at once, like a purr of a wild cat.

"Like, t-to do?" I couldn't feel my tongue. I momentarily made eye contact with her nipples. Last time I saw a naked breast was 9th grade health class.

"Yes."

Heart beating my ribcage like a punching bag, I glanced around the room with a fantasy of finding a menu like the Romans had in the brothels of ancient Pompeii. Zach told me this would feel natural, but I felt about as natural as a goat in a tree. "Can I take off my shoes?"

She frowned a bit, her expression reminding me of face girl's got when I told them about the washing machine incident that killed my pet cat. "What?"

My face was boiling red, eyes bugging out of my skull, my only remaining sentence focused on all the things my father had taught me about going over to a guest's house. "M-may I?" Then, as if the conversation hadn't become brutal enough, "I like having bare feet."

"You're into feet?"

"What? No," I stood gaping at her, shocked at my own stupidity and profoundly uncomfortable. I wanted to pull up the hood on my navy university sweatshirt and sprint back outside, into the anonymity of the crowd. I wanted to hide under the filth of these broken streets where Zach and my parents and God could never find me.

My phone buzzed again, making me just in surprise before quickly checking my phone. Two more texts from Dad lit of the screen. "**The Ann Frank House wasn't open today. Where have you been?**" "**Navin I can't see you but God can.**"

My gut twisted with dread. *He knows.* I nearly groaned out loud, clutching my phone tightly and looking between Venus and the ground. I hoped she didn't think it was rude that I kept looking at my phone, but I was so fretful of my father that I couldn't help it. *Why can't Dad just freaking leave me alone?* A twinge of anger stirred in my chest. *Why doesn't he trust me?*

"Here," Venus leaned over, her back creating a smooth, feminine arch as she lifted each foot and took off her heels. She was still taller than me by two inches. "Now your turn," she gestured to my feet with one veinless hand, embellished with long, pomegranate-red nails.

Kneeling down on the cold silver tile twinkling with glitter and sequins, I untied my shoes with shaking fingers, staring intently at my orange Nike sneakers as if removing them took a massive amount of concentration. "It doesn't have to be anything crazy, you know," she said, sitting on the twin-sized mattress on the ground made with light purple sheets and several small pillows. I think she sat down to get on eye-level with me, kind of like my mother used to do when I started crying in the grocery store.

"My friend recommended that I have sex," I told her like we were discussing movie reviews. I hadn't noticed the sink until now. It was stationed in the back corner, cracked, white, and unusually short. There were several inches of blue-tinged soapy water in the sink along with a bottle of the yellow Dial soap that doctors scrub up with before surgeries. It occurred to me that the sink may not just be used for washing hands.

"So, you want sex?" Venus was leaning back on her palms, somehow immune to all my awkwardness, or maybe she really just didn't care. I envied her composure, and how no one would judge her for intimacy, and she probably wouldn't care if they did. She didn't have to be worried or stressed right now, but I did, and I wasn't even the one with the dangerous and stigmatized profession.

“I don’t know.” I immediately regretted sitting Indian-style on the floor, thinking about all the prostitute sparkles that would be clinging to the butt of my jeans for the rest of the trip. Venus cocked her head slightly to the side, almost flirtatiously, as if to ask what I meant. Her golden ringlets of hair were framing her chest like something out of a Victoria’s Secret ad. *What am I afraid of*, I thought, swallowing hard and praying for God to send a burning bush or bolt of lightning or something to warn me away. If this really was that bad wouldn’t He let me know?

My phone vibrated from yet another text. I almost didn’t look out of spite, but ended up reading the message. **“I tracked your phone. I’m very disappointed. Go back to your dorm right now.”**

My whole body felt cold.

No, I thought.

Scowling, I shoved my phone deep into my back pocket, as if symbolically shoving my father out of my mind. I couldn’t believe how controlling he was being from the other side of the world. I was 20 years old. I was an adult. I was fed up.

“Is everything okay?” Venus crossed her legs, dangling one stiletto in the air and twirling her foot from side to side, letting light jump off all the little rhinestones. She was so relaxed and casual that I felt like I could absorb her calm just by looking at her. “Yeah, it’s alright. I’ve never done this, er, had sex, before and I’m not sure how it works.” I felt less stupid around her now. She seemed open-minded, even understanding. Leaning in a little, I took an uneven breath, the question swelling in my throat like a confession. “Will it hurt?”

Venus flashed her teeth. “If you want it to.”

I paled. “Oh, no. No thank you.”

