Dear MALS Community,

Welcome to the Summer 2009 issue of the MALS Quarterly. We are excited to introduce two new MALS Quarterly authors, publish the second half of Anna Minardi’s piece that we began in the winter edition, and put in print a piece that explores a timely issue in New Hampshire. The Editorial Board feel that these four pieces show a snapshot of some of the best current work in MALS. We hope that these works can generate some critical conversations and important discussions within the MALS community.

Two of the pieces we present here, Nicole Mitchell’s Social Control In Treatment, and Tom Zoellner’s The Groveton Mill Closure, explore issues that are local to Dartmouth. Zoellner brings our attention to a very real social and economic issue in northern New England – that of industrial producers closing factories and placing restrictive covenants on the sale of the property. While telling the story of the mill closure in Groveton, New Hampshire, Zoellner powerfully interrogates the implications of the restrictive covenant and the sale of the paper factory.

Mitchell, a staff member at Valley Vista Rehabilitation Center in Bradford, Vermont, documents and analyzes the way in which our social framework interacts with “the addict.” She draws our attention to the problems that even the most well-intentioned rehab centers have, including nutrition and exercise. Mitchell’s analysis asks that we think about addiction — and the overcoming of addiction — as ways of inhabiting a body, and suggests some alternative approaches to shaping that inhabitation.

The culmination of Anna Minardi’s piece, “Inside Out: On the Self-Revealing Occupation of a Writer – Exposure and Addiction in the Creative Process,” which we began in the winter issue, explores addiction and the female body within Madame Bovary. Discussing canonical literature and literary criticism, Minardi suggests that we expand our understanding of addiction and the meaning of the body, and asks that we examine the relationship between the act of writing and the practice of being addicted.

Brian Zalasky gives us our final piece in this issue, titled “Things Left Unsaid”. This piece of creative writing provides yet another window of interrogation into the intersection of addiction, memory, and the body. Telling the alcohol and sex-infused story of two American brothers traveling in Russia, Zalasky brings a penetrating eye towards the havoc that addiction and compulsion can wreak on familial bonds.

Happy reading,

Alex Corey
Editor-in-Chief

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MALS Quarterly Mission Statement

The Dartmouth MALS Quarterly is the quarterly journal for the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program at Dartmouth College. The journal is broad in scope, and accepts submissions of any scholarly or creative work from current MALS students and all MALS alumni. It is a priority that all work is accessible to the full disciplinary range of MALS community members.

Our primary goal is to publish the best current work being done in MALS from the four tracks: Globalization, Cultural Studies, Creative Writing, and General Studies. Both through publishing this work and by providing detailed feedback on every submission we receive, we intend to initiate and encourage scholarly dialogue and discussion within the MALS community.

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The village of Groveton sits in a sloping valley of the Ammonoosuc River in the upper reaches of New Hampshire, a region known to the rest of the state as “the North Country.” The air up here is sharp and Canadian, the forests are full of spruce, pine and maple, and the region is renowned primarily for the notches and peaks of the White Mountains and the seasonal tourist and resort trade. But Groveton is part of a longer economic tradition in northern New England: that of logging and heavy industry. A blue-sided paper mill with a large smokestack stands near a small hydroelectric dam in the geographical center of the village. Groveton’s streets and houses are arranged around it as though it were a parade ground or a town green. Under a series of owners, this mill has operated continuously since 1891 and, until recently, used to employ more than one-third of the town’s entire population. The jobs here were generational and – at an average of $20 an hour – among the best in the region. Almost everyone else in Groveton depended on the mill or benefited from it in one way or another. The presses, rollers and driers ran at every hour of the day on every day of the year and unexpected blasts of steam released in the middle of the night often jolted sleepers awake.

This structural economic reality of Groveton was reflected in the town seal, which features the legend *Our Little Paper World* curved around an icon of a paper mill at the center. The slogan was apt: Coos County, of which Groveton is a part, is the most geographically vast and least populated of New Hampshire’s counties, the one most distant from the big population centers on the Atlantic coast and poorest in terms of real income.

A description of the town’s physical setting in the May 4, 1898 edition of the *Coos County Democrat*, though larded with Victorian oratory, makes plain the degree to which Groveton was a connection point between the raw wealth of the surrounding forests and the needs of the rest of America: “Nature here spread out a broad plain on either bank of the Ammonoosuc, the ideal site of the future village, while far back in the vastness of the mountains, which rise like an amphitheater athwart the eastern horizon, stood the serried ranks of the spruces, thousands of acres awaiting the logman’s axe and the rending teeth of the saw to be converted into the dwellings of distant cities.”

But no more. In December of 2007, after 117 years of operation, the paper mill was closed by its final owner, the Wausau Paper Corp. of Mosinee, Wis. And in a little-noticed maneuver, the corporation included a paragraph in the deed of sale when it sold the half-million square foot mill to a company whose specialty was the disposal of outdated industrial property. Within that paragraph lay what laid-off millworker Murray Rogers called “a death warrant on this area.” It says:

No manufacturing or any other commercial enterprise or enterprises engaged in the process of paper making for profit or not-for-profit shall be maintained on, or in connection with, the real estate conveyed by this deed nor shall more than twenty-five (25%) of the real estate be used principally for the sale or distribution of paper or paper products. Paper converting is permitted so long as no paper manufacturing is done on or in connection with the real estate.

In legal terms, this is what is called a “restrictive covenant” – a binding seal against the future use of the property in a way that could harm the mill’s former owner. Short of blowing the structure apart with dynamite, it was the most effective way to remove a source of excess paper supply from the market. Some in Groveton saw it as a near-imperial decree on the part of a heart-
less absentee owner, a sowing of salt into the earth to foil any possible successor. Wausau Paper Corp. and some of the financial analysts who “cover” the company for investment banks viewed it as a necessary rear-guard action from a company in a fading business making a legitimate effort to protect its shareholder’s interests. What were Wausau’s reasons for doing this? Was it within the law? Was it a moral thing to do in a modern economy? Those questions are the focus of this paper.

A legal overview

Restrictive covenants are essentially riders on a sales contract which govern the use of real estate long after its sale has been consummated. There is a large body of American case law generally upholding their validity, although most of the jurisprudence is focused on their use in sales of houses and other residential property.

One ignoble historical aspect of restrictive covenants was their occasional use as a tool to prevent racial and religious minorities from moving into all-white neighborhoods. This practice was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948 in the case *Shelley v. Kraemer* brought after the neighbors of J.D. Shelley, a man who had recently moved to St. Louis from Mississippi, discovered a clause in his deed which stipulated the brick townhouse at 4600 Labadie Ave. could not be “occupied by any person not of the Caucasian race” or “people of the Negro or Mongolian Race.” Shelley’s victory in the case on Fourteenth Amendment grounds came to be seen as an early harbinger of the civil rights movement. As a milestone in the history of restrictive covenants, it also ended the taint of racism associated with their use as seals upon residential property.

Restrictive covenants are most commonly used today by developers of tract-home subdivisions, and especially gated communities, in order to create aesthetic harmony within a particular neighborhood (i.e., the owners are prohibited from cutting down a row of trees or leaving cars parked on the lawn). New Hampshire courts have been generally sympathetic to such provisions. In 1975, the state supreme court said the following in its majority opinion on a case called *Joslin v. Pine River Development Corp.*: “Restrictions on the use of land by private parties have been particularly important in the twentieth century when the value of property often depends in large measure upon maintaining the character of the neighborhood in which it is situated.”

Their use as tools to inhibit economic competition is far less common, but is still recognized as legitimate by most courts. “Covenants that restrict competition in a given geographic area, either by restrictive covenant recorded against title to real property or contained in a lease agreement, come in a myriad of shapes and sizes,” wrote Kansas City, Mo. attorney Scott E. Seitter in a recent article in the *Missouri Law Review*. “These so-called ‘anti-competition’ restrictions can limit the use of affected property in countless forms. In the food service industry alone, restrictions can dictate use of property by service classification (full service vs. quick service), type of food (take-out vs. drive through) liquor sales and menu items, just to name a few.”

The case most apparently salient to Groveton dates back more than a century. In an 1897 dispute in Ohio, *American Strawboard Co. v. Haldeman*, a state court ruled that a paper company was within its rights to include a clause in the sale contract for a mill prohibiting its future buyers from making a particular type of paper on the premises for the next two decades. In another relevant 1932 case in Connecticut, the owners of a furniture store, the Dick family, sold a lot across the street from their place of business with the understanding written into the deed that the land would not be used as a place of retail commerce (in implied possible competition with the Dicks) for a period of 15 years. The department store giant Sears-Roebuck later acquired the lot and, reportedly without checking the deed, built a store on the property that sold furniture. A court enjoined Sears from building their furniture store on the Dick’s former lot, reasoning that the deed restriction survived the passage of the lot through a chain of subsequent owners.
This rationale is directly rooted in a durable legal doctrine associated with restrictive covenants, which holds that they “run with the land” — which is to say that they survive the next owner or series of owners and can effectively remain a permanent attachment to the property (This language is explicitly present in the Wausau sale agreement). These clauses can be overturned only through a court challenge; the typical reasoning for such challenges is that shifts in the economy or the landscape have become so pronounced as to make the original agreement meaningless. Such a scenario appears to be an unlikely possibility in Groveton, as the paper and manufacturing trade — while currently in a downward spiral — has been a central part of local life and trade since the middle of the 19th century and remains an important legacy.

It may be useful at this point to reflect on the history of the village of Groveton to understand just what a monumental change was sealed by the paragraph contained in Wausau’s deed of sale.

“Hum of industry”

The mountainous region now known as Coos County was regarded as a chilly and remote wilderness for the early settlers of New England, the domain of the intermittently hostile Penacook Indians. The first permanent European settlement near the junction of the Ammonoosuc and Connecticut rivers appears to have been in the summer of 1757 by a pair of enterprising veterans of the French and Indian War, Thomas Burnside and Daniel Spaulding, who later feuded with one another. The story goes that Burnside, a man of rough-hewn Irish-Scottish stock who once traded a piece of land for an overcoat and a barrel of rum, traveled to the colonial capital of Portsmouth to secure for himself an appointment as magistrate, presenting a roll of linen cloth and “a firkin of butter” as a gift to the royal governor, John Wentworth, and telling him, “There is but neighbor Spaulding and myself living in the town and he is no more fit for a justice of the peace than a chestnut burr is fit for an eyestone.” After securing a commission, Burnside pressed his luck. “Governor, when I get home to me folks, what shall I tell them the governor gave me that was good to drink?” he asked. Wentworth produced a decanter of brandy and sent Burnside home properly lubricated. The town was by then chartered as “Northumberland,” named for a region in England north of the Humber River, and seen as a valuable post from which to watch for French military incursions from Quebec, as well as one of the colony’s many bases for felling logs of the massive native pine trees (Pinus strobus) which were lathed into masts for the ships of the British Navy.

Yet the region remained largely outside the economic ken of the state until 1852 when a branch of the Canadian National railway pushed through the region and built a station stop at a point on the riverside it named “Groveton” for a copse of maple trees on the spot that had to be cut down to make way for the railroad. This was the first connection of the cities of Quebec to all-season ports and it helped trigger a small industrial boom, only furthered by the arrival of a spur line of the Boston & Maine in 1872. Sawmills, shoe-peg mills and strawboard factories began to spring up on the banks of the Ammonoosuc, powered by the steady fall of the river, and in 1891, a pulp and paper mill (erected on the spot of what would one day become the Wausau mill) was opened and named the Odell Manufacturing Company. The resulting explosion in logging activity created a boomtown atmosphere, reported the nearest newspaper of size, The Coos County Democrat in the neighboring city of Lancaster. In the flowery boosterish prose typical to newspapers of the Gilded Age, the newspaper drew a contrast between Burnside’s frontier cabin and the locus of smoke, steam and profits now emanating from the riverbanks:

Now the air is vocal with the din of the locomotive and myriad-voiced hum of industry. Where the tide of trade and travel now surges to and fro on Main and State streets, the
frogs sing their dismal summer requiem in an uncleared swamp. Where the smoke from a
single chimney curled above the trees, great clouds of smoke and steam roll skyward from
the throats of the immense chimneys and steam pipes of the Weston, the Odell and the
Soule manufactories. The single rude cabin is replaced by broad handsome streets, imposing
public buildings and elegant residences, furnished by every accessory which ministers
to the comfort, the taste and luxury of modern life. 15

The Odell mill would later be sold to the shoe-making Munroe family of Lewiston, Maine
and then purchased in 1940 by James S. Wemyss of Brooklyn, N.Y. who began producing a brand of
toilet paper under the name Vanity Fair. “My grandfather told me he went into the toilet paper
business because he didn’t want to sell grand pianos,” James C. Wemyss told Coos Magazine in
1991 16. “You only buy a grand piano once and you keep it forever. He wanted to make something
that people throw away.” The mill featured a paper machine that was considered state-of-the-art in
the post WWII era: one that was 120 inches wide.

