

Unveiled:  
An Anthology of Nonfiction

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To Kevin Quis, my brother

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## I

### **Verizon Ignoring Public Opinion**

Assemblyman Gregory P. McGuckin (R) of District 10 is fighting against Verizon's decision to drop traditional phone land-lines in the Mantoloking, Brick, and Bay Head areas.

Verizon is implementing a new system called, "Voice Link." This is a wireless-only product which connects all wired and cordless phones to Verizon's network.

A previously disgruntled labor force of Verizon's recently supported AARP for continuing to ignore the public's opinions and opting for their own system instead.

AARP members want to continue using land-lines, but Verizon is completely ignoring their wishes. This is why Assemblyman McGuckin wants the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) to investigate this issue.

Verizon's senior V.P. for national operations, Thomas Maguire, stated that "with so many people trading in their landline phones for mobile devices, does it make economic sense to replace the copper system in the communities that were so badly battered by the storm [?]"

The answer to that question is, yes. The people in these areas are furious. They are currently the only areas without land-lines in NJ and the product Verizon offers cannot be used with "fax machines, security monitoring systems or medical diagnostic devices."

"AARP's Johnston said Voice Link is 'not an adequate substitute' for traditional service over wires." And Assemblyman McGuckin could not agree more. Verizon has too much power – what can they take away next without "the consent of the governed?"

## II

### Ayn Rand on Individual Rights

In response to a previous set of statements referring to rights being based on “magic” or having something to do with “faith” – this article will try to explain how exactly rights come into fruition.

In Ayn Rand’s book, *The Virtue of Selfishness*, she explains how we epistemologically acquire rights – individual rights. She claims that:

‘Rights’ are a moral concept—the concept that provides a logical transition from the principles guiding an individual’s actions to the principles guiding his relationship with others—the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context—the link between the moral code of a man and the legal code of a society, between ethics and politics. *Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law.*

Throughout history, political systems have always been based on an ethical code. Oftentimes, this code was centered on the collective, and not on the individual. But in the case of the United States, for example, it was a nation built on individual rights. This means that a set of principles were put in place for how to preserve and protect individual morality and the actions that accompanied it.

Individual rights arise as a logical way to bridge society together with a moral code. This moral code that Rand believed should be followed was one where coercion was not used against another man. She saw a world in which the courts, military, and police were the only systems needed in a government to protect an individual’s rights (usually pertaining to property).

Those are the only moral offices needed, because they protect and preserve “a man’s right to his own life.” This is the *only* fundamental right that he holds. It allows man the ability to use his mind, and work toward happiness, leisure, fulfillment, wealth, etcetera. Yet, the “rights” that are listed in the United Nation’s “Universal Declaration of Human Rights” are not rights at all to Rand – they are a list of things that man must *earn*.

But in order to earn those things, man must be given the space to *think*. “A is A—and Man is Man. *Rights* are conditions of existence required by man’s nature for his proper survival.”

To say that rights appear “magically” is to say that man is irrational and does not follow any kind of ethical system – that all our laws are chaotic and nonsensical. This statement may reflect the United States’ current mixed economy with its several baseless laws, but in a free market society rights are established in a logical way. By following man’s nature, we can create rights that allow society to live in accordance with a moral system – one that gives man freedom over his own life.

This freedom is absolute. It cannot be violated or changed by any “new rights.” The core of individual rights is not to be abrogated. So, in terms of something like wealth redistribution that constitutes an infringement on other people’s right to their own property – their money. As the product of his labor, one man’s money is not to be taken from him to give to another man who has not *earned* it. Certain laws may change, but they must always be in accordance with the absolute “*Rights of Man*” in order to allow for a truly free market society to exist.

For more information on Ayn Rand’s philosophy of Objectivism, visit <http://ari.aynrand.org/>.

### III

#### **Assemblyman Ron Dancer on Saving the Bees**

The protection of the honey and native bee populations in New Jersey are being advocated for by the Assembly Republican Office in Trenton. There are three new bills: A-4261, A-4262, and A-4263. These bills essentially protect people who save bees and protect against those who destroy them.

Bill A-4261 protects the commercial beekeepers in New Jersey from nuisances. Residents, who complain of being afraid of the bees in the area among other concerns, will most likely lose in a potential court battle. Therefore, this bill adds protection to beekeepers from complaints and lawsuits, because beekeeping is encouraged by the state.

Bill A-4262 helps the hobbyist beekeepers. The state declares in this bill that it maintains the right to beekeeping rules. The 500 municipalities in the area are currently providing different rules for various areas in New Jersey without understanding how important bees are to our agricultural industry. This bill gives the state the power to enforce laws concerning beekeepers and their beehives, thereby protecting the hobbyists.

Bill A-4263 discusses man-made beehives for native bees. The bill lowers the \$1,000 fine to \$500 if a hive of that sort is destroyed. That is due to the fact that native bees are not as valuable as honeybees are. Honeybees pollinate whilst producing honey which we use on the market. As opposed to native bees that pollinate more efficiently than honeybees do, but do not produce anything themselves.

These bees are important for New Jersey's agricultural industry due to their pollinating methods which allow for fruits and vegetables to grow successfully. In the food chain, bees are needed in order to pollinate our food. In fact, about one third of the food we consume would not be available to us if bees did not exist. Bees pollinate New Jersey's blueberry, pumpkin, cranberry, as well as, many others kind of popular crops produced in the state.

According to the Department of Agriculture, there are 10,000 bee colonies and each colony is worth \$250 which means that this honeybee industry is worth a total of \$2.5 million. That means that approximately \$200 million is collected in fruits and vegetable production for New Jersey on an annual basis.

None of these figures would be possible without the help of honey and native bees in the area. Therefore, the Division of Plant Industry is trying to create more measures where they take control actions to eliminate pests and diseases which could harm the bee population.

Honey and native bees pollinate about 90% of New Jersey's plant production. But the "colony collapse disorder" is wiping out honeybees and their hives in large droves in the area. It is the state's responsibility to make sure that commercial and hobbyist beekeepers are being protected and defended by New Jersey's Department of Agriculture.

Residents are oftentimes unaware of the differences between honey or native bees and



wasps or hornets. The bees which are being protected only sting when provoked and when they do sting someone, they die shortly afterwards. These kinds of bees are providing more beneficial outcomes than negative ones, and must be protected. The more these honey and native bees thrive, the more revenue New Jersey can make off of crop production. Dancer hopes that “the Legislature will take action on this package of bills sooner than later.”

## IV

### A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Poet

*“Tell me not, in mournful numbers,/ Life is but an empty dream!/ For the soul is dead that slumbers,/ And things are not what they seem.”* I am silently mouthing each line over and over again while sitting on my chair backstage in the upright fetal position. Focus. Heart racing. My nerves are at bay, yet they are making my body stiff. I am held captive as words keep shooting frantically through my brain. Suddenly my name is called and it sounds unreal and distant...an almost vile sound of letters all jumbled together to stimulate my Pavlovian senses. I rise on command.

*“Life is real! Life is earnest!/ And the grave is not its goal;/ Dust thou art, to dust returnest,/ Was not spoken of the soul.”* Walking in character onto the stage I stand in front of the microphone; the spotlight on me for the first time...alone. The light makes me sweat and I can feel myself evaporating off the stage. I take a long look at the people who are watching me full of expectations. Think of all the hours you have practiced, I tell myself. Immediately, my nerves begin to ease as my throat uncoils.