My phone began to ring, making soft xylophone music. “Sorry, sorry, one second,” I stammered in a spurt of panic and frustration, quickly pawing my iPhone out of my back pocket. “Incoming Call from Dad,” it read, along with one missed text from him. I looked between my phone and the prostitute in bewilderment. Venus just shrugged to let me know that it didn’t matter to her whether or not I took the call. Then I saw my dad’s message.

“I thought you were better than this.”

I froze. My head burned like liquid metal had been poured over me. I felt everything at once. Outraged. Furious. Terrified. Hurt. I slowly lowered my phone to the ground, looking at it like a friend who had betrayed me. It stopped ringing.

Breathing out, my heartbeat left my ears.

May God forgive me.

I looked away from the screen, calm, and tossed my phone into the stagnant water of the prostitute’s sink.

Creative Writing Shorts

Rewind

It smelled like dust, but it was my home. Kind of. I watched the movers toss my memories into boxes and stretch the screeching tape over the cardboard. It was odd because I had never felt like the things I owned were so useless and unsentimental. But I didn't like the way these strangers touched them.

Downstairs the front doors were propped open, allowing the hot panting air of the Texas summer to bake the entry rooms. In the streaking sunlight I could see the thousands of dust particles swirling about—the very ones I had been choking and coughing on all day. The marble counters of the kitchen were dimmed with a film of tiny dirt bits that had apparently been resurrected from whatever carpet or cabinet they had remained undisturbed in for 20 years.

With the furniture moved out, there was nowhere to sit. So after hours of packing my house into a truck, there was nowhere to rest but the ground. It was an oddly humbling experience. I stared at the dirty mustard walls, having never really noticed the color before. I stared at the fireplace, having never really noticed how stupid it looked without my mom's beautiful painting of Positano and my grandfathers pictures.

It's not that moving out is hard. Placing objects inside larger, concave objects takes very little thought or physical prowess. It's the watching that's hard. The wait. The slow drain of personality and character from each room. The increasingly stuffy rooms, despite the ever more open spaces. The divots in the carpets where the weight of my sleepless nights used to be. The way it's your home, but it isn't really, because "home" is a time and a place. A place where the smell of fresh laundry drifts into the living room and a time when the dust is only just being stomped into the carpet.

Fast Forward

I sit on my bed, where I always sit, staring at the sunny-yellow walls. One day they will be purple, and then grey, but for now they are yellow. I reach over and crunch down the white plastic blinds with a careless hand, peering out over the driveway one story below me. My brother is running and jerking about on the rain-soaked pavement, playing basketball with two of his long-time friends, who also happen to be our neighbors. The ball's slapping on soft, fleshy hands and dull ringing as it smacks across the driveway are as familiar to me as the murmur of the air conditioning in the dusty vents.

I slip off my bed and feel the soft, white-beaded carpet under my bare feet. It's the same carpet that lines the entire upper floor of my house, and I prefer it to the chill of the dark tile downstairs. My bed is a crumpled mess of midnight blue sheets and pillows with an off white comforter. It's small, but I prefer it small as it discourages others from trying to share it with me. I need space at night to sprawl out on the silk and forget about the Texas heat.

The whole house smells like my mom's concoction of laundry detergents— a potion of fabric softener, stain remover, and soap. I never notice the scents, but my friends always say stepping through the tall double doors of my house is like entering a candle shop the size of a castle— clean and fresh, but with room to spin and dance like joyful fools.

It's a beautiful home, but I don't know it, because it's the only home I've ever had. It's contemporary, with long leather couches, Italian art stretching across the walls, and an antique ivory piano. The kitchen is always alive with pots of boiling sauces, oven lit with lemon and butter cookies, and marble counters glowing with fresh, organic vegetables from the farmers market. I don't know it yet, but my home tastes sweet and warm like my dad's apple pie, and I will never find another place where the thunderstorms feel like a goodnight kiss.

News Writing

Gardasil 9 Vaccine

Chapel Hill, N.C. — Doctors and experts in Chapel Hill agree that students do not need to be vaccinated with Gardasil 9 if they received the original HPV vaccine, but it is not too late for unvaccinated college students to get protected.

Gardasil 9 is a vaccine that protects against certain sexually transmitted strains of human papillomavirus, which are known to cause cervical, anal, vulvar, vaginal and penile cancers as well as genital warts.

“Students should get the HPV vaccine immediately if not previously vaccinated,” said Noel Brewer, Ph.D. and professor in the Department of Health Behavior in the Gillings School of Global Public Health. “Kids are due for the vaccine at ages 11 or 12. Not delivering it then means that the students have missed a very important healthcare service.”

Gardasil was first approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2006 when it protected against four major HPV strains that caused 70 percent of cervical cancers. In 2014, the FDA approved Gardasil 9, which protects against nine HPV variants that caused 90 percent of cervical cancers. The four-variant Gardasil is no longer sold in the U.S.