(N.B.: A brief word here on the mechanics of paper manufacturing, which will become rel-
levant later on. A paper machine is a giant noisy structure which resembles an offset printing press
and usually stands about two stories tall. Raw liquid pulp is fed into a headbox at the front and
spread out across a moving belt of fabric known as “the wire.” Water and moisture, present in pulp
at a ratio of 200 parts per one fiber, is methodically squeezed out through the fabric as the fibers are
joined together through rolling and re-rolling at speeds that approach sixty MPH 17. A powerful set
of driers, heated by either electricity or steam, removes the last of the water and the paper is rolled
into giant bales which are carried out the back end via a forklift. These paper machines are expen-
sive and can cost up to $150 million in today’s economy).

The Wemyss family sold its share in the mill in 1968 to Diamond International Corp.,
which made school notebooks on the site for several years before retooling it as a paper towel plant
and selling it for $130 million to the James River Corp., which transferred ownership to the Wausau
Paper Mills Company, a publicly-traded corporation, which started manufacturing a trademarked
line of brightly-colored paper known as “Astrobright.” This paper was used for decorative pur-
poses and would later go on to supply some of the green over-leaves inside the series of phenomen-
ally successful Harry Potter novels published by Scholastic in the first decade of the 21st century.
The inking was so versatile it could produce dozens of shades of any given color. “[T]he East Coast
location is ideally suited for Wausau Paper’s marketing strategy,” said a press release by CEO
Arnold M. Nemirow at the time of the 1992 sale 18. Local trucking companies were always on call to
make overnight deliveries — most often to the New York City metro area — for wholesale customers
who ordered bulk shipments of particularly-colored reams of paper 19. Those paper products were
frequently resold to retailers, including “big-box” giants such as Staples 20 and Office Depot, that
same morning. With this fast-responding business model, the mill operated in the black for the next
decade — and was even “obscenely profitable,” according to plant manager Dave Atkinson — until
oversupply started to become a problem in the market for the type of uncoated free sheet paper the
Groveton mill was making twenty-four hours every day, at a rate of 340 tons per day 21.

Layoffs and closure

Wausau officials decided to close the mill in October 2007, just before the release of
disappointing third quarter earnings in the Printing & Writing division. President and CEO
Thomas J. Howatt made the following explanation in the press release accompanying the report to
Wall Street analysts and investors.
Despite our recent success penetrating attractive markets and achieving operating efficiency gains and cost reductions, Printing & Writing’s profitability continues to be limited by secular decline in the demand for uncoated freesheet papers and chronically over-supplied markets in North America, exacerbated by escalating input costs, most notably market pulp. At its October meeting, the Board of Directors approved a three-part plan to return Printing & Writing to profitable levels within the next several quarters and achieve returns that exceed our cost of capital by the end of 2009. This plan includes the permanent closure of the Groveton mill, a sales and marketing effort focused on core products and brands, and an assessment of strategic investment alternatives to enhance capabilities and reduce costs in our Printing & Writing system.

On the evening of October 22, 2007, both managers and laborers at the Wausau mill—a total of 303 people—learned they were about to lose their employment. Many of them heard it on the evening broadcast of WMUR television news. “When people left work they had jobs,” Paula Foy, the wife of a mill worker, told the Manchester Union-Leader. “They turned on the news and found out they were not going to have their jobs. That was a really bad way to find out.” Other workers received their official notification from plant manager Dave Atkinson, who told them they would be out of a job by Dec. 31st and that Wausau was offering them a modest severance package: one month’s pay for those who had less than a decade of seniority and three months pay for those who had worked longer.

“There was no discussion,” said Murray Rogers, the head of the Local 61 chapter of the United Steelworkers, which represented laborers at the mill. “We tried to take concession to keep it open. But they wouldn’t discuss anything.”

This meant that more than one-third of the entire town would be unemployed and placing a severe strain on the already thin job market of Coos County. The layoffs would also have a ripple effect across the local economy, particularly among small logging, wood-chipping and maintenance outfits that did business with the mill. The total job loss to the area, according to a state economic analysis, would be about 734. “Everyone was dependent on [the mill],” said Joe Berube, who worked there 44 years, but retired before the layoffs. “It’s affected the local businesses, the logging industry. It’s been a domino effect.”

The local drugstore shut down, as did the Main Street Café, one of the town’s only restaurants. New Hampshire Gov. John Lynch instructed the state to send letters to 5,400 businesses across Coos County asking them to consider hiring the jobless paper mill employees and announced the state would open an assistance center in the union hall, right across the street from the shuttered mill, to help retrain those who had spent their careers in such heavy-lifting jobs as forklift drivers and machine operators.

Rogers was hired to run the transitional center, and he reported in a November 2008 interview that the results have been mixed. The average age of a laid-off Groveton wage employee is 49.6 years old—a difficult perch from which to build a new career. “A rough timestamp, it would have been 1983 when the average worker stepped into the mill for the first time,” said the state economic analysis. In other words, the last time many of the workers had to go through the steps of applying for a job was during the first term of Ronald Reagan’s presidency. Rogers’ data shows that 201 of the workers—exactly two-thirds of the plant’s staff—have found new jobs, but admits the figure is misleading because it does not track longitudinal success. He knows anecdotally that many of those rehired were in temporary jobs, or those who were laid off once again from other struggling businesses in Coos County. Some have found work in the nearby town of Lancaster as cooks and cashiers at the McDonald’s restaurant, positions with notoriously high rates of turnover. The training programs offered by the center are also of narrow benefit, as the types of data entry...
skills being taught are not in great demand in the region. Only a few, for example, were able to find work in doctors’ or dentists’ office as administrative staff.

“I was surprised they trained so many people in medical coding because there aren’t any of those jobs up here,” said Rogers. “If you go through this thing [the state-funded retraining], you are telling us you’re willing to move.”

For those whose family roots in Groveton go back to the 19th century and who are deeply invested emotionally in the community (as well as financially invested in their own mortgages), this was simply not an option. Some elected to chase the few low-wage retail jobs available in the area, even though it represented a severe pay cut. One of them is Deb Mitchell-Parks, who spent ten years driving a forklift at the mill, and now works as a clerk at the discount store Ocean State Job Lots, where she is paid roughly half of what she used to make in her $19 per-hour job. She could make an additional $3 per hour if she took a job in the town of Littleton, a forty-mile drive away. But she cannot afford the gas.

“You look around and this is all there is,” she said, gesturing at the warehouse-sized store filled with cut-rate merchandise. “I am now at poverty level. It’s only my warped sense of humor that keeps me going.”

Of her former employer, Wausau, she said: “They weren’t worried about what’s here. They’re worried about keeping themselves afloat out there [in Wisconsin]. A lot of people who worked there never did anything else. What do they do now? It’s sad. But when does morality ever come into finance?”

The mill’s closure will also affect Groveton in more structural ways. Wausau was a major contributor of property taxes to the town of Northumberland (the official unit of government for Groveton) with the mill possessing an official assessed value of $20.1 million. According to deputy town clerk Elaine Gray, the town will likely be losing up to 14 percent of its tax base at a single stroke, meaning that municipal services such as police, fire, library and street repair could suffer. Some part of the missing revenue will likely come from higher property taxes on the houses of a now-struggling town with an economic vacancy in the center.

“We thought it was just a crying shame,” said the town librarian, Barbara Weagle, who herself worked in the mill for 32 years. “We never expected it to go down. The north country just doesn’t have a job base and so a lot of people are now just working at minimum wage. It is a big letdown. There aren’t any jobs, and so you’re...out of luck.”

Justice of the Peace Melinda Kennett spoke for many in Groveton when she proposed, with a dash of gallows humor, that the town remove the label “Our Little Paper World” from the town seal, as well as the icon of a busily-steaming paper mill at its center. There had been a mill operating at the physical and cultural heart of Groveton for 117 years and now market forces in the industry, combined with Wausau’s restrictive covenant on the property, virtually ensured that the tradition and the lifeblood of Groveton was dead and gone.

“It feels like we’ve fallen off the face of the earth,” said Kennett. “They put a hurting on our little town. I saw them put millions of improvements into the mill and couldn’t believe it when they shut it down.”

An economic analysis

Wausau has been in business for more than a century as a maker of paper towels, tissues, masking tape, packages for microwave popcorn and medical bandages. The corporations’ roots are in the forests and rivers of northern Wisconsin and it built its first mill in 1899, only a few years after the founding of the Odell Manufacturing Corp., on the Ammonoosuc River. It remains a smaller company, by American corporate standards, but successful. According to One Source
Global Business, an informational database: “The company has increased its earning each succeeding year, has exceeded $1 billion in net sales for the first time in its history [and] increased shipments in each of the company’s three business segments.” Closing the Groveton mill left the company with two remaining mills: one in Brokaw, Wis. and another in Brainerd, Minn.

A sinking economy forced the company’s hand, according to Dave Atkinson, a third-generation paper worker from Groveton who was the last general manager of the mill. He said he did not blame Wausau for simply bowing to an inevitable fate. Rising fuel prices had made it increasingly difficult for the company to keep shipping giant paper rolls by truck to the warehouse in New Jersey. The East Coast location that Wausau had touted in 1992 was becoming a growing liability.

Atkinson said that as far back as 2002, he had an intuition that the outlook for the New England papermaking economy, and the Groveton mill in particular, was not promising and that Wausau’s hand would eventually be forced, though he had no specific knowledge of a plant closure until the week before it happened. “They cut off their arm to save their torso,” he said of Wausau. “I have oftentimes thought that if they hadn’t shut it down, they’d be out of business totally. The effect is to keep supply and demand in check.”

Another contributing factor – and a more pernicious one for the paper business in general – was the rise of electronic communication over the last decade and the consequent drop in the demand for typing and copier paper, seen more and more as a relic of a different era. A reduced office employment base and the gradual transition of local newspapers into leaner products of smaller width only added to the pressure.

Closing the Groveton mill helped stabilize a key economic balancing point called “capacity” within the paper business, according to Wausau’s senior vice president for finance, Scott Doescher. The demand for the type of paper made at Groveton had dropped from approximately 15 million tons in 2000 to 12 million tons in the current year, he said, making it more expensive to run mills as a fixed cost. The paper machines must be kept running at all hours of the day and on every day of the year in order to pay for themselves, and the result was too much paper wanted by too few consumers. The Astrobright line was not selling well enough to be profitable on its own and the mill was forced, at a loss, to make the same copier paper produced by competitors. Taking down Groveton resulted in a 28 percent reduction in capacity which helped preserve a dependable price for paper, he said.

“With that excess capacity, we became exposed to the commoditized portion of the market,” he said in a telephone interview. “It really became a matter of survival, if you will, to take out that capacity and allow us to keep the best of the mix.”

The move was applauded by Wall Street analysts, among them Chip Dillon, formerly of Citigroup Global Markets.