*“Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,/ Is our destined end or way;/ But to act, that each tomorrow/ Find us farther than today.”* I know that the first word that flows from my vocal chords will grade the rest of my performance. Bonne chance. Finally amongst the grave silence, the title of the poem is unconstrained: “A Psalm of Life.”

*“Art is long, and Time is fleeting,/ And our hearts, though stout and brave,/ Still, like muffled drums, are beating/ Funeral marches to the grave.”* This leads to memories that are forever etched into my brain. My mother falling down in the bathroom next to her own mother screaming “Let me do it! I CAN DO IT!” Soon after, she is giving me and my brother stuffed animals laying in her deathbed. I do not even thank her. I never went to her funeral...simultaneously another memory reawakens. My dad, a man I never could understand as a child: short-tempered, nature-loving, a thinker, and a doer. Yet, he made me grow: as an intellectual, an innovator, a learner, and a dreamer. I am here now because of his guidance. I am becoming a woman who knows what she wants: to leave her mark on the world, to be a better person, and experience everything that she can out of this beautiful life.

*“Lives of great men all remind us/ We can make our lives sublime,/ And, departing, leave behind us/ Footprints on the sands of time.”* I have finally finished. Keeping in character, I somberly bow and the crowd roars with applause. But I cannot understand what the applause is for: my life or my sacred song? Or both? Yes, both. Because my voice is heard through poetry - it is I speaking about my life, my passions, my sorrows, my ambitions, my discoveries, my world.

## V

### Ayn Rand's Words Live On

Earlier this week, the Ayn Rand Institute in Irvine, CA announced that Penguin Random House will be publishing a “lost” novel that Rand wrote in 1934. The title is *Ideal* which shares the same title as a previously published play of hers. This novel will be released by July 2015, in a single volume with the play.

At this year’s upcoming 2014 Objectivist Summer Conference (Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas, June 27-July 4), the Ayn Rand Institute will be hosting a Q&A session about the book. Ayn Rand’s intellectual heir, Dr. Leonard Peikoff, will be answering questions there concerning this “lost” novel.

Around the 1950s, Ayn Rand became well-known for her two works of fiction: *Atlas Shrugged* and *The Fountainhead*. These novels promoted and supported a new philosophy which she called, Objectivism. Objectivism includes 5 major philosophical branches: 1) metaphysics, 2) epistemology, 3) ethics, 4) esthetics, and 5) politics. These divisions make up her philosophy that essentially stresses individual rights and freedom from coercion to find happiness for oneself. It is a guide for how to live life *here*, on earth.

Following her fiction, she wrote non-fiction which further developed, explained, and expanded her own Objectivist philosophical theory.

Ayn Rand spent her entire life creating a world that she saw as possible for man to attain. Inspired by the works of Aristotle, she wrote about man as a hero. She glorified his accomplishments and vision throughout the ages. She *believed* in heroes.

Heroes are needed more than ever before in this country. We require leaders who can take responsibility for their actions, as with the Benghazi attack. We need heroes who can say that the Affordable Health Care Act does not work. We desire frontrunners that will butt heads with the NSA. We want individuals to stand up for themselves and their country at large. Men and women who will put an end to this mixed economy and allow for the free market system to thrive. People who will seek to teach others about man’s ego and his right to use “I” in a sentence – to use “I” as a basis for a rational, moral foundation.

Ayn Rand wrote and spoke about those invisible heroes, and there has been controversy over it ever since. Yet, her voice continues to grow stronger with each passing year.

Do you want to know why this “lost” novel means so much to the country right now? It is because

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Rand's books are prophetic and the American people are crying out for a hero that has yet to be found. America burns for inspiration, guidance, and eloquence to combat these rough times.

We the people are desperately searching for the *ideal* hero who is always there in Ayn Rand's novels.

For more information on the upcoming conference or on Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, visit <http://ari.aynrand.org/>.

## VI

### **Abortion's Legality: Giving Women the Right to Choose**

Currently, there is a Washington, D.C. nonprofit that gives “coat hanger necklaces” out to women who decided to have abortions. This reminds them of the lengths that other less fortunate women without the option of legal abortion have been forced to go through.

Members of this nonprofit, the DC Abortion Fund, say: “The cost of a first-trimester abortion can be more than a family on public assistance receives in a month. Many women who work multiple jobs still do not have enough extra money for an abortion. Low-income women and girls often delay their abortions while trying to raise the money they need. Many times, these delays force them into more expensive and complicated second-trimester abortions. Some never get enough money to cover the cost of the procedure.” Abortions are expensive and scary. No one wants them. But women will do anything to get them if having a baby is not an option for them at that time.

Out of desperation, women will go to great lengths to abort on their own. Horror stories have cropped up concerning the objects that women have used. A retired gynecologist, Waldo Fielding, says that women use anything they can find, such as, “darning needles, crochet hooks, cut-glass salt shakers, soda bottles, sometimes intact, sometimes with the top broken off” and the infamous coat hangers as well. These procedures are dangerous and can even lead to death.

Regardless of whether abortion is legal or not, women will find a way to get rid of something that they cannot provide for. Raising a baby is an enormous responsibility and it takes time to care for a child. So although it may not be ‘moral’ to have an abortion, it should still be legal. Having abortion made legal means fewer deaths, and overall tragedies.

Embryos do not have rights, only the woman carrying the child does and should, therefore, make the decision. The government has no right to tell her whether to give birth or not. It is the woman’s decision and a right of hers. Those rights cannot pertain to something that has not been born yet. The living are the only ones who can have those rights.

The government does not know what the woman’s circumstances are, and therefore, should have no right to say whether or not she can have an abortion. Political parties, part of the governmental system, do not know what each individual woman is dealing with either. A woman’s entire career may be ruined, her education may be thwarted, or her ability to eat may be halved.

For instance, the Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus delayed an RNC meeting to protest abortion in the March for Life, because he wanted to support his voters – other

social conservatives who are pro-life. The Republican platform holds: “Faithful to the ‘self-evident’ truths enshrined in the Declaration of Independence, we assert the sanctity of human life and affirm that the unborn child has a fundamental individual right to life which cannot be infringed.” Therefore, the Republicans are against abortion on moral grounds. They believe that abortion is murder – that the fetus does have rights.

But the GOP is mixing religion into government affairs in this case, rendering this a theocratic issue. They refuse to completely separate church and state.

Meanwhile, Democrats have fully supported abortion rights and made it a key issue in the media since the 2012 elections. Their platform is as follows: It’s “a woman’s right to choose.” Democrats are focused on the legality of the issue, although they do not find it immoral. Democrats do not believe that a fetus has any rights, as opposed, to the Republicans.

The feminists and other activists on the left are calling for the separation of church and state. They want abortions to be legal in all 50 states. However, they do not understand that abortion should not be taken lightly, and is not a “good thing.”