“Guidelines for women, men who have sex with men, and transgender people are to get vaccinated up to the age of 26. For other males, to age 21. But males can still get it to older ages,” Brewer said.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that North Carolina ranked among the highest in residents contracting sexually transmitted diseases. College students are at particularly high risk.

“I work at Campus Health Services as a gynecologist. HPV is the most common of all STD infections,” said Jennifer Tang, MD and associate professor at the UNC Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology. “We recommend the HPV vaccine to everyone, all of our students. Insurance usually covers it up to age 25.”

The FDA said that it is unnecessary for people to receive Gardasil 9 after receiving the four-variant vaccine. However, the FDA does not have information on the effects of being revaccinated.

“It wouldn’t be dangerous to get Gardasil 9 after receiving the older vaccine,” Tang said. “There would be no harm. I can’t think of a biological downside to it.”

Tang said that the HPV strains that cause cancer are asymptomatic, so it is important to check regularly for abnormal cells through Pap tests. Currently, there are no FDA-approved HPV screening methods for men.

“Revaccination should be considered on an individual basis,” said John Thorp, MD, professor and division director of General Obstetrics and Gynecology at the UNC School of Medicine. “You have to differentiate between public health recommendations and individual recommendations. If cervical cancer runs in your family, you may feel you want to be more protected.”

Thorp also said that previously vaccinated people who have had more sexual partners or do not use protection during sex may wish to get Gardasil 9. He says he would not refuse the vaccine to someone who wished to receive it.

Thorp said age limits on the vaccine are also to be considered on a case-by-case basis. The vaccine will not become harmful or ineffective by default once someone reaches a certain age.

“You don’t turn into a pumpkin at 26,” said Thorp. “The age recommendation assumes a population perspective that if you practice your sexuality like the average American, you’ve already been exposed to HPV. If you’ve chosen to live your life in a different way, you might be a good candidate.”

For students who are unsure if they have received an HPV vaccination, each state has a vaccine registry with this information. A doctor will be able to access this information for a student.

Violence in the ED

Chapel Hill, N.C. — Emergency department physicians in Chapel Hill say that violence in the ED is common and increasing, and a recent survey found that physicians throughout the country see the same trend.

The American College of Emergency Physicians engaged Marketing General Incorporated to conduct a survey with ER physicians to understand the frequency and impact of violence experienced in the emergency department. The survey found that nearly 50 percent of emergency physicians have been assaulted while working. Nearly 70 percent of physicians said that the violence in their workplace has been increasing.

“Violence in the emergency department is a complex issue. The emergency department, by its very nature, evaluates and treats patients who are under enormous stress and perhaps under the influence of mind-altering substances,” said Dr. Jane Brice, a professor in the UNC School of Medicine’s Emergency Medicine Department. “Going into this profession requires the acceptance of risk. Over the last several years, I think we have noticed a steadily increasing risk of violence.”

Brice said that it is not possible to work in an emergency department without risk, but UNC Hospitals reduces the risk by having every patient and family member walk through a metal detector to try to keep out weapons. The hospital also has police staffed in the emergency room at all times, and patients are screened for violence and placed in separate spaces if they have potential for violence. But even with the precautions, assaults are common.

“We recently had an intoxicated patient become frustrated. He took a power cord and whipped one of our providers repeatedly in the head, requiring several stitches to close lacerations,” Brice said.

The ACEP survey found that only 3 percent of physicians said their hospital had pressed charges against an attacker.

Dr. Nikki Binz, an emergency room physician at UNC Hospitals, said that most of the violence she experiences is verbal attacks. It is so common that it is almost a daily experience.

“Patients cuss at me, call me names, make threats,” Binz said. “Last week, I had a patient who said, ‘I know where you park your car. I know where your car is.’ I think patients are simply frustrated, get sick or are in pain. It comes from a place of insecurity.”

Binz said that she had never been physically attacked, but had seen attendants be punched, kicked, bitten and spit on. One nurse who was attending to a severely autistic kid was attacked and ended up with several broken ribs.

“Autistic kids are some of the most prone to violence,” Binz said. “But you can’t get mad at them. They don’t really know what they are doing.”

Binz and Brice both said that the patients most susceptible to violence are those who are under the influence of mind-altering substances and psychiatric patients.

“We have unstable, actively psychotic patients in our emergency department for weeks and months,” Brice said. “The emergency department is not designed to manage this patient population. Our staff has become much better at handling these patients but they are not psychiatric providers.”

Ryan Armstrong, a student at UNC-CH, said he was waiting in the UNC Hospitals emergency room with a sick friend when he saw a patient threaten an ER staffer.