“In the long run, you are doing everyone a favor because the mill isn’t viable,” he said in a telephone interview. “It’s an ancient mill,” he added, referring to the paper machines within. Newer models with wider wires manufactured in China can produce four times as much paper, and much of the energy still left in the domestic business is centered in the Southeastern U.S., particularly Georgia. The prospects for papermaking in the surviving 19th century New England mills are bleak.

Despite these global factors, a troubling question remains: Was it a socially responsible action for Wausau to have put the restrictive covenant on the mill property, depriving the community of all hope for a papermaking resurrection, as well as creating a sour and humiliated feeling for those whose grandparents had worked in the mill and where they themselves spent the best part of their lives?
A moral analysis

The signature on the warranty deed that contains the restrictive covenant belongs to Doescher, the senior V.P. of Wausau Paper Corp. He said he was sympathetic to the town, but that Wausau’s primary objective was making sure that the decommissioned capacity could not re-emerge under another owner, which would have defeated the whole purpose of the plant closure.

“I understand there’s an employee perception, but the paper making business fundamentally has changed,” he said. “One of the things we wanted to make sure did not happen is for the mill to compete with us in the marketplace. We were very open about this when we took the mill down that it was not in our interests to sell the facility to make paper again. It doesn’t make good economic sense. It was painful for the company, but necessary to reduce the capacity of the business.”

Plant manager Atkinson said he saw the clause as legitimate, though probably redundant, given the shrinking heritage of papermaking across northern New England. “Even if they had they not put the restrictive covenant on, I doubt anyone would have purchased the site. There still would be too much supply and not enough demand. They didn’t want someone coming in here buying it at ten cents on the dollar.”

In placing the restrictive covenant on the old mill to ward off even a remote possibility of competition, the Wausau Paper Corp. was acting prudently in the best interests of its shareholders, to whom their primary allegiance is owed. This shareholder-centric view of the corporation’s ultimate fealty – charitable posturing to the contrary — was famously articulated by Milton Friedman. In a 1970 New York Times Magazine piece, he quotes from his own book, Capitalism and Freedom:

“There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.” As there is nothing illegal or deceptive about the restrictive covenant, Friedman would argue that Wausau would have been derelict in its duty to the shareholders if it had not placed a figurative (and cost-free) sprig of garlic on the mill’s door.

Chip Dillon, the former Citigroup pulp and paper analyst, sketched a potential — though he admitted, improbable — scenario under which the Groveton mill might have come back to haunt Wausau. The price of colored paper experiences an unexpected rise in popularity because of a junior high school fad. An operator buys the mill for ten cents on the dollar, hires a local workforce for six months, produces a burst of colored paper to capitalize on the brief demand, then shuts it after six months, leaving the town once again in dire straits. Still, he conceded that market forces in the paper trade would have almost certainly spelt doom for papermaking in Groveton by the end of the decade, even without the restrictive covenant.

“It is probably unnecessary,” Dillon said of the covenant. “But Wausau might not care about their image in New Hampshire very much.”

Not every economist agrees with Friedman’s idea as shareholder qua king, and there are some who believe it to be in the ultimate disservice to a market economy. In his book Corporate Community Relations, Edmund M. Burke laid out a theory of what he termed “the psychological contract” between a corporation and the locality in which it operates. Residents expect a company to be “a good citizen” – not polluting the air or water, making modest donations to charities, paying decent wages and treating its employees with respect. Companies expect a locality to provide honest workers who will treat company property with respect and give it “license to operate,” that is, be free to make a profit from the resources offered by the land, the natural resources and the local talent.

In the case of Groveton, there are many who feel that Wausau violated a certain psycho-
logical principle by leaving the community with a sealed-off property and a bleak future. Yet seeing as Wausau saw for itself no further involvement in New England, and with a paper industry in decline in the U.S., it could sever that intangible “contract” without bottom line consequences. Murray Rogers called the restrictive covenant “inhumane” and “a slap in the face.”

He added: “The problem with this country is that companies do things like this and do not think about the consequences – if they did, they would not be able to sleep at night. The employees were not factors in their decision. They seem to have done away with all ethics and morals. They say, ‘we’re just doing business.’ I say, ‘that’s crap.’ If you can’t act morally, you shouldn’t be in business in the first place. So much for being community oriented. Who do they think is going to buy their product after they’ve dumped everyone on their ear?”

The executive director of the Coos Economic Development Corporation, Peter Riviere, was more guarded in his assessment, though no less incisive in trying to sum up local sentiment. “Publicly, they have not been dragged through the mud,” he said of Wausau. “Privately, this is not the way you want to go out. I don’t think they behaved in the best interests of the community.”

There may be no better conclusion to this analysis than to tell the story of what happened to the two paper machines inside the mill. The mill and everything within it was sold in August 2008 for an undisclosed sum to a company called Capital Recovery Group based in Enfield, Conn. which specializes in the appraisal and sale of decommissioned industrial property. The company functions as a kind of cleaning service for defunct factories. In a telephone interview, CEO William Firestone denied local rumors that the mill, valued at a minimum of $20 million, had been sold to him for $100,000, or that he planned to strip all the copper wiring and heating ducts out of the building, leaving only a shell of brick and metal. Firestone said he planned to leave the innards of the mill intact for the property’s eventual resale, but he declined to reveal the price he paid to Wausau.

A Nov. 5, 2008 digital auction for the mill’s assorted contents was advertised on CRG’s website. “Multi Million Dollar New Stores, Parts & Supply Inventory including Stainless Steel Pumps, Motors and Drive Controls, VS, digital, DC, AC; Bearings; Valves; Transformers; Change Parts; High Pressure, Steam, Hydraulic Fittings and Parts; Wire; Seals; Hardware; Fasteners; Maintenance Supplies; and More!” said the ad. But there were no buyers, as yet, for the major assets – the two paper machines – and Firestone disclosed that Wausau had placed a restrictive covenant on the sale of the machines as well. They were to be sold only to an overseas buyer so as not to provide a competitive problem to Wausau. “If they go to Bangladesh or Pakistan they would be absorbed into the local economy and not impact business domestically, said Firestone.

Reflecting in general terms on the sale of the Groveton mill and the mechanical contents that had sustained a local economy for more than a hundred years, Firestone offered the following observation:

This is a real world situation. We’re at the base level of the capitalist economy…We are working there right in the pits of it. In an ivory tower situation, you could say, ‘why don’t they have some subsidies to keep it going?’ But these are all things that happen economically….We have changed from an agrarian society to an industrial society and we all know what happened. We are going to a service economy. You are not going to switch all that around and become an industrial society again. This is what happens to make our country go forward.
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Social Control in Treatment
Nicole Mitchell

In evaluating the similarities between the United States prison system for women and the women’s chemical dependency treatment program at Valley Vista Rehabilitation Center in Bradford, Vermont, it appears that while similarities abound, each environment utilizes its own form of social control that can determine certain outcomes. Social expectations have impacted the way in which Valley Vista provides treatment. Currently Valley Vista offers treatment through the utilization of evidence-based models like Cognitive and Dialectical Behavior Therapy, the Community Model of interaction and the Twelve Step Model of Recovery. Essentially this format of treatment follows the Minnesota Model, which has become a norm for treatment modality. Read and Kahler explain the Minnesota Model as “an abstinence-oriented, spiritually focused approach that works in conjunction with AA and commonly includes psychoeducation, medication and psychotherapy (231).” The therapeutic interventions used by Valley Vista are designed to begin addressing circumstances that led to addiction (childhood trauma, abuse, loss, socioeconomic circumstances) and find appropriate skills to manage them without using chemicals. All of the therapeutic tools employed through Valley Vista are widely accepted and proven to have positive efficacy. I find in working with this model, especially with a large community group, that these techniques often over-generalize or gloss over the individual issues, thus preventing individual growth in the patient. Discussion or overviews of generalized addictive behaviors, responses, or thinking patterns should be the beginning of treatment, but there must be more to follow. Gagne, White, and Anthony agree, “recovery is a personal and individualized process of growth that unfolds along a continuum and that there are multiple pathways to recovery” (33). My perception is that we, as clinicians, must incorporate as many modalities of treatment into our toolbox as we can get our hands on. For me this certainly prioritizes holistic therapies including nutrition, exercise and individualized medical, and psychological treatments. Currently nutrition and exercise are greatly marginalized at Valley Vista. I consider Valley Vista a victim and possibly an advocate of social control by using the Minnesota model alone. How can programming be modified to be more holistic and individualized to support long-term recovery?

In this paper I plan to address the factors that lead a woman to seek or to be placed in a therapeutic recovery environment. Although many women arrive from the criminal justice system, the reasons for engaging in treatment go much deeper than legal issues. These can include a personal desire to change her lifestyle, personal relationship dynamics, or a desire to cope with a history of trauma more healthfully. Secondly, I will address social controls utilized in the treatment setting and how, when paired with the Twelve Step model of recovery along with other evidence-based theories, these social controls may positively or negatively impact a woman’s success in treatment. Finally, I will discuss who seems to benefit from treatment based on my experiences with women in treatment. I will pose ideas as to how holistic therapies may further enhance the success of women in treatment.

Nicole Rafter, a professor of criminal justice, defines social controls in Partial Justice as “the mechanisms by which powerful groups consciously or unconsciously attempt to restrain and induce conformity, even assent, among less powerful but nonetheless threatening segments of society” (157). The prison system has a hierarchy of power starting from the State down to wardens and guards that dictates movement of individual prisoners and encourages the acceptance of others or lack thereof, depending on perceptions of those in power. Worst of all, the powerful (from corrections officers down to women who have taken an alpha role) take advantage of the weak through harassment, abuse, and shaming while simultaneously identifying each woman as a crimi-
nal or “threatening segment of society” (Rafter 157).

Valley Vista also has a hierarchy of power that at times can be similar to what we see in the prison system. This power dynamic at Valley Vista is initiated through the State of Vermont as the overseer and creator of regulations. The owners of the facility ensure that State regulations are upheld while simultaneously implementing their expectations for treatment (and profit) by over-seeing the administration, clinicians, and recovery aids. The program employs a set of social controls that create a compilation of standards for healthy and unhealthy chemical use, acceptable social behaviors (at work, home, and with family or friends), and what is expected of a “good parent.” These controls are implemented through daily groups that provide information confirming social perspectives. For instance, women are provided with parenting skills groups and vocational education groups that, by their presence in treatment, indicate that these women with addictions have failed at two very important social roles. There are surveillance techniques to catch any antisocial behaviors. This includes the use of cameras and staff completing 30-minute checks. It also includes thorough documentation of behaviors completed by staff for each shift. The women are constantly aware of always being watched. I oftentimes witness women respond with fear and guilt to a situation where they might be caught doing something as mundane as giving a friend a cigarette. The situation is difficult because on one hand, the rules are in place for the protection of the patient, but concurrently isolate women from one another as relationships are discouraged.

To add to the confusion, the women in treatment at Valley Vista are provided with a community model. Women who are placed in treatment to address those behaviors deemed socially unacceptable are asked to monitor one another through identifying and addressing addictive behaviors. Ideally this format could work if each patient were capable of feeling vulnerable and willing to accept feedback. Often times, as a clinician, I find that when my words do not impact a patient, their peers may get through. Reality tells me that the women in treatment are new to their recovery and are all at different levels of willingness to change. Therefore, social pressure by peers can be intensely shaming especially in a community group environment. Nonetheless, social rules are set in treatment and the women are expected to engage in self-modification with guidance by peers and professionals. In his editorial to Addiction, Arthur Caplan discusses this dynamic:

People who are truly addicted to alcohol or drugs really do not have the full capacity to be self-determining or autonomous… An addiction literally coerces behavior. An addict cannot be a fully free, autonomous agent precisely because they are caught up in the behavioral compulsion that is addiction. If this is so, at least for some addicts, then it may be possible to justify compulsory treatment involving medication or other forms of therapy, if only for finite periods of time, on the grounds that treatment may remove the coercion causing the powerlessness and loss of control. (1919)

This precise statement explains the necessity for rules and limits in treatment despite their many downfalls.