Yet today, Planned Parenthood and other similar nonprofits are teaching people about contraception use and safe sex. The hope is to lower the number of abortions needed, while an increasing number of states are legalizing abortion, in order to minimize the amount of suffering.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the frequency of abortions from 2009 and 2010 and the rate from 2001 to 2009 has decreased overall by 9%. A majority of the abortions were for women in their 20s. “In 2010, 765,651 legal induced abortions were reported to CDC from 49 reporting areas. The abortion rate for 2010 was 14.6 abortions per 1,000 women aged 15–44 years and the abortion ratio was 228 abortions per 1,000 live births.”

As a result of these efforts and the legalization of abortion in some states, the number of abortions performed has decreased.

Although abortion is not necessarily morally correct, it still does not mean that the government should be in control of “moral issues.” The government should be solely in control of legal ones.

Abortion is an unfortunate and difficult ordeal to go through for any woman, it is not morally “good,” but it should be legally allowed. It is ultimately the woman’s right to choose. Therefore, abortion should be made legal for every woman.

## VII

### Google Should be Held Accountable for Gun Geo Marker App

Google Play has released an app called Gun Geo Marker which identifies the homes and businesses of suspected unsafe gun owners to help the public learn about their geography of risk from gun accidents or violence. However, by anonymously *marking* gun owners and their homes, people with the app are infringing upon the gun owners' rights. This is a clear violation of the Second Amendment.

The Walkingtools Laboratory that created this app is asking for U.S. citizens to take the law into their own hands. That is *not* the job of the people; it is the government's job to protect individual rights and that includes the safety of its citizens. Some of the suggested 'keywords' to search on the Geo Gun Marker website include things like, "guns and substance abuse," "possible anti-government/terror threat," or "neighborhood talk, unsafe." These are *accusations* from local neighbors, family, and friends which are subjective and possibly inaccurate.

The company also warns app users to make certain distinctions between whether the guns are known to the public, safely stored, or used for criminal activity before attempting to mark them. The general public is *not* properly trained to make such distinctions. People are not meant to be undercover agents for the government.

After the release of a Fox News, titled "Gun Geo Marker app tries to locate homes, businesses of gun owners," Editor Brett Stalbaum stated on the Gun Geo website that he "find[s] it sad that the Second Amendment is represented most vociferously by a paranoid minority who respond to imaginary problems with threats, intimidation, and legal solipsism." Yet, gunpolicy.org states that the "estimated total number of guns held by civilians in the U.S. is 270 million to 310 million people." That is not a "*frightened and irrational minority*" of the population. That is a large number of citizens who want their privacy and protection of their individual rights respected.

As the marketing aim for Gun Geo Marker, Google should be held accountable for promoting such an app without any kind of consideration for individual rights.

The Gun Geo Marker application is currently rated a 1 star out of the possible 5. Google Play's response to such a low rating is:

"Our app rating is actually a source of pride in this context. The App was pilloried by a paranoid community of deluded gun rights activists in July 2013; deluded because the gun owning community in the United States shoots itself in the foot - and endangers all of our 2nd amendment rights - when it comes out against reasonable solutions to the gun violence

epidemic. This includes Apps that might allow it to better allow gun owners regulate themselves, foment better safety practices, and prevent unnecessary gun deaths. But in short, the community instead decided that this App was a threat and spammed it up with useless info that effectively disabled it for sincere users.”

Google has its own bias in demanding that everyday citizen’s tattle-tale about who owns a gun ‘unsafely.’ It should be an unbiased company that serves the people – not a venture where political agendas are pushed onto its consumers. Critics who gave the Gun Geo Marker its poor rating remarked, “Just another person who wants more government control over their life,” or “This app is horrible. Not only should everyone give it a bad rating but you all should go to the bottom and flag it to Google. Hopefully if enough people tell Google that they shouldn't have an app for targeting people who are not breaking the law they will remove this garbage.”

If Google receives enough complaints and poor sales of this product, perhaps it will rethink the propaganda it has promoted online which is ultimately harming the public, *not* helping it.



## VIII

### The Evolution-Creation Debate Rages On

On February 4, 2014, Bill Nye and Ken Ham met in Petersburg, Kentucky at the Creation Museum to debate over this question: “Is creation a viable model of origins?”

Ken Ham is the museum’s president, the “Answers in Genesis” guy, and an advocate of Creationism. Bill Nye is known as “The Science Guy,” currently the CEO of the Planetary Society, and an advocate of Evolution.

When this event was created in January, all of the museum’s seats sold out quickly and a sizable audience gathered online preparing to watch the debate. Based on the event’s popularity, this issue is still considered a hot topic for many Americans.

However, many nonbelievers disagreed with this event saying that a real scientist has nothing to debate about with a person who believes that the earth is only 6,000 years old. Regardless of the skepticism, both men cordially debated over the question – while Ken Ham answered ‘yes,’ Bill Nye conversely said ‘no.’

Deborah Haarsma, president of the BioLogos Foundation, said that “It is this huge stereotype that all Christians reject science and an event like this reinforces that stereotype.” To note, believers do not necessarily all agree with Ham and his view that the Earth is only 6,000 years old.

Throughout the debate, Bill Nye used observable evidence that the earth is much older than the creationists believe it to be. In fact, before arriving at the debate, Nye managed to find a fossil outside the museum building which he brought in to use as proof that the earth is approximately 4.5 billion years old. But Ken Ham fought back by relying heavily on faith. He answered every question with the bible as his basis. For instance, he referred to the creation story as a way to explain where atoms originated.

Both sides made their arguments which people already on their side believed were strong, while the opposing side saw them as weak. This rendered the debate useless, because neither side could *constructively* argue with one another.

Ayn Rand, a novelist-philosopher, believed that religion began as a way for Man to explain the universe. She thought that it was useful at one point in human history and that it still has some valuable moral conclusions. However, Rand believed that, ultimately, philosophy is what all people should strive for in the end. For each one of us has a philosophy, whether we realize it or not. How and by what standards we choose to live our lives *is* having a philosophy.

By Ayn Rand's logic, this debate was useless because it was really pitting philosophy (or science) against religion. These are two *different* methods of answering the questions of the universe. Therefore, no real common ground is possible between them.

During the debate Ken Ham said: "The Bible is the word of God [...]. I admit that's where I start from." How could anyone argue against that kind of reasoning and total commitment to faith? Ken Ham refused to acknowledge anything apart from his belief in God.

"If we accept Mr. Ham's point of view...that the Bible serves as a science text and he and his followers will interpret that for you, I want you to consider what that means," Nye said. "It means that Mr. Ham's word is to be more respected than what you can observe in nature, what you can find in your backyard in Kentucky." Bill Nye refused to acknowledge any kind of truth in Ken Ham's argument due to his belief in science.

Each man threw 'facts' at each other throughout the argument – never shaking the other's belief. And so, they debated 'at' each other, never coming to a *constructive* conclusion.

Eventually, people must choose whether they will follow the religious or philosophical path. These men were already set in their beliefs and so the debate itself was futile in changing anyone's mind.

Religion versus science (or philosophy) *cannot* be debated because there is no common ground.

Debbie Goddard, director of outreach for the Center for Inquiry, said that "If we don't let their [creationist's] ideas see the light of day we can't develop the tools to address them [...]. And we don't just need the tools of facts and evidence, but also of understanding their views and compassion for them if we want to be effective at changing their minds."