“She was yelling at the people at the front desk. When a nurse told her to take a seat, she said, ‘I’ll slap you! Don’t make me slap you,’ and held up her hand,” said Armstrong. “The staff was actually very calm about it. They probably deal with this stuff too much.”

Armstrong said that the incident did not make him feel unsafe, and he was impressed with how calmly and professionally the woman was handled by the ER staffers.

Brice said that, “despite broken ribs, concussions, lacerations, and lots of bruises,” no one has been seriously injured to date. When physical force is needed, the police step in and can end attacks before they become too severe.

Long-Acting HIV Injection

Chapel Hill, N.C. — Researchers at UNC-Chapel Hill are leading a project to create an ultra-long-acting treatment and prevention injection against HIV.

The project is being funded by a \$3.8 million grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and a \$1.8 million grant from the National Institutes of Health. The goal of the project is to create a liquid injection that solidifies in the body and slowly dissolves, treating and preventing HIV for up to one year and replacing the need for daily oral medications.

“The grant funding will be used to optimize long-acting antiretroviral formulations consisting of one or two HIV drugs. We will then test the ability of these formulations to prevent vaginal, rectal, oral and intravenous HIV acquisition when administered prior to HIV exposure,” said Angela Wahl, Ph.D. and one of the lead researchers in the project.

Wahl said that the project requires the use of humanized mice, which are mice that have been surgically altered to operate with a human immune system. The humanized mice are necessary because HIV can only infect human cells and some species of non-human primates.

HIV is a bloodborne pathogen that about 36.7 million people are living with worldwide. There is no cure for the disease, and there are about 5,000 new infection per day and 1 million HIV-related deaths per year. HIV is the virus that leads to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome or AIDS. HIV and AIDS are fatal because they destroy the cells humans require to fight off infections and diseases, which means even a common cold can be disastrous for the health of a person with HIV or AIDS.

“The current HIV treatment is Truvada, the daily pill. But the pill must be taken every single day to be effective. People forget, or they don’t want to take the pill, and it leads to a lack of compliance and more HIV infections,” said Rahima Benhabbour, Ph.D. and a lead researcher of the project. “There is another long-acting treatment that is given intramuscularly, but it cannot be removed. This is bad if you are allergic, or if you become pregnant, exposing the baby to a drug.”

Benhabbour said that another limitation of the daily pill treatment is that when people do not take it regularly, they can create a drug-resistant form of HIV. This means that these

individuals can no longer be effectively treated and can pass their drug-resistant disease to others. The new treatment, however, is injected into the skin instead of the muscle. This makes it easy to remove if the person is allergic or becomes pregnant, and because the injection will ideally last for many months, there is a much lower chance that drug-resistant HIV will form. Additionally, long-lasting treatments will be more accessible for poor or rural populations because the patients will rarely have to take trips to the doctor.

Martina Kovarova, Ph.D. and another of the three project leaders, said that the humanized mice trials are showing promising results. After giving dozens of mice the HIV prevention injection and then exposing them to high concentrations of HIV, only one of the mice contracted HIV. However, the injection still must be tested on non-human primates and go through clinical trials before it can be administered to patients regularly.

“It is too early to tell when the project will be done. There are many steps, with each step more complicated than the last,” said Kovarova. “Hopefully, if everything works, it will be just a couple years. But practically, it could be many years.”

Academic Writing

Mind and Matter

Burton's Exploration of the Causes and Cures of Melancholy, Physical and Metaphysical

Illness and healing are always either “natural or unnatural,” according to Robert Burton. The “natural” events are of the physical aspects of the planet: microbes and pathogens find homes in organic orifices, tragedy inflicts emotional pains, and accidents cause spilled blood and broken bones. Medicine, compassion, and time are healing of earthly misfortunes. Meanwhile, the “unnatural” occurrences are intangible, mysterious, and debatably nonexistent. These are the events brought about by God and other spiritual entities, such as angels, demons, devils, saints, and witches. The supernatural may heal or hurt— emotionally, physically, or in any imaginable or unimaginable way. Burton focuses on mental illness, specifically “melancholy,” as he examines the threshold of lawful healing and the most prominent causes of chronic sadness in his book, “The Anatomy of Melancholy.” Partitions I and II of this work discuss the most prominent matters that produce and cure melancholy during the early seventeenth century. Exploring the physical, emotional, and spiritual causes of melancholy, Burton unravels his struggle for a balance between earthly and supernatural healing.