Incarceration and treatment settings are connected in that significant social controls are present to address the levels of addictive behaviors enacted in the community. In fact many women that arrive in treatment come from prison. While incarcerated, these women are in a highly supervised setting and are provided with little to no therapeutic interventions. They transition to treatment facilities that are also highly supervised but with therapeutic interventions provided continuously through medication, therapy, various groups as well as psychoeducational learning. The disconnect between the two establishments is due to, what I believe, the different end results obtained. The prison system was created to punish a woman for crimes committed in society. Often the guards or correctional officers overlook violent acts by prisoners toward prisoners. The forma-
tion of a social hierarchy among the prisoners is permitted where the strong prey on the weak. This includes behaviors by the guards themselves. Valley Vista was designed to provide a therapeutic environment to manage the crimes committed against the woman in treatment.

For instance, most of the women in treatment arrive there due to circumstances in their lives that were beyond their control. This can include sexual molestation or assault, progressive trauma, or acute trauma and grief due to the loss of a loved one, home, or position in society. Prison punishes through intensifying a woman’s shame, by degrading her, marginalizing her needs, and separating her from any potential healthy supports that encourage self-growth. Valley Vista institutes social control to encourage the evolution of coping skills through the identification of risk factors, strengths, and healthy perceptions. The treatment model requests that family members and healthy supports engage in programming offered to better understand addiction and to reduce shaming responses. Valley Vista begins to address the plethora of transgressions committed against a woman rather than only identifying the transgressions a woman has made against society. In prison, a woman is considered a criminal who has acted illegally to sustain her addiction, where treatment recognizes the chronic illness of addiction and how it often leads to criminal behavior.

A lifetime of victimization by family and society is a direct cause of chemical dependency. On the issue of structural violence, James Gilligan, a Harvard medical school professor and prison psychiatrist, writes, “Even a brief analysis of the psychological situation of the different social classes in our society will illustrate the power of systematic shaming and humiliation as a cause of violence” (197). The simple fact that a woman is born into poverty or born to a family that struggles with education or an interpersonal relationship predisposes her to maltreatment by society at large. She is expected to function healthfully with few skills and to endure hostility from those who will judge her for her lot in life. This oftentimes leads to dangerous circumstances and repetitive violence against her. The violence could be in the form of relationships, degradation, circumstantial shaming, or self-inflicted violence through the use of chemicals. The bigger picture being that, with such life circumstances going against her, if additional stressors are added atop of the blatant and continuous mistreatment, her ability to locate or utilize resources within herself or in her community diminishes.

If we observe generations of dysfunction within family units shamed and humiliated through structural violence, we will further see indications of reenacted shame among family members toward one another. Yasmina Katsulis and Kim Blankenship discuss this circumstance utilizing a composite character in their essay “Women’s Agency in the Context of Drug Use”:

Her father’s alcoholism, his violence toward her and her mother, her mother’s acceptance of this violence, the sexual abuse that Mary endured at the hand of a family friend, the date rape that she experienced as a teenager, the lack of residential substance abuse treatment programs truly responsive to her needs (i.e., the lack of counseling and mental health services within such programs to address the connections between her mental health and substance addiction) were all out of her control (93). Gilligan argues that structural violence turns inward, while Katsulis and Blankenship identify that this familial and structural violence leads to mental health issues that in turn may be self-medicated through chemicals when supports are not present. It is important to recognize that structural violence and social control are connected in that each allows the facilitation and continuation of our social class system in America. They both help dictate how community support systems are structured and made financially available as well as order who receives education, who is provided treatment, and who is incarcerated.

Perhaps due to the social acceptance of some substances, including the use of cannabis
and alcohol, a young woman may begin experimenting with chemicals as a means to make friends and escape or transition from the family unit. In the treatment milieu I have conducted initial interviews to ascertain why a woman has come to our program. Through discussion, it is often revealed that initial experimentation with drugs led the young woman to acceptance by a social group, which at that time (usually adolescence) was integral to her need for support. Once welcomed into a social group, the woman finds availability of new drugs, eventually using drugs that she thought she would “never try.” What some women find is that the drug does more than meet a social need; it allows her to either numb her emotionality or engage in acting it out. Because most drugs reduce inhibitions, when we place on ourselves in sober social situations it is no surprise that a woman may act out in rage while under the influence of chemicals. Thus, the enactment of anger sometimes leads first to repeated incarceration, then, if fortunate enough to self-advocate, she comes to treatment.

There are multiple factors that can be involved in a woman deciding to engage in chemical dependency treatment. These can include the Department of Children and Family Services recommending a mother obtain treatment before she will be permitted to continue care of her children. The Department of Probation and Parole may send a woman to treatment because they have evaluated her circumstance and concluded that her legal issues are drug related, or a mental health counselor may find a patient unable to make progress on her emotional issues because of chemical use and will refer her to treatment. Furthermore, family members who see the downward spiral of the addict can provide an intervention.

The final factor that can lead a woman to treatment (as I have witnessed) is her desire to end her reliance on chemicals to manage her emotions. This seems to be rare at least in the Valley Vista program. Most women who arrive in treatment do so to please someone else and initially have little self-investment. “Shame not only motivates destructive behavior, it also motivates constructive behavior. It is the emotion that motivates the ambition and the need for achievement that in turn motivates the invention of civilization” (Gilligan 234). Essentially, the power of shame can produce healthy change or can further suppress it. When women arrive in treatment, this struggle of wanting self-value and believing they are not worthy of it engages. It is the treatment setting, in tandem with the woman’s input, that provides the clinician with information to evaluate how to most effectively assist the patient in progressing toward a sense of worth, while she simultaneously wages war on ingrained and internal negative dialogue.

Valley Vista, as a program, implements a level of social control to facilitate the assessment of a patient and where she fits on the spectrum of our interpretation of recovery. This includes consistent monitoring and documentation of behaviors by all members of the treatment team, including nursing, psychiatric services, clinicians, and staff. The team meets on a daily basis to discuss the patients in the facility and provide ideas and support regarding how to work with a patient to produce a strong recovery. Women are encouraged to also seek support from peers who have or are experiencing similar challenges. Phyllis Baker describes how a woman, as a patient in a treatment facility, learns to internalize changes encouraged by the social controls (868). “Identities constructed by addicts in recovery are not a result of the intrinsic nature of the recovery process, but rather are products of the socially constructed nature of recovery” (868). How a woman chooses to identify herself in treatment and after is in direct relation to how “normality” is represented in the facility by the program and by her peers. Baker suggests it is not within the natural course of recovery that a person is able to reveal her authentic sober self; she constructs this new woman based on the feedback and tools provided to her during the change process.

Therefore, the implementation of the Twelve Step model of recovery and therapeutic community model of treatment must be mindful in balancing how a woman’s shame is handled and interpreted and then utilized to produce a woman in recovery from an active addict. This means that
the staff is also required to be cognizant of all women in the program and how their social interactions are impacting one another. When negative emotions are elicited through education on a topic that may lead to a painful realization, experiences involving personal relationships, or home-life dynamics that have historically prompted chemical use, the emotions brought forth must be processed in as healthy a manner as possible. The emotion is addressed in relation to how the behaviors and thinking patterns connected to that emotion could motivate or inhibit recovery and why. Emotional experiences in treatment can effectively be related to the experiences of the others in the group setting. Women are encouraged to discuss their similar experiences and how they handled them. This type of discussion is not limited to only positive choices or outcomes, but sharing mistakes and learning.

It is idealistic to hope that each woman will benefit fully from such a generalized treatment program. Each woman comes to the program with her own experiences and beliefs about the world around her. How she chooses to evaluate a situation is her own, and a barrier of learned defenses and survival skills that are incredibly hard to modify in a ninety-day period protects her. The exceptions to the rule are with women who have come to treatment prepared to be vulnerable and open, almost in desperation to change their life’s course.

Phyllis Baker describes this experience of desired change taking place as a discovery rather than an acceptance. “They discovered a new sense of emotional well-being, identifying an increase in self-esteem, and greater ability to deal with feelings, and a growing happiness” (872). Baker also noted that women acknowledged a new ability to manage feelings during treatment (873). Although a woman will not and cannot accept all of the tools and information provided to her in treatment, she can be open to new understandings about her addiction and store them away for future reference. She may discover that there is much more to her than previously believed when she was in a cycle of shame and addiction. In my experience, a woman can be simply amazed at her own strength and abilities once she has stabilized in sobriety. She can accept that other people view her in different ways and she learns to manage each narrative more healthfully due to these self-discoveries.

Acceptance is found in Step One of the Twelve Step model. “We admit we are powerless” (AAWS), meaning we accept that we lost control of our lives. Other steps include “taking a personal moral inventory” and “admitting our wrongs to another person” (AAWS). One way that these steps are initially applied is through the writing and sharing of a woman’s life story. This writing process and the sharing of the story have not only been enlightening for women, but a relief and a weight lifted. She often sees patterns in behaviors and circumstances that were invisible before. Women have experienced recollection of lost memories that open doors to discovery of self or greater understanding of others. The process leads to multifaceted and individualized growth. Baker explains, “she asserted that letting go of old baggage by admitting it, writing it down, and reading it to a group were integral to her staying sober” (873).

Once a woman has acknowledged the path that led her to addiction, she cannot “un-know” it and therefore is more likely to stay on a course of recovery because she will be better equipped to recognize risk factors and use skills to manage them. In the end, one hopes that she will discover that she is valued as a woman in recovery. She has experienced active addiction and has acknowledged how that addiction impacted her choices, relationships, and, most importantly, how addiction impacted her as a whole. It is hoped that the recovering addict will learn to navigate her inner dialogue (as taught to her by her family of origin and experiences prior to treatment) rather than allowing harmful negative statements or experiences to dictate impulsive emotionality. She will be better equipped to avoid the utilization of toxic coping skills, such as chemicals, engaging in devaluing statements of self, or becoming overwhelmed by negative emotions including depression or anxiety. This is a delicate balance of using emotions to motivate forward movement in
recovery. It is important, however, to state that if peers or staff misuses the information shared through a personal narrative, it is likely to be detrimental to recovery. If a woman has low self-esteem, misinterpretation of support, such as a mentor reminding her of a past behavior that delivered negative consequences in order to help her avoid re-enacting, can also create a regression in treatment as she interprets the feedback as criticism rather than caring.

Success in treatment, as understood by societal expectations, rests in a woman’s ability to acknowledge her addiction through acceptance of it and engagement in social norms, her discovery of how self-perceptions either positively or negatively impact choices, and then successfully using new coping skills to manage those perceptions and to make healthier choices. However, I believe strongly that there can be much more to successful treatment than fitting into social norms. Individual issues arise that cannot fit into a generalized format. Understanding personal relationships and experiences are integral to treatment success. What one person finds useful, another may not need. Certain tools can work in certain environments and be failures in others. I believe that Valley Vista offers a great start to (what could be) an extraordinary program of early recovery. There is a need for the integration of alternative therapies so that women can tap into a different skill if the first one they tried is not working to manage emotions. Wesa and Culliton agree that “because there is not one specific treatment that is effective for all people and for all of the addictive disorders, using a holistic approach and individualizing the treatment regimen is the recommended approach to disease intervention” (198).

Health and reparative tools like nutrition and exercise also play an important role in recovery. Thrill seeking behaviors and boredom can be greatly impacted by specific types of exercise and food sources. Depression and anxiety are also effectively managed for some individuals through diet and exercise. Both food and exercise naturally increase depleted dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine levels (Slaght, Lyman, and Lyman, 8). How do women learn to assimilate these tools into their lives as recovering addicts? Slaght, Lyman, and Lyman address some of the ways in which the Biopsychosocial model of treatment can incorporate tools to reduce mood swings that could carry into life after treatment. They encourage “healthy eating and adoption of daily routines that mandate three meals, eight hours of sleep nightly, and an exercise regime” (7). Further they suggest treatment centers provide a list of resources in patients home communities for fitness centers and alternative treatment modalities (Slaght, Lyman, and Lyman 7).