But according to Ayn Rand, it is nearly impossible to change the developed mind. On the one hand, there is the mind that believes in a God. And on the other, there is the mind that believes in Science. Those two stern mindsets will never intermingle.

Believers and nonbelievers wasted their resources by giving voice to two beliefs which could not reasonably argue with each other. This debate was a 'lose-lose situation' for the American populous costing them needless time, money, and energy.

The evolution-creation debate will continue until Man learns that neither side will ever win.

## IX

### The Five-Year-Old Robber

As I walked through the aisles, humming to myself, my hands running down each pre-packed produce item, I noticed an open container full of peanuts. The container was at eye-level and my eyes clung to it and nothing else. Sharply tugging on my mother's pants, I asked politely if I could have some. She said, "Not now, Katie." But my mind was already made up and being the stubborn child that I was, I felt the urge to grab some of the peanuts and shove them into my pocket. No one would ever know. I felt a rush of triumph blow over me. I had taken flight with new wings my parents had no control over. If I wanted something, I took it.

Walking behind my mother, the act replayed in my head over and over again – my small hand reaching out, my heart palpitating ten times its normal rate, my eyes shifting back-and-forth, my armpits starting to sweat. And then the grab itself. Cupping my hand, I became the plastic scooper and kidnapped what few peanuts I could. I captured about five unnoticed. I remember the way that their shells felt against the palm of my hand. Each peanut took on its own shape, the rough curvature making every one unique. I almost felt like naming each separate peanut before devouring them whole. But I had to release the light, ridged shells into my soft, sweater-pocket. The pocket itself was so tiny that it could hardly hold down five large peanuts. But I shoved them down its throat with deft accuracy and speed. That way the pocket would not protest and I could go home a free girl – free from trouble.

A grin began to appear on my face, but as I looked up at my mother, I felt an intense drop in my mood. *Would she approve of my achievement to outsmart her...or even worse, would father?* I gulped. Looking around the current aisle we were being swallowed up in, I noticed it smelled like bleach and large tubs of colorfully labeled goo were sitting on the shelves. We were in the cleaning supplies aisle which seemed like forever away from the peanut container I had just violated. It was too late – the damage was done.

Suddenly, my mother asked me: "Katie is there anything else you'd like since we finished with the grocery list?" This was my chance to confess. It was a miracle. But appearing on my left shoulder the devil whispered into my ear, "Are you nuts, kid? You can't give up now; you're bound to get in trouble if you tell her here." While an angel on my right shoulder yanked on my ear and said, "No! You must confess now, because it will only be worse later." *Later?* I was not planning on getting caught *at all*. The thought had never occurred to me that I would be caught *later*. But being too nervous and stubborn with my decision, I hesitantly replied, "Nope." Something in my gut kicked me...or perhaps it was my brain. Either way, we got through the check-out line with ease, my peanuts still being safely hidden away in my sweater-pocket's mouth.

When we arrived home, I was both excited and nervous to dispose of the peanuts – down my throat. I only had them once before at my godmother's house last summer, and finally I would get to experience their taste once more. Unnoticed, I crept to my room and unloaded the goods

onto my bed. One by one, I proceeded to crack their shells to pieces and gobble up their insides. (Good thing I did not name them). The savory blend of spit and salt mixed in my mouth. I could not think of anything else in that moment of ecstasy. And so, I left my room in a beautiful haze of briny, peanut-y goodness. I went to look outside one of our windows in the kitchen while I enjoyed the last remnants of peanut in my mouth. It was like tasting the sun going down.

My brain had stopped kicking me for a while until my mother yelled my name – my full name: “Kaitlyn Marie Quis!!!” *Uh-oh.*

“Yes, mama?”

“Come here.” I trudged into my room. *I had been caught somehow.*

“Why are there peanut shells all over your bed?!” *How could I have forgotten?!*

“I took them from the store when you told me I couldn’t have any...”

“I’m telling your father. Stealing is *not* okay!” *Oh no, my father will spank me for sure.*

My face started scrunching up. *Was I really going to cry now when just a few moments ago I had been so happy?* Mother walked me over to the living room where father was sitting in “his chair” and began listening to her story. His eyes grew large and frightened as he aimed them at me. Now my head and stomach *and* heart were all sounding the alarm. My butt was going to be sore tonight. But as I looked back at my dad he could tell that I had no real notion of what “stealing” was – I had only heard the word used a few times in church after-all. I promised them that I would never do it again. I was not a “robber.” My mother and father gave each other one final look and the decision was made in silence. No punishment. *Thank goodness!* I thought, as a wave of relief came over me.

I had yet to realize though that although I was not physically punished, I was mentally. This thing that is called, “guilt” had been sneaking up on me the whole time. I also had this thing called, “conscience” which was what was doing all the kicking, I suppose. My parents talked to me for a while about why stealing was wrong and I began to understand what I had robbed that grocery store of – money. I also learned what I had robbed from myself – dignity. My mental punishment may *actually* have been more severe than a physical one, because I had only myself to blame and I thought my parents looked down on me that day. Thankfully, I learned my lesson and never stole anything again. That day, I had tasted the sunset – and it tasted like dirt.

## X

### The Unveiled Übermensch: Fighting a Mixed Moral Code

This creative thesis is meant to serve as an intensive character study of who an Übermensch is and what he or she *ought* to be. An Übermensch is the German name for “overman” or “superman.” He serves as a compelling fiction character, because he breaks away from the masses and assumes his own individuality. He also denies Judeo-Christian morality and releases himself from guilt as a driving force of morality (as opposed to guilt simply serving as a consequence of poor behavior). But there are limitations to the character that keep him from being more than a theoretical creation. I reveal how Nietzsche’s conception of the Übermensch only leads to ruinous consequences if he is not drastically changed as a character. I utilize Ayn Rand’s protagonist, John Galt, as a possible answer to how an Übermensch could represent future characters and act as a role model for readers. Galt is an individual who obeys the laws of reality. Obeying the laws of reality – or natural laws – is a good thing, because life becomes easier and better for Man. It makes sense for him to function this way because Galt’s main goal is his own happiness while Nietzsche’s Übermensch desires complete freedom from guilt and ample power over others.

The structure of this paper begins with an analysis of who an Übermensch is, what kind of Übermensch I aspire to create, and finally an example of such a character in my own short story. The outcome of an in-depth character study is discovering a character of my own that I can employ in my writing career. I want to show readers a stronger depiction of a current hero who is not mystical, but rational. In terms of being “mystical,” I mean that Nietzsche’s Übermensch gains his destructive powers from what seems to be out of nowhere. By the end of this thesis, I also think readers should consider challenging their own moral code to see if there are any values that are actually holding them *back* from reaching happiness in their lives.

My version of the Übermensch is one who does not use force against others, but lives for her own happiness. My Übermensch’s name is Marilyn and she is my heroic character. Marilyn is a housewife in 1950’s America living with her ex-military husband, James. She loves James, but tensions have started to arise in their relationship, because James has a “mixed morality” that I will discuss more elaborately later on in this paper. He is unaware of the mixed altruistic and selfish values that he holds. After a minor breakdown, Marilyn asks James if she can get a job – he consents – and she begins as a secretary in a local office. Through a series of obstacles, Marilyn discovers her own moral code once she is fired by her boss, Mr. Thompson (a figure based off of Nietzsche’s Übermensch). The short story closes with Marilyn leaving the office and exhaling for the first time since this gut feeling began to worry her. She is now free of the unnecessary guilt caused by a society with mixed morals.