Before considering details about the onset of mental illness, what melancholy is according to Burton must be clarified. The name itself means, “black Choler,” or in modern translation, “black bile.” This name arose when it was believed that an excess of black bile caused melancholy, but Burton looks beyond this archaic illustration. Burton offers multiple definitions for the illness, saying it is, “a bad and peevish disease, which makes men degenerate into beasts,” and “a kind of dotage without a fever, having for his ordinary companions, feare, and sadness, without any apparent occasion” (Burton, I: 162). These descriptions of “beast” behavior and “sadness” suggest that Burton’s melancholy is a combination of the modern day mental illnesses depression, insanity, and an anger disorder. Similar to how people can go through moments of feeling gloomy, crazy, or angry, people can have a “disposition” of melancholy, meaning these feelings may occur “upon every small occasion of sorrow, need, sickness, trouble, feare, grief, passion, or perturbation” (Burton, I: 136). These emotional responses are normal and do not call for medical attention. An illness develops when “this melancholy of which we are to treat, is an Habit, a Chronicke or continuous disease... fixed, and as it was long increasing, so now being grown to an habit, it will hardly be removed” (Burton, I: 139). In the book “Mystical Bedlam,” Michael MacDonald writes that, “when grief is in great

measure, it bringeth with all a kind of loathing and tediousness, which causeth a man to hate and to be weary of all things, even of the light and of a man's self... refusing joy and consolation" (MacDonald, 159). Therefore the disease being spoken of is a long-term chronic illness that must be treated persistently over time. Sorrow cycles back through a person repetitively until it is all they know, and it becomes a habit. There is no simple, one-time fix to rid someone of a habit. This is where the argument for physical vs metaphysical cures emerges. The almighty, in His infinite power, should be able to purge an individual of illness instantaneously. However, whether or not a higher-power may wish to preform this favor, and which spiritual figures possess this kind of power, is debatable— especially when the supernatural powers cast the illness in the first place.

The foremost cause of melancholy, apparent to the most casually observer, is physical abuse or neglect of the body. Burton defines this as "affliction to the body, contrary to nature," or rather, "hurt or altercation" of the body (Burton, I: 129). This kind of hurt can be either self-inflicted or inflicted by others, but Burton focuses on the ways people hurt themselves. The exception to this is "old age," which Burton says is "cold and dry, and of the same quality as melancholy." Even this, however, is created by the individual, as those who "have lived in action all their lives, had great employment, much business, much command and many servants to oversee, and resigne up all on a sudden: they are overcome with melancholy in an instant" (Burton, I: 203-204). The feeling of old age, therefore, is more forcefully brought upon people when they allow it to be emphasized in their lives, ending work suddenly rather than letting it taper off. As for the more blatant self-inflicted abuse, Burton pays the most attention to diet and exercise. He particularly scrutinizes meats. Addressing each independently, he explains, "beefe, a strong and hearty meat... bread gross melancholy blood... pork, of all meats is most nutritive, but altogether unfit for such a live at ease... Redde Deere hath an evil name... Hare, a black meat, melancholy and hard of digestion, it causeth fearful Dreames," (Barton, I: 212). The list continues extensively, elaborating on the poor results of eating fowl, fish, milk, fruits, roots, and beans. Some "infect the blood," others are "unwholesome and dangerous," and some even "send up black vapors to the braine." These effects are used to justify why poor diet causes mental health to decline— bad blood slows the brain and darkens the mood, vapors taint thoughts and the soul, and bad dreams disturb sleep and lead to idleness. Idleness is a catalyst of the disease on its own. There is "nothing better than Exercise for the preservation of the Body: nothing so bad, if it be unseasonable." This is because "a life out of action... has no calling," and a life with no calling cannot bring happiness, as it has no true purpose (Burton, I: 238). Daily work is what makes rest meaningful, so daily toils increase overall happiness. Burton suggests that a life of careful eating and daily exercise is more immune to melancholy, and such can be avoided in old age by continuing these good habits for as long as possible.