I would encourage taking this suggestion to a higher level of expectation. Incorporation of a healthy schedule of meals and exercise should be mandatory, but also teaching cooking techniques for healthy inexpensive eating, nutrition guidance as well as multiple exercise and stress reduction techniques. These should include cardiovascular training, yoga, tai chi, meditation, and strength training so that a woman is well versed in options and has had an opportunity to experience each to find her specific interests. Further, the case management team should have resources in surrounding communities so that they may set up appointments and possibly provide financial support so that women may continue participating in this newfound healthy lifestyle when she returns home. Wesa and Culliton greatly support this style of treatment. They explain that “meditation has a long history of successful use in addiction treatment. Meditation consistently has been shown to be beneficial in reducing stress and for increasing a sense of well-being and contentment. These are feelings that counter drug craving, and they help to support abstinence. Yoga has been used for treating the addictive disorders for many years. Yoga traditions incorporate meditation practice with the physical postures, specific breathing practices, and various lifestyle alterations including dietary and behavioral modification. Substance use creates a mind-body dissociation that the physical practice of the yoga asanas helps to reverse” (195).

Education is an effective key to successful recovery. Teaching women about the brain, and the nature of chronic illness is incredibly helpful to reduce the stigma placed on the addict. Teach-
ing them about nutrition and exercise to counteract and heal damage done by addiction could be an incredibly empowering tool. Without this knowledge and experience putting it into practice, we as therapists and as a program create a recipe for disaster. In a study by Cowan and Devine, people in early recovery were followed to investigate the phenomenon of substituting food for their drug of choice. The subjects were “using food, usually sweets and junk foods as a drug substitute, to regulate moods, to alleviate boredom, to satisfy cravings, and to provide structure to days” (36). It is integral for a woman to understand what addiction has done her emotionally and physically, it is equally important for her to continue on her healing path.

Currently, Valley Vista employs a culinary outfit that provides three meals to our patients daily. I will not eat what is served due to its lack of nutritional value. I have complained multiple times to the chefs as well as administrators that while I stand in front of 60 patients and teach them how to recognize healthy portions, nutritional values in foods, and ways to eat healthfully to feel energized and to stabilize mood, we continue to offer deep fried foods, drenched in fats and salt. The vegetables offered are swimming in butter; the soups are high in sodium, and women gain weight quickly. Aside from the lack of restorative foods offered, the women have no space to exercise, especially in the winter. They are limited to small group rooms and videotapes without schedules or education around it. Read and Brown explain: “participation in physical exercise has been associated with positive changes in mental health such as decreased depressive and anxiety symptoms and increased self-concept” (52). Essentially, we are fighting against ourselves when we fail to fully engage in alternative treatments including exercise.

As we teach skills to strengthen self-worth, we overfeed and under-exercise our patients so they become self-conscious of their weight. Addicts know that there are drugs that will help them lose the added pounds. Do we set women up for relapse? As I have experienced, a woman’s willingness to relinquish her addictive thoughts and behaviors is directly correlated to her ability to seek help when her coping skills are not working. How supportive her community and family are during treatment and after, as well as how Valley Vista performs as a program in identifying and celebrating a woman’s personal strengths also makes a difference in her sober life. Currently Valley Vista does not spend enough time celebrating women as a whole or as individuals. The patients are limited to less than one hour a week with individual therapy, and although we are a program for women only, we do little to identify what is unique about women and how to strengthen their place in the world. When a woman is able to manage her shame and not allow it to control her every thought and action there is progress. When she can verbalize that she is worthy of recovery and a good life, there is progress. Most importantly, when a person enters her life and tries to challenge those new beliefs, she can stand on her own and tap into her inner strength to thwart negativity. Women succeed in treatment and in recovery when they believe that the social controls can be manipulated to fit their personal experience and can be utilized by them to create a sense of power over their own existence. As Katsulis and Blankenship discuss, “It is important to understand the process of becoming a constructed social self, so that one can have an element of purposeful control over it” (100). Once a woman understands how to create a new self through the incorporation of inherent strengths and skills she is better able to find her niche in society.

In order to provide long-term healthy recoveries for women in treatment for chemical dependency, the treatment center must consider individuality. When a facility takes the time to train staff in multiple treatment modalities that encompass compassion for the mind, body, and spirit, we create a holistic approach to recovery. This approach then creates coping skills for a woman in recovery to utilize. In order to be impactful in teaching these skills we must practice what we preach, by providing healthy meals, space for exercise and meditation, and more individual therapy per patient. When an individual is learning to live a completely new lifestyle, it is important to practice the skills required to survive in an unpredictable setting. Inpatient treatment facilities can
provide a safe haven for skill practice and learning of healthy living skills. Moving away from only using the Minnesota Model would be a start.

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Boldly Body Re-Metaphorization

Anna Minardi

Editor's Note: This is the concluding portion of Anna Minardi's exploration of addiction and Madame Bovary. The previous section can be found in the Winter 2009 edition of the MALS Quarterly, along with the author’s preface.

In viewing addiction, and the language of addiction, from a different angle, and in analyzing how the process of representation works in literature, even though my analysis supports most of Ronell's conclusions, some of my findings extend even beyond her re-metaphorization of Madame Bovary.

Ronell refers several times to literature and its language as a drugs-like device, as a sort of destructive affirmation: “—In other words the representation of representation—cannot fail to raise the question about the veilings that both literature and drugs cast” (56). And she continues that literature “has to be seen wearing something external to itself, it cannot simply circulate its non-being” (Ronell, 57). In a sense, if we agree that writing and the language of literature are the artifice for producing and denying, exposing and concealing; in fact if the language is non-existence, we have to conclude with her also that: “a structure of dejection with which drugs have been associated—a structure where there is neither introjection nor even incorporation, but which posits the body as the no-return of disposability: the trash-body, pivoted on its own excrementality” (Ronell, 58). Following this logic, the pharmocodependence that has often been associated with literature mustn’t strictly be associated with the disease to which writers seem to be particularly susceptible; but in a broader sense it should be extended to the writing process itself, to the language of literature, not only as a sedative, cure, escape, euphorizing substance but also as “mimetic poison” (Ronell, 98). Both the drug addict and the writer use prosthetic devices to recreate, re-write reality, a reality that is often paradoxically unreliable, detached, which produces “the slippage from obscenity to the representation of hallucination—in other words the representation of representation”—Ronell refers to (56). Nonetheless, even supposing that there is no liability on the writer’s side, I have to argue that drugs are not the only compelling force that “forces our hand” (Ronell, 58). In my reading, and this is my furthest point of departure, Emma is not only a subject of the simulacrum, where her degenerated body—the degenerated body of literature—is at the same time the contaminant and the contaminated woman-text, at once toxin and its repository. Instead, she represents a sort of parody of the mediatic construction of the self. By embodying, as literary representation, what I would call the “drag queen” of literature, she is not a copy of the real, but hyper-real, and she is true in her own language-reconfigured-altered-realm.

By declaring war on the real, Emma—paradigmatic figure in the history of narcotics according to Ronell—is in my reading also a female illusionist, who would not only never have a ‘natural body’ and a ‘natural’ beauty but, as we’ll see, an over-the-top female sexuality re-appropriated by her “self” (93). Emma’s body, what the reader could not classify as feminine or masculine, healthy or sick, beautiful or ugly, a dissected body of exaggerated details, who theatrically dies spitting out the rotting ink-like substance that is the very means of her existence, becomes the representation of the dying—absolute—romantic—realistic—novel constantly reaching for the unreal by becoming hyper-real.

More recently, Peter Brooks, in Body Works: Object of Desire in Modern Narrative, discusses in chapter 4, “The Body in the Field of Vision,” how Emma Bovary’s body is systematically inserted into a visual field that puts Emma not only as a specular object of Charles’s gaze, but also, in my understanding, in the spectacular field of representation. To conceive of a body in this sense is not
to conceive a natural form but a body that is simultaneously on the surface and inside itself; it is not a structure of identity, or a simplistic stereotype, but a perfected “representation of representation” of a female identity, simulational hyper-human.

Drag queen – killer queen — killer text. Emma: it’s all there: her extravagant, superb, expensive and ridiculous wardrobe, her make up, her striking poses, her inappropriate boudoir that elicits Charles’ fetishism, the phallic body, the imaginary phallic supplement provided by the incorporation of her lovers, the impossibility of being a nurturing mother (prosthetic breast?), and the public display of the sexual act, as simulation of exposing the most private act and putting on the market a “clandestine traffic” (Ronell, 78-79, 98). (I would add sex traffic, but also the marketable literature, the obscene traffic that the consumerism of the text elicits.) Simultaneously all these items reveal her double nature, her hybridized body that, while incorporating/injecting a phallic flux, fails in its attempt to penetrate her hyper-romantic core, disguised in the hyper-real (Ronell, 103).

Ronell writes:

The drunk, like the adulterous Emma, liberates uncontrolled signs into public sphere. Their display irradiates a mimetic poisoning which once absorbed, would set off an entire population of innocent bystanders in the same movement of dissolution. Like the work which contains them, they become killer texts, triggering a chain reaction of uncontained mimetic caliber... They—the adulterers of morals—stage for the socius an irremediable destructive satisfaction; in other words they stage the literary satisfaction derived from auto-destruction. (98)

Some of the examples that I want to use to support my theory in trying to link language to the representation follow. I want to underline Flaubert’s attempt to produce a counterfeit real anti-romantic woman, and on the one hand, I’d like to nod to Baudrillard’s Simulacra and Simulation, as the problem of the parody, of hyper-simulation or offensive simulation, is posed here. But on the other hand, the structure of addiction is established between the writer and the character, and the paradoxical intoxicating power of literature comes to an end.

To go over my previous list, where I mentioned the details of the drag queen Emma, I will provide a few quotations from the killer text in order to establish how Flaubert has mis-represented—in the literary conception of Realism—his real character.

It’s evident in the following passage, where Flaubert renders how her eyes look, the use of make up and disguising prosthetic devices (colored contact lenses perhaps?): “… her eyes appeared larger than life, especially when she opened and shut her eyelids several time, … black when looked at in shadow, dark blue in bright light, they seemed to contain layer upon layer of color, thicker and cloudier beneath, lighter and more transparent toward the lustrous surface” (Madame Bovary, 37).

Here again, where in the description of the wedding gown, we notice for one of the first times, the ridiculous, extravagant wardrobe of our drag queen: “Emma’s gown was too long, and trailed a little, from time to time she stopped to pull it up; and at such moments she would carefully pick off the coarse grasses and thistle spikes with her gloved fingers, as Charles waited empty-handed beside her” (Madame Bovary, 31). The following two examples of the hybridized man-womanly body and accessories: “…but as she sewed she kept pricking her fingers and raising them to her mouth to suck. Charles was surprised by the whiteness of her fingernails. They were almond-shaped, tapering, as polished and shining as Dieppe ivories. Her hands, however, were not pretty—not pale enough, perhaps, a little rough at the knuckles; and they were too long, without
softness of line. The finest thing about her was her eyes. They were brown, but seemed black under the long eyelashes; and she had an open gaze that met yours with fearless candor” (Madame Bovary, 17). And further: “Her skin was rosy over her cheekbones. A pair of shell-rimmed eyeglasses, like a man’s, was tucked between two buttons of her bodice” (Madame Bovary, 18).

The theatrical surrounding, the boudoir, that elicits Charles’s fetish, is depicted in this scene: “Emma would be at her dressing table; he would creep up silently behind her and kiss her, she would cry out in surprise. He couldn’t keep from constantly touching her comb, her rings, everything she wore; sometimes he gave her great full-lipped kisses on her cheek, or a whole series of tiny kisses up her bare arm, from her fingertips to her shoulder; and half amused, half annoyed, she would push him away as one does an importunate child” (Madame Bovary, 39).