Hence, Marilyn by the end of the story earns her power while Nietzsche’s Übermensch *takes* it. Earning is a virtue, because there is a value to it which can only be obtained through some sort of effort – a person is not a slave to anyone else. To me, happiness is the end

goal of a person's life. To be clear, she does not live for her own pleasure as a hedonist would, but as a *rational* human being seeking her own happiness on earth. This means that she uses her emotions to help her form rational concepts in order to be able to live in reality or the world's laws of nature (as Rand's Galt does) and *not* as a force that is to be opposed by reason. She creates her own status, power, and ego by struggling to find her true values (as opposed to blindly just taking them). My Übermensch adds an updated voice to this split between Nietzsche and Rand by coming to the conclusion that we are currently living in a mixed moral system which needs to be addressed. A "mixed moral system" is a *culture* that upholds a muddle of Judeo-Christian values (e.g. altruism) with those of a more secular tradition that teaches selfishness (typically derived from the Ancient Greeks). Therefore, having a moral code that is mixed by these combating forces of altruism and selfishness, is one that is an *individual's* set of values which causes people to behave in ways, often unknowingly, that disallow them from attaining happiness. Life with implicit – as opposed to explicit – values becomes more ambiguous and harder to act in. People, instead, end up living in unnecessary fear and guilt, because they have absorbed the culture's ideas into a code of their own. Therefore, it is better to analyze where one's morals come from and to rid oneself of the damaging "virtues" derived from Judeo-Christian morality. This is a productive point for me, because I wish to have my fictional characters learn to live without this altruistic guilt on their shoulders, as well as, expecting the same for others in reality.

As mentioned earlier, Nietzsche's Übermensch whom he calls Zarathustra in his book, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, claims that the end goal in life is not happiness, but power over others and over morality itself. This is how Nietzsche invents his version of an ideal man. Zarathustra is not concerned about societal happiness, but it may be a byproduct of when an individual finds his personal happiness, like the cliché of loving oneself before being able to truly love others. Although it is never explicitly defined, one can extract a basic definition of what Nietzsche meant from his book. An Übermensch is the German word for "overman" and means "that man is something that must be overcome – that man is a bridge and no end" (*TSZ* 310) to what readers are lead to believe is a type of superior man known as "*Zarathustra the godless...*" (*GofM* 66) who can make his *own* rules through his *own* will. This will is one of pure force which is given to some and not to others – some people are the leaders or "the blond Germanic beast[s]" while others are the followers (*GofM* 23). Nietzsche's Übermensch is given this distinction through a kind of mystical or divine right – he is born stronger and can feel it in his very bones. Therefore, an Übermensch is "destined" to rule over others.

However, Nietzsche's Übermensch figure is still very much a part of this world due to his non-mystical nature, but he is *not* a part of the masses who are ruled over a morality that the Übermensch scorns. For Nietzsche believes that morality originally arose among the Judeo-Christian tradition of original sin, punishment, guilt, hatred, revenge, and other fabricated virtues that he denies. Judeo-Christian guilt is the largest perpetrator of this traditional morality, because it is based on the idea that altruism is good. For example, a "good Christian" would sacrifice his last piece of bread to a stranger's starving baby than to his own, knowing full well that this would mean his baby's death, resulting in the loss of a *real* value. This kind of behavior is outright rejected by Nietzsche (and Rand), because it enslaves one man to another. Guilt never meant anything good or motivating when it only resulted in losses for the figure of the Übermensch.

I will now begin by turning to Nietzsche's work and analyzing what makes his idea of the Übermensch useful for fiction writing, and what are the problems entailed in his conception of it. In his *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche begins his "Preface" with "We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers [...for w]e have never sought ourselves" (*GofM* 1). Similarly, one of the goals of my creative thesis is to have people re-evaluate their set of morals, because many people (especially at my age) have never done so before. Re-evaluating involves searching for non-coercive, logical

morals. We are not born knowing ourselves or our choices, so it takes study and thought as to why we behave the way we do. Nietzsche also says that “[a]ll instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn themselves inwards* – this is what I call the *internalizing* of man: thus first grows in man that which he later calls his ‘soul’” (*GofM* 57). This internalizing process makes up a Man’s soul and some internalizing brings both the good and the bad. This is how we tend to grow up with a mixed morality (which reflects the current culture too). I find it useful as a concept, because it is true in our culture and there is no value to having a set of implicitly and unevaluated morals. We must work to change it. Man must “almost be a cow and in any case *not* a ‘modern man’: *ruminating...*” (*GofM* 7). He must spend time to think about why guilt, especially, is used incorrectly in morality.

Again, Nietzsche claims that the very idea of morality began only when Judeo-Christians ruled the West. He believes Christians began proving that “[...] unegoistic actions were as a matter of habit always praised as good, one also felt them to be good – as if they were something good in themselves” (*GofM* 10). Yet,

[f]rom the beginning there is something *unhealthy* in such priestly aristocracies and in the habits ruling there, ones turned away from action, partly brooding, partly emotionally explosive, habits that have as a consequence the intestinal disease and neurasthenia that almost unavoidably clings to the priests of all ages [...]. (*GofM* 15)

The hierarchy that came with church rule affected and redefined everything the people of that time period knew and it still echoes in our culture today. Nietzsche sees the priests and followers of God as trying to use morality “[...] through an act of *spiritual revenge*” (*GofM* 16). The priestly aristocracy advocate for pain and ultimately death to all mortal beings. But those individuals who resist such teachings are able to shout out a “triumphant yes-saying to oneself” (*GofM* 19).

However, Nietzsche believes that too many people have fallen prey to the teachings of the Judeo-Christians, whereby “[t]he darkening of the heavens over man has always increased proportionally as man has grown ashamed *of man*” (*GofM* 43). Yet, people must become aware of where their morals come from before living by them. The fall of Adam and Eve is the beginnings of this shame of Man himself. He is made to feel ashamed and *guilty* of being naked, seeking pleasure, and enjoying his life on earth. Therefore, “[w]hat actually arouses indignation against suffering is not suffering itself, but rather the senselessness of suffering [...]” (*GofM* 44). For this guilt is senseless to Nietzsche. It is all made-up. And “all those instincts of the wild free roaming human turned themselves backwards against *man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, pleasure in persecution, in assault, in change, in destruction – all of that turning itself against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of ‘bad conscience’” (*GofM* 57). The priestly aristocracy implemented this notion of bad conscience and it is deeply ingrained in morality. Only the noble men who are free from this guilt can have a good conscience. They are good, because they do not fight against their “animal past,” rather they recognize that “[...] the suffering of man *from man, from himself*” is a most dangerous idea (*GofM* 57). Therefore, the Übermensch completely rejects morality. For

[...] what kind of *pleasure* it is that the selfless, the self-denying, the self-sacrificing feel from the very start: this pleasure belongs to cruelty. –So much for the present on the origins of the ‘unegoistic’ as a moral value and toward staking out the ground from which this value has grown: bad conscience, the will to self-maltreatment, first supplies the presupposition for the *value* of the unegoistic. (*GofM* 59)