After the body is abused into melancholy, it can be revived by physical means. With so many meats that cause melancholy, Barton outlines exactly which selections will prevent or even cure illness, stating that the best flesh is, “moist, easie of digestion, and not apt to engender winde, not fryed, nor rosted, but sod, hot and moist, and of good nourishment.” This emphasis on simplicity and ease suggests that melancholy may arise from an internal and external struggle — a struggle to eat more elaborately, and to digest less natural sustenance. Barton understands and challenging one’s body via diet is not rewarding, but rather, harmful. Further, “the leane of fat meat is best,” and “eggs are justified as wholesome meat... and the thinnest, whitest, smallest wine is best, not thicke, not strong” (Burton, II: 20). These specifics are focused on plainness. Fat, the richest part of a steak, should be cut out. Eggs are relatively flavorless, and the weakest wine is advised. Burton is alluding to a minimalistic form of eating, later covering the negative effects of eating more than two meals a day or adding spice to dishes. Less is more. David Harley called this “solemn fasting” in the book “The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century.” Solemn fasting was common, according to Harley, because it was “a therapeutic resource used to combat supernatural affliction and mental illness... and was not confined to cases of sickness” (Harley, 119). The practice was so useful, people did not even have to be sick to use it. It generally improved lives regardless of their current state of affairs. Therefore, people with melancholy can certainly have their spirits lifted by not indulging in the comfort of foods, but rather simplifying their eating in order to take pleasure in other things, such as their work. Burton explains that people who take pleasure in their work “may happily live to 105 yeares, without any manner of impediment,” (Burton, I: 129). More working and less eating wards off melancholy and the physical and mental effects of aging, causing people to live longer, happier lives, especially if they enjoy their work. Burton even states that he would “rather be sicke than idle,” to emphasize that idleness is in fact a higher form of sickness than a disease (Burton, I: 238). This further convinces his audience of his message— a life of simplicity and activity is the best thing an individual can physically do to prevent abusing their own body and thus causing melancholy.

Although the body may be plagued with a physical problem that causes melancholy, metaphysical means are an option for healing. Burton believes in the power of healing through God, but is less certain of other “spiritual” figures that claim to possess such powers. While “wizards and white-witches, as they call them, in every village, will help almost all infirmities of body and mind,” Burton reasons that, “God permits oftentimes these Witches and Magitians to produce such effects” (Burton, II: 3). Therefore, he concedes that other figures may be able to heal using supernatural force, but the source of their power must be from God. God’s will is more powerful than the will of even the best-intentioned saint or wizard. He insists that it is “in vaine to seeke for help, runne, ride, except God bless us” (Burton, II: 5). In essence, there is no

way to achieve true healing without the help of God. Even physical means are powerless against a God who does not will them to work on an individual's body. Therefore, if one wishes to be cured with the help of a witch or saint, they must first make sure they are right with God, so his good will may be on their side, and they may heal. In "Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine," Nancy Siraisi suggests that these figures are not even necessary. She wrote that, "with or without medical guidance, patients practiced self-help in the form of self-medication, visits to medical baths, pilgrimages, or prayer," (Siraisi, 137). With divine power on their side, people can effectively heal themselves from melancholy.

Melancholy can also be the result of social and emotional issues. Specifically, hateful and ungodly emotions wound mental health. Burton states, "if we give reins to Lust, Anger, Ambition, Pride, and follow our own ways, we degenerate into beasts," (Burton, I: 128). This is significant because part of how Burton defines melancholy is "beast-like" behavior, which is now associated with the "seven deadly sins" (namely lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy, and pride). Harley speaks to this as well, saying "arrogance could lead to God striking down even a godly minister" (Harley, 116). These forces destroy the foundations of goodness inside humanity, as "envy so gnaws many mens hearts, that they became altogether melancholy," and malice leads to "rotting of the bones" and greed "crucifies their soules, withers their bodies, makes them hollow-ey'd, pale, lean, and vastly to behold" (Burton, I: 263). This is a distinctly more religious message than Burton's address of diet and exercise, suggesting that the body is not as connected to spirituality as the mind. The body does not have to be as "Christ-like" as the mind in order to avoid illness. However, Burton also seems to be stressing how a declining quality of mind will decline the quality of the body. Thus is all the bodily imagery, such as "rotting of bones," and "withered" bodies. Melancholy due to sinful emotion is also destructive to the community, as "it ruined and subverts whole townes, cities, families, and kingdomes... No plague hath done mankind so much harme" (Burton, I: 270). This emotional damage is the substance that scars relationships, even when people do not mean to be harmful. Emotional wounds also take significantly more work and dedication to heal than their physical counterparts.

Treating mental wounds by physical means is a process that ironically requires the help of the people who were potentially pushed away during the onset of melancholy. Burton insists that what these people need is the modern day equivalent of therapy. He says that such "passions" as anger and madness can be "rectified by good hope and counsell... tis incredible how much [friends] can do." This emphasis on relying on the community is a contrast to the more classical form of combatting sin—relying on God. This is evidence that Burton is grappling with healing from the supernatural vs earthly standpoint. Mark Altschule in his book "Roots of Modern Psychiatry" says that "disturbing thoughts should be ventilated to either a friend or a physician," encouraging the mentally ill should seek refuge in earthly relationships,