And her hyper-feminine habits that make her so over the top feminine can be seen in these passages: “Emma devoted herself to her toilette with the meticulous care of an actress the night of her debut. She did her hair as the hairdresser advised, and slipped into her gauzy barége gown, which had been laid out for her on the bed” (Madame Bovary, 55). Next: “She subscribed to a women’s magazine …; she was fascinated by the debut of every new singer, the opening of every new shop. She knew the latest fashions . . . . “ (Madame Bovary, 64-65). And here: “And Emma, who was wearing a blue silk dress with four rows of flounces” (Madame Bovary, 248).

In the following Flaubert compressed in a few words her scandalous conduct: “…totally unconscious that she was prostituting herself” (Madame Bovary, 350). And then, where her striking pose is beautifully rendered: “…because it was almost empty she had to bend backwards to be able to drink; and with her head tilted back and her lips outstretched, she began to laugh at tasting nothing; and then the tip of her tongue came out from between her small teeth and began daintily to lick the bottom of the glass.” Finally, last in my list is the spectacular Emma, how she appears in this revealing passage: “You are pretty as a picture! You’ll be the belle of Rouen!” (Madame Bovary, 185).

Coming back to Ronell, I was further compelled to think about her work on the language of addiction that could be compared to an economical transaction, a failed crash textual economy that shows no reserve in the author’s writing strategies:

So much is foreign to this woman: everything ‘active’ belongs to a foreign currency … (Madame Bovary, 101)

and:

What goes hand to hand with her decline is a kind of crash economy, an exorbitant expenditure with no reserve: we call this ‘narcodollars’. Quite understandably, little has been said about Emma Bovary’s radically losing economy, save to mention perhaps her creditor, a certain Mr. High and Happy—monsieur Lheureux. No doubt this topos fails to gain easy currency within readings that limit themselves…Yet all these conditions are linked to expenditure. (Madame Bovary, 109)

In considering the concept of language of addiction as counterfeit money, I would go back to the “way of literature.” I want to refer again to Baudelaire, who in “La fausse monnaie” describes a rich man who thinks he can accomplish both a charitable act and a good deal by giving a beggar a counterfeit coin:

….Tout aussi bien la pièce fausse serait peut-être, pour un pauvre
petit spéculateur, le germe d’une richesse de quelques jours. Et ainsi
ma fantaisie allait son train, prêtant des ailes à l’esprit de mon ami et
tirant toutes les déductions possibles de toutes les hypothèses possibles.
Mais celui-ci rompit brusquement ma rêverie en reprenant mes propres
paroles: “Oui, vous avez raison; il n’est pas de plaisir plus doux que de
surprendre un homme en lui donnant plus qu’il n’espère. ” Je le regardai
dans le blanc des yeux, et je fus épouvanté de voir que ses yeux brillaient
de l’incontestable candeur. Je vis alors clairement qui l’avait voulu faire
tous jours la charité et une bonne affaire; gagner quarante sols et le cœur de
Dieu; emporter le paradis économiquement; enfin attraper gratis un brevet
d’homme charitable. Je lui aurais presque pardonné le désir de la criminel
jouissance dont je le supposais tout à l’heure capable; j’aurais trouvé curieux,
singulier, qu’il s’amusât à compromettre les pauvres; mais je ne lui
pardonnerais jamais l’ineptie de son calcul. On n’est jamais excusable d’être
méchant, mais il y a quelque mérite à savoir qu’on l’est; et le plus irréparable
des vices est de faire le mal par bêtise.

But the counterfeit coin might also just as well serve as the seed for
several day’s wealth, in the hands of a poor, small-scale speculator.
And so my fancy played itself out, lending wings to the spirit of my
friend and drawing all possible deductions from all possible hypotheses.
But he brusquely broke my reverie by repeating my very words: “Yes,
you are right: there is no pleasure sweeter than surprising a man by giving
him more than he had hoped for.” I gazed into the whites of his eyes, and
I was appalled to see that his eyes were shining with an incontestable candor.
I then saw clearly that he had wanted to both perform a charitable act and
make a good deal at the same time -- to gain forty sous and the heart of God;
to get into paradise economically; finally, to earn for free the badge of a
charitable man. I might almost have pardoned him for the desire for
criminal enjoyment of which I had just recently supposed him capable.
I would have found it curious and singular that he amused himself by
compromising the poor, but I could never pardon him for the ineptness of
this calculation. One is never excused for being evil, but there is some merit
in knowing that one is -- and the most irreparable of vices is to do evil
through stupidity. (Cat Nilan © 1999, Flaubert, La Fausse Monnai
metaphorizes, in my reading, the counterfeit value of language itself.
Emma as the drug addict who thinks to buy a little “artificial paradise” by buying drug, buys liter-
uture instead, the representation of representation, the language that veils-unveils reality and that
promotes values that are so un-really counterfeited that they become perfected. What do I mean by
saying that Madame Bovary is the drag queen of literature? If it’s true that Emma is not only the
simulacrum but its perfected form, then not only the character but the novel itself is the perfected
simulation. Ronell stated that literature “dresses up the wound of its non-being” (Ronell, 57).
Flaubert dressed up Emma so well that she had to die—not-being—because she was so true; the
simulation—as operation of the code— is the real, surpasses the real, and the language that created
it is the means of manipulation, of control and death. And if that is not addictive, what is?
This short postscript may seem the result of a certain intoxication, so let me explain by describing its composition, the reasons why I want to include it, and the process that links it to this research. When I started writing the previous section, I was simultaneously reading and thinking in three different languages, and I had to write in all three of them. Some thoughts that were in French (when I read Baudelaire) came out on the page in Italian, and some of the readings in English (including Madame Bovary’s translation) mingled with the French. The result was that I had to write in a Babel of languages, a Babel of thoughts that then I converted into the previous section, Boldly body ri-metaphorization— which is not a literal translation of what follows here, but is more a reorganized analysis linked to this entire project.

Another reason I wanted to add this Postscript is because I do think it is relevant to my thinking about language as a foreign currency, and about the definition of language as nomadic parasite. I started wondering about my condition, when I write: I write in English, and writing for me started with this English language, this foreign currency, and yet as I said in the introduction, it is not a foreign substance. My words written on the page are silent words that sometimes have no voice; often I cannot even pronounce them correctly. Yet if they have no sound, they do have shape, weight, and texture. I have never written before, not even in my own language, and I’ve no stories to tell. Most of the time I write about small details, memories, crumbs of life, and all the time when I start writing I focus just on one word, a particular word that catches my attention, that I feel, that I feel differently because it is so foreign and yet so alive. Words are my material. When I write in English it’s never a translation; it’s a transformation, a make-over, a creation. It’s completely unorthodox, eccentric, and inventive. It is deceiving, unreliable, and suspicious, and yet honest at the same time. It is both unusually concealing and exposing, and this language gives me the innocence to write.

Is it “La Fausse Monnaie” then? No, it’s not counterfeit money, but it is a foreign currency, and it’s also a nomadic parasite I’m infected with, because words insinuate themselves into my senses, they circulate in my body, they tingle under my skin, and they work their way inside me; and when they come out they are something else, different, new, fresh, vital. This condition elicits a semi-nomadic journey, causing this dislocated expression in my writing, as my passages from Italian to French to English. All these languages sometimes short circuit in my mind; they immediately fire through an unintended path, and come out together. Here for example is a segment of what I wrote, in case it is of interest:

Qu’est ce que c’est que la fausse monnaie? Est-ce que c’est Emma qui ne peut plus être soi-même, puisque son image—belle comme une photo—c’est n’est plus elle ? Ou bien est-ce que c’est Monsieur Flaubert qui l’a trompée, en lui donnant de la fausse monnaie, et la pauvre Emma qui était sortie pur acheter des rêves a acheté sa morte ? Che cosa voglio dire con la drag queen della letteratura: che se è vero che Madame Bovary non e solo un simulacro ma una drag queen non è solo reale (è un romanzo realista) ma iper-reale, nel senso che tutte le caratteristiche corporee sono esagerate e perfette (perfezionate), allora non è solo un corpo descritto in dettagli, come qualcuno dice ma è la creazione letteraria stereotipata di donna. Donna che usa protesi per essere più donna, che non è un modello ma l’archetipo. Che cosa c’entra questo con la lingua? Se assumiamo che la lingua della letteratura è il mezzo, l’artificio, la sostanza (droga) che lo scrittore usa per velare la realtà nel caso di Emma l’articolo è svelato, il corpo è spogliato e rivestito con un velo che ne determina la veridicità. Se trasferiamo questo al romanzo Madame Bovary che dice di essere un romanzo anti-romantico-realista, ci si accorge che Flaubert lo riduce invece a un iper-romantico iper-realista e la lingua che dovrebbe negare il significato lo afferma. Ronell dice anche che la letteratura “dresses up the wound of its non-being.” Ronell stated that literature “dresses up the wound
of its non-being” (57). Flaubert dressed up Emma ……What are my wounds?
And if that is not addictive what is?

References

Works consulted


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Things Left Unsaid
Brian Zalasky

1.

Before they got on the overnight train to St. Petersburg, Matty took out the tickets and pointed to a collection of muddled symbols. The Russian alphabet is a combination of the Greek and Hebrew letter sets, sort of like a gyro made with matza bread. Cullen looked on in confusion.

“This says we’re in the ‘premiere’ car,” Matty stated with a wink and nod. This was the first talk between the brothers in over a day’s time. Before this, they hadn’t spoken in six months.

When they were kids Matty made it a point to obnoxiously signal to the world when he had overachieved. It always burned Cullen. When Matty was five, he had the gall to ride his big wheel sans hands. He did this in front of their dad and the camcorder. A couple years later, he came in second in the Shohola Elementary Spelling Bee. (The certificate was photocopied. One was placed on the refrigerator for public viewing and the other was thumb-tacked to his bedroom door to inform all who may enter.) And at the sprightly age of nine, Matty won the Geography Bee at Shohola, again caught on the camcorder by their dad. “Video proof of my greatness,” Matty professed with some self-deprecating humility years later. Cullen could detect his false modesty though; it really burned him up.

2.

The overnight train ride from Moscow to St. Petersburg was uncomfortable. Bench beds, one on top of the other, fell outward from the train’s wall like baby-changing tables in an American restroom. The aged mattresses were no thicker than a deck of cards in some places. Peaks and valleys landscaped the mattress foam; craters left behind by former train passengers. Also left behind was an awful stench like old tennis shoes worn with no socks in the summer heat. The train’s ventilation was another problem – it didn’t exist. Not to mention the burden of late May ‘white nights’ (For several weeks around the summer solstice in areas of high latitude, such as St. Petersburg, the sun doesn’t set before 11:00 p.m. and the twilight lasts almost all night.). On top of that, condensation formed on the inside of the immovable ‘premiere’ car windows with the temperatures in the nineties all day and well into the evening.

Matty had told Cullen how keen the Russians were to a good sauna, banyas as they are known. (Cullen was surprised to find an informal, makeshift banya in their ‘premiere’ car.) Matty was a reservoir for useless knowledge. He was always telling Cullen something and nothing at the same time.

3.

Cullen was unable to sleep on the train. The mattress was one reason. The heat another. Plus, the worn tennis-shoe smell stung his senses. The ‘premiere’ car couldn’t feel less ‘premiere,’ he thought. Cullen had been on some class trains before, where air conditioning was a staple. Over the past four months, he had been in a small Tuscan hill town called Cortona. He was a student. Art history and creative writing are his passions. During that spring semester, Cullen and the other students took a train each weekend to Cinque Terre, La Spezia, Perugia, Siena and so on.

Classes ended, friends departed, and Cullen traveled alone. He became extremely lonely and hardly spoke. A week was spent here, then there. Trains to and from Amsterdam, Frankurt, Berlin, Vienna; the Austrian Österreichische Budesbahnen had TVs in the seats like an airline. (That’s
what Cullen considered premiere!) This Russian mattress, however, was the antithesis to a Sealy Posturepedic.

His trip’s culmination led him to Moscow, where he met his brother. Two weeks with Matty in Russia. Two weeks for them to bond, to drink Russian Standard vodka and Baltika beer. Two weeks to drink in memories.

4.