But to value the unegoistic is to preach anti-life sentiments. In other words, life is only meant to be humbly, selflessly suffered through until the holy day of judgment. Hence, it is best to be on good behavior for the lord to let you up into heaven when that day comes. So it seems that the

[...] will to self-torment, that suppressed cruelty of the animal-human who had

been made inward, scared back into himself, of the one locked up in the 'state' for the purpose of taming, who invented the bad conscience in order to cause himself pain after the *more natural* outlet for this *desire to cause pain* was blocked, --this man of bad conscience has taken over the religious presupposition in order to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome severity and sharpness. Guilt before *God*: that thought becomes an instrument of torture for him. (*GofM* 63)

So who will save Man? Jesus? God? No, Nietzsche calls on Zarathustra to awaken people from their Judeo-Christian slumber. He says:

This human of the future who will redeem us from the previous ideal as much as from that *which had to grow out of it*, from the great disgust, from the will to nothingness; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision, that makes the will free again, that gives back to the earth its goal and to man his hope; this Anti-Christ and anti-nihilist; this conqueror of God and of nothingness – *he must one day come...* (*GofM* 66)

It is Zarathustra who Nietzsche uses as a role model for what others should do to throw off the shackles of morality. Morality brings nothing but unheeded guilt, suffering, and pain. "But there could not be any greater and more doomful misunderstanding than when the happy, the well-formed, the powerful of body and soul being to doubt their *right to happiness*" (*GofM* 89).

Rejecting altruistic guilt is part of what makes Nietzsche's Übermensch fascinating, because he rids himself of age-old theology and tries to stand out among the commonplace. He desires to be an individual and stories like those are always the most interesting to us as readers, because we can take the time to know and identify with the main, individualistic character. Nietzsche wants his character in the book to overcome morality, because he "denies that there is a universal morality applicable indiscriminately to all human beings, and instead designates a series of moralities in an order of rank..." (Wicks). In other words, there is not an absolute morality for all people to ascribe to on earth. The current moral values of society are so mixed with Judeo-Christian values that Nietzsche considers them to be against life – advocating instead for death. As a result, he creates a character who rejects the entire moral system and "overcomes" it all. Zarathustra eliminates morality in order to live his life, free from undeserved guilt.

I argue that Nietzsche's Übermensch does the right thing by rejecting unfounded guilt upon his shoulders, but that he takes it too far by throwing off morality entirely – instead of reinventing it. The character in my short story and I, as a writer, struggle unlike Nietzsche in this battle against mixed morality. We struggle, because happiness is a *choice* (as with being rational) and it *must* be earned. We are not born with a natural right to happiness – the only way to find it is through a series of rational choices. Thereby understanding that happiness is the *outcome* of the rational choices a person makes and not the other way around. A morality without altruistic guilt as a driving force for action is the most freeing way to live – and thereby the happiest way to live. Rejecting this kind of guilt is useful, because it allows a person the freedom and ability to act toward his own happiness. But that freedom can become paralyzing if a person tries to then throw off morality entirely.

Nietzsche rightly shows that man is strong and should be free to live without guilt, and therefore, without religion. However, Nietzsche is a mystic in the way he claims that the leaders are naturally (or evenly divinely) given power to rule over others. He is replacing Zarathustra (his Übermensch figure) with God. This is the self-overcoming or overcoming of Man that I deeply disagree with in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy. Man *needs* morality in order to live. Nietzsche rejects this notion, because he does not believe that morality is needed at all, but even from his character, Zarathustra, one can see that he is no more than a theoretical tyrant. People cannot



connect with Zarathustra, because he is miraculously able to throw off morality and still somehow act. But people cannot make choices without having some kind of implicit or explicit morality. Hence, Nietzsche's Übermensch can and *will* only remain a theoretical answer to the problem of a heavily Judeo-Christian influenced morality. He cannot be taken seriously as a character, because he lacks the agency to do anything. As a result, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* does not have a plot. Zarathustra spends his time giving sermons about his coming and what will happen to the world, but no actual change in terms of his earthly situation takes place. The only thing he does is faints continuously from his rather frequent epiphanies, but by the end he is still in the same place as at the beginning. Although, the point of creating compelling characters is to weave them together with a good plot – meaning that there is a theme (something they desire) and a plot (how they attain what they desire). It is these two things that allow for a character to feel *real*. A reader should get the feeling that no matter how fantastical the scenarios may be, a character could possibly be someone in reality – a next door neighbor, a doctor, a family member, and etcetera. In reality, people live by some sort of moral code. Therefore, there is nothing that can be overthrown in its entirety, but there ought to be a system of morality that is free from the Judeo-Christian influence – namely, free of self-sacrificial “values.”

It is for this reason that I have chosen Ayn Rand's novel, *Atlas Shrugged*, as a way to correct Nietzsche's extreme conclusions. The novel is based on the idea of man's mind on strike. This man on strike is her version of the ideal man. He is what the Übermensch *ought* to be, because he sticks to his code of morality and deprives society of the benefits of his code until they learn to appreciate it. In other words, people begin to suffer at the hands of a purely Judeo-Christian morality until they gain back those members of society who have a better, reality-abiding moral system. Rand's character, John Galt, is a man of the mind with a moral code. He is a man who uses reason, as opposed, to divinely-given emotions which drive the will (in other words, Zarathustra's character). Both seek independence from the unthinking masses which is hard to achieve if the culture is really poor. To me, a fictional character must be real enough to be possible in reality, therefore, he should be in constant communication with society and his independent thoughts. As with real people, there should be logical consequences for the actions taken in a fictional world and so with independence or the ability to choose comes responsibility. My characters will not be able to reach happiness if they do not abide by the laws of reality – even in fiction. By following these laws, a person is able to make concrete goals for himself in order to get to a place where he is happiest in life. John Galt still seeks to abolish Judeo-Christian guilt from morality like Zarathustra does, but he seeks to make his morality *his* by rationally picking and choosing his values. He purposefully thinks through his values that he was taught from society since birth in order to determine which ones are the most helpful to him (in terms of attaining his happiness rather than not thinking and just feeling his sense of leadership or power like Zarathustra). Ayn Rand's definition of morality is “a code of values to guide [that is, to help him select] man's choices and actions – the choices and actions that determine the purpose and course of his life” (The Ayn Rand Lexicon). To be clear, Rand also says that “‘value’ is that which one acts to gain and keep, ‘virtue’ is the action by which one gains and keeps it” (The Ayn Rand Lexicon). Man needs a moral code in order to *act*.