despite the word “ventilated” being quite controlling and god-like (Altschule, 154). But Burton seems to agree with this approach, and goes on to outline how a friend might help with melancholy, explaining, “faire promises, good words, gentle persuasions are to be used, not to be too rigorously at first” (Burton, II: 110). Words such as “promises” and “good” and “gentle” almost seem seductive, as if to lure the person out of melancholy rather than healing them. Perhaps the concept of therapy is not so much healing at all, but guidance from one state of mind to another. This would be consistent with what Burton believes about humans— their healing abilities are limited to their earthly means, and God is the only true healer. Burton also offers techniques to treat the symptoms of melancholy, but not necessarily the illness itself. For example, melancholy causes nightmares and fatigue, and “sleepe by all means procured, sometimes is sufficient remedy of itself.” Symptoms such as agitation can be soothed with “poppy, violets, roses, lettice,” which can help people rest peacefully (Burton II: 225). However, these herbs and habits will not fix the larger mental illness. Reforming and soothing the body is different than soothing and reforming the mind. Burton sees emotions as too abstract and close to spirituality to be cared for by human means alone. Therefore, he looks to God for the most effective cure.

Because it is indescribably difficult to rid a man of chronic anger, envy, and sins of the sort, Burton suggests praying to God for answers. He describes a type of tag-team healing—praying to God to ask for guidance, mental healing, and mending of the soul, while visiting physicians to help aid to body and combat the symptoms that make every day life difficult for people suffering from melancholy. Wilfrid Bonser promotes this method in his book “The Medical Background of Anglo-Saxon England,” stating, “herbs, if used, should be accompanied by the magical or religious ceremonial nature as would make an impression upon the mind of the sufferer” (Bonser, 260). Medicine works more effectively when the mind and spirituality are involved with the administration. In summary, “we must first begin with prayer, and then use Physicke, not one without the other, but both together” (Burton II: 4). A melancholy due to emotional imbalance is a problem that rests between spiritual and physical, therefore, it must be tended to by both forces. The first step is prayer because God’s healing is more powerful and important. However Burton continues by pointing out the Biblical story of a man who asked God to help him while refusing to try to help himself. One must have the will and drive to heal, and God will guide their efforts. (Burton, II: 5). He also points out that, “God worked by means, as Christ cured the blind man with clay and spittle.” In other words, God will not wave a magic wand and zap one’s mind into perfection. He will work through the people and elements of the earth to ultimately bring healing. Burton says that the best way to summon God’s help is to “pray for health of body and minde, so wee must use our utmost indevours to perverse and continue it... pray with all submission and penitency, and confess sinnes,” (Burton, II: 6). A combination

of prayer and endeavors is the most secure way of achieving mental health. Additionally, there is a humbleness required. A man must be willing to admit he has a problem, and confess that he cannot solve it on his own before asking for God's help. This is somewhat reminiscent of modern day therapy, when a person must first acknowledge their illness before treatment can ensue. Burton is encouraging men to use God as their therapist, as only He truly understands the troubled mind and what can soothe it.

The most dooming cause of melancholy is to be ill by God's will. Why God may wish to damn someone to melancholy is not always clear. Burton speculates that it may be "to punish... bringing these calamities upon us, to chastise us, I say, for our sinnes, and to satisfie Gods wrath" (Burton, I: 123). Death is the ultimate price for sin, but earthly torments like pain and sorrow are also consequences of unholiness. The beast-like lifestyle of sinfulness upsets the divine, so He penalizes mortals with bouts of illness in order to make them more humble, appreciative, and in need of their savior. Burton also plays with the idea of the devil's supernatural influence, but acknowledges that such influence could only exist if it was God's will. When describing the causes of melancholy, he comments, "the supernatural are from God and his Angells, or by Gods permission from the Devil" (Burton, I: 172). This is nearly an abandonment from God, as it is God surrendering an individual's protection from the most evil force in the world. Thrusting such a nightmare on someone seems extreme, but Burton clarifies that God would not allow such horror without good purpose. Humans experience all emotions relative to their own background and understanding of life. If one is not first sad, he can never be happy. Likewise, "bodily sickness is for his soules health" (Burton, I: 124). No one wants to be miserable, but Burton argues that it is the very misery of sickness that will amplify "grace, beauty, favour, health... good gifts and benefits," in a person's life. Altschule points out that "Burton said that malaria often cured melancholia; he cited earlier authors in support of his statement" (Altschule, 142). The road to recovery sometimes includes getting worse before getting better. God's punishment is not done carelessly, but is rather a way of shaping His children into happier, stronger people. Although God's inflicted melancholy may seem harrowing, it is an opportunity to grow and ultimately please Him.