While Cullen studied art and writing in Italy, Matty studied government and public policy in St. Petersburg. Cullen reunited with Matty in Moscow after more than a year since they last saw each other and six months since they had spoken on the phone. Moscow was cheap to fly to and Matty had been in the Russian capital for a conference. However important it was for the brothers to see each other, I must tell you, their first (and only) night in Moscow was less than ideal.

A few beers and reminiscing about their respective trips turned into a bottle of vodka fueling several arguments: their parent’s loveless marriage; their varying opinions for why their youngest brother Michael dropped out of high school (Cullen thought he’d be fine and just needed to mature; Matty thought he was a dumb shit). They waded through these arguments and into Matty’s love life, a topic he didn’t respond to kindly. He became frustrated, spoke rapidly and at length, much of which was indiscernible. But it was talk nonetheless. And talk was what Cullen was after.

“Why did you ever dump, what’s-her-face? The one with the big head…” Cullen mused.

“Du, dude. You don’t even know her name. What the fuck, man? An, and ‘the one with the big head?’ You’re su, such a dick.”

“Okay. Settle, settle.” Cullen put up both his hands, palms outward, bracing himself for Matty’s anger.

“No,” Matty said sternly. His bloodshot eyes demanded a response.

Though it sounded like he was whining, Cullen was extremely passionate about what he said next. “Well, we never talk. I was just making a point, Matty. I mean Michael and I talk about…”

“I dated her for um, um… for a long freakin’ time. Don’t try and lecture me about girls. I’m not like Michael and you. I don’t feel a need to discuss my love life with everyone or even you, you two,” Matty went on furiously, “And what is your problem anyway? Huh? What do, do you have to be upset about? What are you complaining about?”

Cullen was caught off guard by the question. An odd sense of guilt rushed through his skin. He was flush. He had no answer for Matty. He didn’t know. What was he after, making fun of his brother’s old girlfriend? How was Matty supposed to react? Did Cullen just want any reaction? A wordy response? He didn’t know.

“What the fuck are you after, Cullen? What are you whining about?”

For years, the brothers’ relationship had been a bit contentious. Matty never considered Cullen, or the rest of the family, as trustworthy. For Matty, strangers had an authenticity his blood didn’t. Both of them knew there were things they kept from each other. Openness didn’t exist between them. That’s not to say Cullen didn’t wish for it. He wanted openness dearly. But at the very least, they tried to be civil in the past. At family holidays, they rarely spoke about anything outside of school or work or sports. The rest of the family’s presence didn’t lend itself to intimate conversation either. Matty preferred it this way; he could be polite and cordial without saying too much. This particular evening, however, ended absent of civility with things still left unsaid.

At night’s end, Cullen and Matty were wandering the streets of Moscow separately, blacked
out and alone. The alcohol muted their senses. Neither remembered how they navigated the foreign landscape to get home. Neither knew how they became separated, but both presumed they knew why. Matty returned to the hostel at 3:00 a.m. Cullen came to the door three hours after him. They didn’t talk that night and the following morning. The next day they’d catch a train to St. Petersburg.

5.

Matty sat reading a book on the overnight train from Moscow to St. Petersburg. The argument was fresh in his mind. He uttered little to Cullen since the night before in Moscow. The train crossed the countryside lit by the ‘white night’ twilight. The train’s lights flickered on and off and on and off, eventually settling on the latter. The train car was shadowy and quiet.

“Dude?” Cullen broke the silence.

Matty didn’t answer; he was busy finishing a paragraph.

“Dude?” Cullen sheepishly asked.

“Listen,” Matty started, “we can’t do that again.”

“I know.”

“Seriously, man. We could have died. We should be dead.” Matty’s words hung in the humid air of the train car.

“Mhmm.”

“And obviously neither of us want that,” he stated, looking at Cullen only for a second before returning to a threadbare copy of *The Master and Margarita*. It was Matty’s favorite book. He told Cullen about it a bunch of times and that he should read it, giving his younger brother an open invitation into his mind and character. He couldn’t explicitly talk to Cullen about love and his idea of love. So, in place of conversation, he offered *The Master and Margarita*. If Cullen read it, he would have understood his brother a little better. It was the best Matty could do.

6.

Cullen wished he had read *The Master and Margarita*. But he never did. The silence between them on the train burned him. It was still and quiet and painful. Cullen had traveled alone for the past three weeks. No family, no friends. No one to share the view of Villa d’Este resting at the base of the Triangolo Lariano mountains as it eased into Lake Como; no one to share in the sex-laden, drug-induced debauchery found in Amsterdam (or tulip-rich beguilement, depending on who you are and what intentions lead you there); no one to share Frankfurt’s or Vienna’s cathedrals and their buttresses, and the devils and lords and ladies perched atop them reaching way up, up and up, toward the sky.

Language barriers rose up and up too. He didn’t speak for days at a time. “Thanks” and “please” were the only words he spoke. Politeness began to sicken him. His interaction with others whirled to nothing more than staring and nodding at strangers on the sidewalk, and soon that became impossible. He was forced into conversation with his inner monologue. (And the inner monologue can be daunting; it’s not a record you want broken. His memory dictated the conversation. Each word seemed old and overused. So he searched for new words, new thoughts. But it’s his memory that dictated the conversation. His inner monologue was a broken record. He was daunted. Each word seemed old, overused. It was as though loneliness and silence suffocated his mind’s breath of life.) After three weeks, he was afraid he wouldn’t have a mind left to speak.Being alone frightened him. For four months he had looked forward to seeing Matty. Even though he hoped their two weeks together in Russia could mend (or rather create) their relationship, he would have been excited to see anybody at this point. The days dragged on much like this paragraph, coming back to the same ideas.
and words and thoughts. Cullen wasn’t merely lost in translation; he was frozen in it.

He started to read Vonnegut at an alarming rate: *Cat’s Cradle, Breakfast of Champions*, and so on. Pessimism became second nature. He read, “You’re afraid you’ll kill yourself the way your mother did,” and he not only believed in suicide, he wished it, almost expected it. He didn’t go through with it though. Commit suicide that is. What’s an experience when there is no one to share it with? Anyhow, Cullen was much too much of a coward. Then there’s the whole business of finding his body, getting it back to the States, and so on. Plus Matty would be waiting for him in Russia. And so it goes. For almost three weeks, he didn’t speak. He just looked forward to being with Matty.

7.

The overnight train pulled into St. Petersburg’s Moskovskiy Vokzal station. Cullen and Matty exited onto the arid platform – it was early morning and the trains lined beside theirs sat solemn and quiet. Kiosks stood closed next to the station lobby.

Outside the station, a few kiosks were open and populated by various patrons: two old men who stunk of homelessness, a young woman buying a pack of cigarettes, and, around the corner from the owner’s barred window, three children no older than thirteen years old passed out around a plastic two-liter bottle of Zhiguli beer – a famous prey of the poor in modern Russia.

The first time Matty drank, he was thirteen. He was with two friends back at home in Matamoras, Pennsylvania. They had a few bottles of Colt .45 malt liquor forties in a backpack. Matty was wearing the backpack. As they walked toward a short steel and aluminum bridge that connects Pennsylvania with New York State, the Matamoras police pulled up. Matty stood on the bridge as the evening wind whirled through the open grates below his feet. His mouth was closed, his eyes nearly shut and he was helpless. One of his friends, J.D., knew the police officers since his dad was a lawyer and prominent business owner in town. Matty felt like crying when the police let them go. It was the first time he thought he might let his family down. The fear of disappointment paralyzed Matty, and when he tried to ignore it, he became more victimized by it.

8.

The brothers decided early on that they were going to try and take in as much culture as they could. In St. Petersburg, there are two kinds: classical and contemporary – one lessens the guilt-ridden pleasure of the other.

They started at the Hermitage, the first act of *Prince Igor* (a performance at the Mariinsky Theatre), and then earned a permanent intermission to enjoy Baltika 7, Export Lager, in aluminum pint cans served by street vendors out of replicated nineteenth-century carriages – just as Peter the Great would have intended. Afterward, Matty and Cullen went to Dacha, a hole-in-the-wall bar a few blocks off of Nevsky Prospekt, St. Petersburg’s main avenue.

Matty had planned on meeting Sasha, a native of ‘the Motherland,’ and her friends there. Matty hadn’t mentioned these plans or Sasha to Cullen. Sasha had been providing hands-on lessons in Russian culture for Matty, and he was more than willing to accept. “She’s great experience for my language skills,” he reasoned.

She was a sweet little temptress, in her mid-twenties like the brothers, with shoulder length chestnut hair, and impish lips. Those lips. They were bought at a soul’s cost: pouty in the middle with pinkish hues. They were a devilish creation. Their thin edges curled upward and whispered deceit. Those lips. No English crossed those lips and she was cute and cuddly about this ignorance. (Too cute and cuddly for Cullen. Though he didn’t vocalize his mistrust of this five-foot siren, he found out later that she’d caused the proceedings of the sad comedy about to happen.)
Sasha’s company also included a girl named Olga. Matty pointed to the door when they walked in, “I’ve made out with Sasha and Olga can speak English with a valley-girl accent.”

Compatriots they may have been, but Olga was the complete opposite of Sasha. Olga was jovial, personable; she had a certain joie de vivre that just escaped Sasha. The most obvious difference, however, was their appearance. Olga had a big frame and round face, with hair and eyes oft seen in the neighboring Scandinavian nations.

“I like, like American television, totally. It’s, like, how do you say, oh my gawd, totally!” English, even as clueless as Olga’s, was a pleasantry for Cullen this late in his trip. He reveled in the Dacha’s atmosphere: hookahs were smoked, beers and vodka flowed freely and so did Olga’s tongue.

“So, you and Sasha have been friends for a while?” Cullen asked.

“Yeah, like, I met Sasha years ago through her like boyfriend, Grisha. She’s, like, weird about him though. She gets a text and just leaves us, like, totally random…” Olga hesitated, “Oh my gawd, worst… comment… ever!”

Cullen thought little about the comment at the time. Matty had said himself they only ‘made-out.’ But how much weight could Cullen put into what Matty said about relationships?

They stayed at Sasha’s apartment that first night in St. Petersburg. She lived off of Prospekt Bolshevikov (Prospect of the Bolsheviks) in the Vesolii Posyolok (Happy Village) just east of the Neva River in the southeastern part of the city. The apartment was one grey shoebox of hundreds in the St. Petersburg outskirts. She lived on the fifth floor, the top floor. Matty slept with her. Cullen slept in an old cot.

Cullen and Matty arose from the Lomonosovskaya metro station. It was early morning and the streets were busy with activity. They said nothing of the previous night. This time, Matty broke the silence, “Do you, um, do you see a phone?”

Cullen didn’t hear the question. If he had, he wouldn’t have answered anyway. Cullen had a tendency to block out what he considered banal noise. Instead, he stared at the Petrine Baroque architecture that surrounded him and his brother (the architecture was one of those seemingly useless pieces of knowledge Matty served up to Cullen years ago and now had served somewhat of a purpose.)

“So, Matty, what do we have planned for today? I mean, I’m up for anything: culture, churches, parks, whatever... you know?”

“Well, I’m not sure. We could see the ‘Church of the Spilled Blood.’”

“Isn’t that the gold one with the blue and white onion domes? Just off of Nevsky, right? Tell you what, that’s a pretty bad ass name.”

“Yeah, it’s where Alexander II was assassinated. Pretty crazy. But... I don’t know if we’ll have time...” Matty trailed off as he walked ahead of Cullen.

“Oh, like we have something else going on? To be honest, I was hoping we didn’t have anything planned. You know? Let’s just go by the seat of our pants, drink some beers. It’s doesn’t matter what we do,” Cullen gazed at the architecture again as he spoke, “I mean, I haven’t seen you in a year an...”