A man of the mind is someone who takes action in the rational world. An Übermensch should turn toward the mind, because reason is our only tool of survival and it is the only way to achieve happiness. As mentioned previously, happiness can only be achieved as an *outcome* of a rationally-lived life because it will allow a person to concretely create goals thereby opening the pathway to having a positive response toward the world. A man of the mind is one who understands that “Life is given to him, survival is not” (Rand 1012). The mind is man's tool of survival and he must make the active choice whether to use it or not, because he has volition. The fact that he has free will means that man chooses to live, survive, exist. All of those require him to

take action and use his mind to create. A man of the mind must understand the underlying Aristotelian notion that “A is A” or existence exists (Rand 1016). He must function according to the laws of reality which means working on the premise of *life* and not death. Similarly, Nietzsche wants to abolish morality in order to preserve life and not death. But in order to work on that premise, Man must have an ego – pride toward himself and his creations. Nietzsche attempts to *take* his ego from out of thin air, but that is not how it works. Like happiness or any other value that a Man has in his life, it must be *earned* – not stolen. He cannot allow negative influences to destroy his creative, productive spark since that is a man of the mind’s ticket to his own achievement and happiness.

The spark that is free from cynicism and pessimism is based on man’s most basic value which is thought. When a man uses his tool of survival he is not evading like the others who chose to avoid thinking. John Galt understands that “reality will show him that life is a value to be bought and that thinking is the only coin noble enough to buy it” (Rand 1018). Man must think in order to survive. He cannot mooch off of others as the people in this world were doing before Galt took away the bound and blackmailed thinkers. And without them, death is more pronounced for those who refuse to use their own minds.

Creativity can bring a man pleasure, but *not* a hedonistic pleasure rather one that is rationally selfish. To be rationally selfish, John Galt decides to create Galt’s Gulch and work on what he loves without the guilt and red tape that society placed on him to dampen his creativity. The masses tried to uphold an irrational morality, meaning that they “sacrificed independence to unity [...] reason to faith [...] wealth to need [...] self-esteem to self-denial [...] happiness to duty” (Rand 1010). All of the morals that people are supposed to be upholding are suddenly reversed by this group. Instead of having people take responsibility for their own actions, they are now being given a pass at blaming their lives on others – using others – *being* others. But John Galt is one of the last few men who understands that he is on his own and that he has to *earn* his values through the various choices that he rationally chooses for himself. From this sentiment comes another one of the most famous lines in the novel: “I swear – by my life and my love of it – that I will never live for the sake of another man, nor ask another man to live for mine” (Rand 1069). John Galt wants to be his *own* man like Zarathustra. He desires to remain responsible for himself in every way in order to take ownership over his own creations – his own intellectual property.

To be creative, man must rely on his mind to imagine and practice his craft. But this space or freedom to think cannot occur in a society that does not allow one to think *independently*. This is the fault with totalitarian regimes, because they allow for group think, but nothing more. Every man depends on his neighbor for thought under that kind of a regime. But John Galt rejects this view that he needs another man in order to think and so too does Zarathustra. He is a man of the mind, but Zarathustra is a man of the divine will. John Galt understands that he can form his own concepts from observing reality and use language, science, math or art in order to convey his own thoughts. Zarathustra does not abide by reality or morality, but depends on his emotions and instincts to show him the way. Galt is self-sufficient which provides him with an ego and purpose in his life. Zarathustra has a false ego, because it has not been *earned* – the same as with his happiness. Zarathustra uses force to get his way while Galt does not. John Galt kept his ego, because he outright *rejects* “the doctrine that life is guilt” (Rand 1010). Meanwhile, Zarathustra is also of the mindset that guilt should be rejected. Yet, society continues to try to tell Galt that he cannot create anything alone and that Zarathustra is mad.

The society that Galt (and Zarathustra) is subject to uses guilt as its most deadly weapon. Guilt can cause an entire system to collapse and does not (necessarily) promote thought. What guilt does is rob men of their egos by telling them that they are incapable of creation. Or that if they *do* manage to create something, then it is everyone’s property and not his own – he does not have a right to life. Guilt does not allow room for a self. And a self, therefore, withers away when it

is not nurtured by the one who owns it. Instead of following the path of Zarathustra and “overcoming” morality, John Galt left society before it got to him and he took other men of the mind with him in order to show the world how it is to live without reason. He stopped the world’s motor. The motor symbol represents the world that moves based on reason. Galt challenges the altruistic ideology that no one seems to have questioned before. For without independent thought and creativity, the world is thrown back into the Dark Ages. But Galt denies guilt and desires other leaders to deny it too before their own egos would be washed away along with their individuality.

John Galt teaches men to think for themselves and to maintain their egos. Man should push his mind to the limits, because out of that comes an immense amount of pleasure and happiness. What Galt means by happiness is “that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one’s values” (Rand 1014). Creation is the greatest thing a man can do with his life, because it provides those very values and happiness for man. Hence, John Galt believes that the “symbol of all relationships among such men, the moral symbol of respect for human beings, is *the trader*” (Rand 1022). Trading values is an arrangement free from sacrifice, altruism, and coercion.

I will now use Rand to specifically critique and alter Nietzsche’s extreme conclusions, because value trading with others is *not* an idea that Nietzsche advocates. Ayn Rand states:

Nietzsche’s rebellion against altruism consisted of replacing the sacrifice of oneself to others by the sacrifice of others to oneself. He proclaimed that the ideal man is moved, not by reason, but by his “blood,” by his innate instincts, feelings and will to power—that he is predestined by birth to rule others and sacrifice them to himself, while *they* are predestined by birth to be his victims and slaves—that reason, logic, principles are futile and debilitating, that morality is useless, that the “superman” is “beyond good and evil,” that he is a “beast of prey” whose ultimate standard is nothing but his own whim. Thus Nietzsche’s rejection of the Witch Doctor consisted of elevating Attila into a moral ideal—which meant: a double surrender of morality to the Witch Doctor. (The Ayn Rand Lexicon)

Nietzsche does not rid himself of the Judeo-Christian tradition by abolishing morality – he merely reverses it – meaning that Nietzsche rails against the altruistic guilt of sacrificing one’s values to another by, instead, making everyone else sacrifice their values to him by coercion. The outcome, however, is the same. Both the self-sacrificing collective and those domineering individuals who demand self-sacrifice are both *wrong*, because they are still enslaving one man to another. Nietzsche’s Übermensch reveals that by being irrational – moved by the passions of the will – can man truly live. But this creates a mystical character with an inflated self-confidence and no real value to speak of. The character is still perpetuating the same altruistic guilt – only now he has the reigns. Dominant individuals are not “an exception” to the altruistic guilt in morality – no one should have to suffer with this moral code. Rand’s John Galt opens the door for *anyone* who wants to escape the Judeo-Christian form of guilt to do so, but sadly not many ever do. It is apparent then that Nietzsche’s Übermensch is *not* a hero, but a pseudo-god and a character who can never be anything more than hypothetical.

Ayn Rand uses her character, John Galt, as a man of the mind who employs her philosophical system and decides to eventually tell the world what this means over the radio. Her philosophy is for men of the mind – those who *choose* to think. He (like Rand) wants to draw people into a system that acknowledges reality and universal truths. John Galt is tired of the age-old mystics still left in our modern society. And what Rand specifically means by mysticism is “the acceptance of allegations without evidence or proof, either of one’s senses and one’s reason” (The Ayn Rand Lexicon). This is why he proclaims: “I quit that factory. I quit your world. I made it my job to warn

your victims and to give them the method and the weapon to fight you. The method was to refuse to deflect retribution. The weapon was justice” (Rand 1048). John Galt is a man who stops the entire motor of the world in order to destroy the ruling philosophy of altruism. He calls out to those who must make a choice between good and evil. He wants those who have loved existence, even if for a single moment, to “*stop supporting [their] own destroyers*” (Rand 1066). In a rationally selfish manner, Galt says this because he desires to live in a better world so that he can live his *own* life happily.