To cure a God-given illness without God's assistance is difficult, but not impossible. Men can always, of course, recruit the help of the devil. However, not just any regular person can speak with the devil. A man condemned to melancholy by God must seek out a person who knows how to channel the devil. Burton writes about a woman who "cures halt, lame, blind, all diseases of the body and minde, and commands the devil himself." It is though these people "how many meloncholy, mad, and demoniacal persons are daily cured." The healing is done through countless mysterious rituals, with materials ranging from "images, shrines, reliques, consecrated things, holy water, metalls, benedictions, those divine amulets, holy exorcisms, and

signs of the crosse” (Burton, II: 8-10). While these acts supposedly work and heal effectively, this concept goes against Burton’s original claim that God’s will is necessary for anything to happen, with or without the help of the devil. There is an increasing tension between the practices of Godly and ungodly healing as Burton ventures into satanic treatments. He admits that, “many doubt whether the Devil can cure such diseases he hath not made, and some flatly deny it, however common experience confirms to our astonishment, that Magicians can worke such feats, and that the Devil without impediment can penetrate through all the parts of our bodies, and cure such maladies by means to us unknowne” (Burton, II: 2). Although Burton seems hesitant to agree to the full control and power of the devil, he does see devil-healing as common and therefore worthy of consideration. However, mentioning that men have been healed through the devil is not a contradiction to the assertion that God’s will always prevails. Macdonald mentions that “clergymen glossed popular beliefs about demonology and which craft by insisting that God ultimately determined the scope of action permitted to evil spirits and witches. They could not harm or help anyone unless it was consistent with divine will” (MacDonald, 175). Perhaps God wanted men to be healed through the devil in order to demonstrate how He will not help a person who chooses to turn away from him, but He will not stop that person from seeking remedies elsewhere. It is not mandatory that God has a strong opinion on everyone’s health and healing at all times.

The final situation for discussion is when a person falls to melancholy by God’s hand, and then rises again by God’s divine intervention. In other words, the act of being redeemed by God. To have one’s punishment actively terminated. First, Burton acknowledges the foundation of the matter: “that such spiritual diseases are spiritually to be cured, and not otherwise” (Burton, I: 173). This is a rejection of the earlier statements about satanic healing— such is improper healing. Through God is the purest path to complete and lasting health. Bonser backs up this idea, claiming, “Christ is the author of heavenly medicine... he was able to cure diseased people by mere command,” and therefore this display of power should be reason enough not to seek treatment elsewhere (Bonser, 41). However, achieving godly healing after enduring God’s wrath is almost impossible. Essentially, Burton proposes begging through prayer. He tells a story about the Biblical David, telling his readers, “pray with David, acknowledge His power, I am weakened and sore broken, I roare for the griefe of mine heart, mine heart panteth.” To follow the path to redemption like David, one must first confess feebleness to God, and then ask, “rebuke me not in thine anger, nether chastise me in thy wrath... make me to heare joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken, may rejoyce.” One must openly recognize that God is who took away joy and gave brokenness, and then plead, “Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and stablish me withthy free spirit.” Persuading God through prayer is may have worked for David, but Burton does not guarantee it will work for his readers. By casting out

beast-like behavior and humbling oneself before God, people do what Burton calls “monster-taming,” or crushing inner demons to make more room for God and light in the soul. It is ultimately God’s decision whether or not to help after receiving a “call for mercy.” Burton concludes with, “He alone must help; otherwise our disease is incurable, and wee not to be relieved” (Burton, I: 174-175). Health is a privilege that God has the rightful power to take away. While earthly remedies may help melancholy, Burton ultimately expresses that true healing of body, mind, and soul comes from God.

There is no easy way to to be broken, but millions of people break every day. To be restored from melancholy or depression is more than to wake up one morning and feel happy again. Sadness is a lifestyle— but so is joy. Many of Burton’s methods of recovering from melancholy are outdated by tiny capsules packed with chemicals made in labs. However, this does not change the power of his message on habits, physical and emotional abuse, and spirituality. Being well is an everyday endeavor. Battling social pressures, stigma, and abusers is too difficult to do alone. One must stand with family, stand with friends, stand with God— stand with wrath and pride and gluttony and all the shattered glass of mental illness. Healing is slow, but men were built to rage against illness. Men were fashioned to love and work and fail, and to make a habit out of working and loving and failing. Burton beautifully illustrates human imperfection and the best ways to cope with the consequences of being flawed creatures. There is no easy way to be sick, but there is no health without sickness, not joy without pain, no laughter without tears. These contradictions in the world are good. Burton’s struggle between a God who orchestrates the universe and a physician who is weak with earthly burdens is valuable not despite the contradictions, but because of them. There is no certainty without wonder, and Burton cannot help but make his readers wonder about the fabric of their minds— what tears them, and what wove them.

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