Matty was two or three strides ahead of him. He looked around feverishly. He hadn’t been listening. They walked into a train station lobby. The ceiling was almost six stories high. Footsteps echoed off the marble floor and unadorned walls. There was a sterile smell to the empty hall; the marble under the brothers’ feet shined in the morning sunlight. Matty’s silence was obvious to Cullen. Cullen feared that he had been talking too much. But so many days had gone by in silence for him that he had catching up to do. Matty didn’t know what happened to Cullen over those four months.
And Cullen couldn’t tell him he contemplated suicide. The brothers’ family interacted only through euphemisms. (You see – he was lonely rather than suicidal. Much easier to deal with.)

“Nah, I just,” Matty broke the silence again, “Do you see a phone booth?”

“Phone? We called mom and pops from Moscow,” Cullen said.

“Hold on…” Matty trailed off again. A phone stood next to a magazine kiosk. Cullen stood alone inside the busy train station lobby. Matty fumbled through his wallet frantically looking for what Cullen presumed to be a phone card. Matty spoke to himself quickly. He was owl-eyed again.

“Dude, what’s your problem?” Cullen asked.

Just then, he saw the answer walk into the lobby. Matty regained his prideful façade and walked past Cullen toward the siren.

“Privet, Sasha!”

“Privet, Matvey. Privet, Cullen.” Her greetings breezed over those damnable lips.

Cullen forced out, “Huh? Hi, oh uh, Privet.”

Matty and Sasha carried on in Russian for a few minutes before all three left the station. They were an odd sight, Matty and Sasha. He’s a relatively tall man, perhaps six foot one, and taller than Cullen or anyone else in his family (overachieving once again) and much taller than his female companion, whose eye level was no higher than Matty’s armpit. The conversation stretched along many city blocks, hinged on banalities – which Cullen ignored – and swayed, though rarely, between Russian and English. Matty served as translator.

“Sasha says she likes your polo.”

“Oh yeah, tell her thanks. I like her… uh,” Cullen struggled with politeness (it sickened him and reminded him of the previous three weeks), “she has nice shoes. Those heels must be killer.”

Cullen always hated that word: nice. “Is there a more apathetic adjective out there?” he thought. But it seemed fitting for this chat. Matty continued his translation against the background of architecture similar to other European cities in Sweden and Holland, but seldom seen in any other city in ‘the Motherland.’ Cullen thought he was getting away from Europe when he met Matty. And he thought loneliness and silence would stay behind too.

“Spasiba, Cullen,” Sasha’s lips whispered.

“You’re welcome,” he replied.

10.

The following days continued on like this. It became regular habit for Cullen to witness his brother’s awkward flirtation with Sasha: at the Leningrad Zoo, at the monument to Fyodor Dostoevsky, even at St. Isaac’s Cathedral. They had no shame, no guilt. A cathedral, for Christ’s sake! They really burned Cullen.

He ached from patience. His joints were stiff from composure. He was the third wheel on some sort of Russian-American hybrid.

11.

Matty and Cullen sat at the dinner table in Sasha’s one room apartment. She was in the shower. The brothers drank tea, ate yogurt and pirogies with a pile of sour cream. As usual, silence filled the space between them. Finally, one of them broke the silent space.

“She’s pretty awesome, huh?” Matty’s words hung in the air. Cullen coughed, nearly choking on them.

“Who?” Cullen asked.

When Cullen didn’t provide him with the answer he wanted, Matty looked at him queerly.
Matty didn’t understand him, but he could tell when Cullen was facetious. Cullen could only say, “Yeah, man,” another transparent, somewhat facetious answer he was sure Matty would see through. Cullen wondered then what would have happened if he had said, “No, you’re being played a fool, dude, she’s fuckin’ with you; she doesn’t care about you; the girl has a fuckin’ boyfriend! No, you’re just a fling for her and when you’re gone she’ll go right back to him because she doesn’t care, dude, she doesn’t give a shit about you Matty but I give a shit, I care about you Matty. No, Sasha doesn’t need you, but I do, man, I need my brother ‘cause I’ve had some bad thoughts, man; suicidal shit, man. No, I do, man and I’m scared because the past four months have been shit and the last three weeks have been shittier and they’ve hurt, everything hurts, and I can’t talk, only cry at everything and that’s why I need you, Matty, because even though you can’t stop something that’s inevitable, we – just us – can hang out without the Sashas or the Olgas or the others and we can try and forget about our past. No, for three weeks I didn’t speak a word, three fuckin’ weeks and I feel terrible about Moscow, Matty. I do, but I want to fix that: fix our relationship, Matty, fix everything and no, Matty… she’s not awesome, Matty,” he’d say, “No, Matty. No.” But Cullen wasn’t able to tell him anything, nothing for twenty-four years. The sound of flowing water coming from the bathroom stopped long ago and Sasha would be back again. Cullen was playing a cowardly role in this poor comedy. Oddly, Matty seemed satisfied by the “Yeah man” response. Cullen was convinced Sasha’s siren song pervaded Matty’s senses.

“So what are you going to do? Can I ask that?” Cullen asked.

“Yeah, I dunno. I wish it were simpler. I don’t know why, but she seems hesitant… She’s been kind of…” Matty caught himself. He looked at Cullen and realized he was talking about a woman to the one person he decidedly wasn’t going to talk to about women.

Cullen shifted in his seat. Had Matty realized the nature of this woman? That he was just a ‘kept man’ for her? Cullen began to jump to a number of conclusions. He waited for his brother to explain all his suspicions of Sasha. He waited for his brother to piece together her signs of infidelity. And he would be there for Matty as a confidante to corroborate his evidence.

“Whatever. Get your shit together,” Matty said, “We’re leaving in five. You wearing that?”

“Where are we going?”

“I told you. The U.S. consulate. You really wearing that?”

“Consulate?”

“Seriously? I told you about this. The consulate has parties for the Navy seamen who are stationed in Petersburg. I’ve heard a lot about them. Apparently, they get pretty crazy.” Matty continued to tell him about a party Sasha had been to – a group of seamen had become friendly with her and her girlfriends running up a tab over $600; sex in the coat room, hooking up on the dance floor, fights broke out between seamen over who was going to take which girl home, and so on. “Sasha said we should have no problem getting in with our passports. She said she’s been there plenty of times.”

“I’m sure she has,” Cullen mumbled.

“What?”

“Nah, nothing.”

The consulate was three metro stops from Sasha’s – the Gostiny Dvor stop. Olga was waiting inside with a few other people; Cullen assumed they were Sasha’s friends; Matty greeted them comfortably. “Privet! Like, Jack and cokes,” Olga declared over Snoop Dogg lyrics, pointing to sweaty tumblers on the round table. Three glasses had puddles at their bases. Matty whispered to Sasha and they walked to the bar. A plush couch faced the dance floor and semi-circled the table, while three
stools low to the ground completed the circle. Cullen filled the last stool, “Privet, Olga. Fuck, am I glad to see you.”

“Vat up, Cullen? Like, someting the matter?” Olga’s broken, valley girl English made Cullen smile.

“Nah, nothing’s the matter.” He sipped the lukewarm Jack and coke. “Can we get table service here?”

“Mos def. What you like?”


Cullen didn’t look up from the drink, “Yeah, Olga. Nothing matters.” The dark beverage disappeared. “Just happy to be talking a bit, you know?”

“Mos def, totally.”

Flush from drinks and shots, Cullen danced with no one in particular, though Olga and some others were in his vicinity. Initially, the movements of American dancing (or dry humping rather) took him time to readapt to. Cullen was used to the European style: feet stationed, face stiff, hands and arms raised while house music bass encourages a ladder-climbing movement. It was an efficient dance style; no beat was ever wasted.

13.

Matty and Sasha sat on the plush couch. It had been an hour since they arrived at the consulate. American hip-hop blasted from the speakers facing them. Sasha and her ‘kept man’ said little to each other.

“What is he doing out there?” Matty asked rhetorically.

“Dancing,” Sasha answered without lifting her head from her cell phone.

“No, I know that. I don’t know.”

Sasha’s fingers moved briskly over the phone keys.

“I think something might be wrong with him,” Matty started, “He hasn’t seemed right since he got here. He wants to talk about everything and I don’t know why. Plus, he’s been getting really drunk and making up stories. Stories and scenarios that never existed, it’s kind of weird...” His attention shifted from the dance floor to his Russian counterpart. “Sasha?”

“Da, da. Okay, I have to go.”

“What? Wait, who is that on the phone? Why do you always have to leave like this?”

She didn’t answer him. Sasha stood up from the couch and whispered through those lips, “прощание.” (Goodbye). An impish peck fell on Matty’s cheek and she was gone.

14.

After an hour or so, Matty still had not spoken any English to Cullen. Cullen saw Matty and Sasha sitting on the plush couch. Her face was lit up every now and then by a cell phone in her hand. Matty obediently sat. Sasha stood up from the couch and whispered something through those lips, then gave Matty a kiss on the cheek. Cullen saw a look on his face he had never seen before; his mouth was closed – he was silent – and his eyes were nearly shut staring at the round table full of empty tumblers and cocktail glasses. For once, Matty was speechless. He was helpless. For their twenty-four year relationship, Cullen had never coerced that sort of response from him.

Cullen stumbled off the dance floor and approached his brother. “Where is sh, she going?”

Cullen’s speech was a bit slurred from the Jack and cokes.

“She got a text. Said she had to leave,” Matty said.
“The text said that?”
“I dunno what the text said. She just had to go.”
“Well, fuck her. So, Matty! Matty! There’s this girl over on the dance floor. She’s an American – and she’s been studying in St. Petersburg like you. She speaks Russian, the whole bit…”
“Yeah. Sure, Cullen.” Matty’s helplessness was beginning to wane.
“…plus she’s from PA, like us. Somewhere in, or, around Scranton, you know, off I-84. She seems real cool. I’ve been dancing with… well, around her for a wh, while. You should come over…”
“Uh huh.”
“So, why do, don’t you come out to the dance floor. We can drop it as if it were hot! Come on, dude. Get a drink and come over. I think you…”
“Let’s go,” Matty interrupted. He was owl-eyed; his vulnerability had completely gone. This was a look Cullen could recognize.
“Wha, What? Why?”
“Let’s… go.”
“What? Fuck off… can we just hang out? For once? I’m having fun. Come on, Matty. Ladies all around…”
“Ladies! Ladies? Man, let’s go. I’m leaving.”
“What’s wrong, Matty? What’d she say, where’s she going?”
“Nothing’s wrong! And piss off. I’m not going through this again with you! I don’t need your help with women. I don’t need your opinion about shit. I don’t need it. I don’t need you…” he kept talking on and on and so on. Cullen didn’t stop him. He wondered if he should stop him, if he should tell his brother where she was going, or rather whom she was going to see. Cullen wondered if he should try to explain his reasons, his need to see his brother because of what he might do to himself. Instead, Cullen stood there in Matty’s verbal wake.

Alone, Cullen thought about what he wanted to say to Matty earlier that evening at Sasha’s; about how she wasn’t worth it, how she didn’t care, how he was just a lark, how “she has a fuckin’ boyfriend. You’re being played, man…” Words began to spring out of Cullen’s mouth. He followed Matty towards the exit. “No, she doesn’t care, Matty! I do, man. I need you. Fuck, I need my brother.” He was yelling now. Each word brought painful tears, “I’m scared, I’m really…” Cullen began to follow Matty across the dance floor yelling, then talking, then mumbling, then silent – a confession was present in each adverb. People around him froze, but he was in too much pain to feel embarrassed.

Cullen imagined that Matty stopped too, that Matty felt some of the feelings he was feeling. Cullen imagined Matty wanted to hear what he had to say, that trust would envelop him. Cullen imagined Matty grabbing him and bringing him into his chest. Matty wouldn’t have had to say anything. And if what Cullen imagined were to become truth – who knows – Matty may have been able to save Cullen. But Cullen’s desperate thoughts and yells were of no more help to Matty and his woman problems than Matty’s silence and ignorance were to Cullen’s despair.

Matty stopped at the end of the bar near the exit with Cullen a couple paces behind. His head turned just enough for Cullen to see his profile. His mouth was closed and his eyes nearly shut.
“I,” Matty said, “I can’t help you.”