Finally, my short story provides a spectrum of people fighting a mixed moral system that has taken a hold of current society (circa 1950s onward in America). Before we jump in, I would like to make a quick note about the titles of the thesis and the short story I wrote. The title of the story is: “The *Veiled* Übermensch.” My protagonist, Marilyn, is forced to “hide” in a way until society changes its mixed moral code. The title of my thesis is: “The *Unveiled* Übermensch: Fighting a Mixed Moral Code.” My thesis involves analysis that is unveiling Marilyn’s journey and subsequent position as an Übermensch in my fictional world.

The date here is important, 1950s America, because time is a factor in my story unlike it is in Nietzsche’s work. This is another reason as to why Zarathustra can only be a theoretical person and never a real one. People live according to the laws of nature which include space and time. Marilyn is nervous and excited about her job, because it was not too common for women to work outside of the home then. She is able to do more than the norm in her time and place. However, time should not limit a person’s ability to create a good moral code. The essences of the characters are derived from their moral codes that allow them to make decisions and say certain things to other people. The story is about a young woman who is fighting a chaotic, uncontrollable world that utilizes this mixed moral code. All three characters – Zarathustra, Galt, and Marilyn – lack control of their situations in the beginning, because they are battling against the cultural mixed moral system. For this reason, Marilyn lacks independence and is suffocating from the way society is. She is not weak, but instead her anxiety derives from the moral codes that people have all around her. It is a mix of Judeo-Christian tradition (e.g. altruism) and Ancient Greek tradition (e.g. selfishness). I believe that means our current society abides by “values” like altruism while at the same time advocating for selfishness. This young woman tries to combat here uneasy feelings by getting a job outside of the home. But when she does her best, her boss fires her (with the help of some morally reprehensible coworkers). Through a series of interactions, Marilyn discovers that many people have become cynical and lost sight of happiness. And she must fight to maintain her own optimism. All three characters – Zarathustra, Galt, and Marilyn – eventually seek to obtain their own morality. Zarathustra throws off morality (and subsequently guilt) entirely for mysticism and divine will. Galt thinks and refines his morality until he is able to come out to society about it. Marilyn does not throw off morality entirely, but also seeks to create hers based off of reason. We *all* must fight to maintain our own idea that the world is benevolent. So, still believing that happiness is attainable in this life and with the support of her morally mixed-up husband, Marilyn slowly realizes by the end that she must abandon guilt and hide away in her logical, controllable space in the home until society learns to analyze itself and “purify” its moral code. Only then will her newfound moral code be accepted in society.

Marilyn, the protagonist and young wife of the story is introduced first. She is anxiety-ridden, but this emotion seems to be charged by her interactions with society at large and is *not* the result of mental illness. She has a moral code that allows her to act and attain happiness for herself, but is having difficulty keeping it in tact when she lives among others who have seemingly given up that pursuit. Yet, she desires personal happiness and understands – at first only by her emotions – that this current culture cannot bring her what she desires. The story follows Marilyn discovering what is making her feel so ill-at-ease and how she can overcome it. Her happiness is a

struggle, but by the end it is earned to allow for it to become a real value to her. Nietzsche's Zarathustra also struggles as he faints from making his several discoveries about overcoming Man and guilt. Galt, too, struggles against coercive government measures and hides away from society until he has completely defined his own moral code.

The readers spend some time with Marilyn washing dishes in the kitchen. This first scene is all about the battle that Marilyn sees between order and chaos, or in actuality, between a logical moral code and a complete lack of one. [Please note that the idea of domesticity is here being accepted for what it is as a definition without the historical baggage that it carries. It means house chores that both men and women can do – no more or less. In an indirect way, this paper is meant to show that the Übermensch can be either male or female. Therefore, this paper will not address gender any further. Also, being an Übermensch does not mean that Man must remain completely alone – other people can bring value to our lives too]. Now remember that Nietzsche desires Zarathustra to do away with morality while Rand desires to maintain one – but the *right* one – one that corresponds to logic and rationality. I consider both writers to be establishing their ideal characters (Zarathustra and Galt) and these are the Übermensch figures of a future society. Marilyn is an Übermensch in the way that she also tries to overcome the morality that she grew up with and acknowledges that she desires something more from life – true happiness. For morality is a logical system that is created to help Man attain happiness without necessarily having to learn by experience and other mistakes. The passage about how the dishes “were all given a nice rinse, patted dry with a soft cloth that smelled of spring, and then placed back into their proper homes” is to show that this will be a constant theme throughout the story (Quis 26). This is also a moment where Nietzsche comes to mind, because he refers to a “blond beast” in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* which is the name for the master morality (Wicks). I use James' blond hair, blue eyes, and the color yellow itself (like of the sponge, etc.) to hint at the Nietzschean dichotomy between master and slave morality – or between the leaders and the followers – another theme that is present. Nietzsche claims that the leaders are the blond, blue-eyed men in his works. I use these physical allusions in order to hint that perhaps there is hope for James in his break away from the mixed morality of his culture. But that is left as an open question after the story finishes.

Marilyn is constantly fighting what she refers to as “grime” which is a symbol for a lack of order and therefore a lack of a moral system present. In the beginning of the story, Marilyn feels as if she is losing this battle (Quis 26). The grime in the kitchen – on the dishes themselves – symbolizes this moral fight.

A few passages later she discovers that James has placed all the dishes upside down in the cupboard which they have argued over before: “Quickly setting down the plate, she immediately turned all of the cups upwards. Biting her lower lip she grabbed the dish rag and continued to dry the plates.” (Quis 27). This moment is key to understanding that Marilyn is losing the battle for morality, even it seems, in her own home. This is due to James' mixed morality, because he brings the some of the chaos of society in with him. Subsequently, “her body bent under the weight” which is a hint to John Galt representing Atlas shrugging (Quis 27). Rand comes to mind here, because Marilyn will later hide away from society and its mixed moral code. Another example of this losing battle is when Marilyn has shaking hands that have trouble placing her keys into the lock of her home (Quis 29).

Marilyn's unease soon reaches its climax when she is in a diner with her husband for breakfast and she can no longer concentrate on what he is saying. She is physically concerned that the something (namely the grime) is getting to her.

She reached for a paper towel, and without putting water on it, began vigorously rubbing her lips with it. This aggressive scraping soon moved from her lips to her cheeks, and her chin, and her eyelids, and then her forehead.

Placing the towel down, and staring back at herself into the mirror, Marilyn saw the raw, red complexion she had kept hidden. (Quis 31)

She is physically purifying and fighting back against this mixed moral system which results in her “want[ing] a job” (Quis 32). Marilyn is attempting to regain control over her moral code which she feels like she is losing in the face of this societal culture of mixed morals.

When Marilyn takes up her first secretarial job in a government office, she is physically examined by the mixed morality of society. The woman at the front desk views her with an examining eye for any moral “impurities” that show “one defective part to make fun of to no avail. She looked perfect” (Quis 33). The scrutiny by the front desk woman means that the office is full of mixed morals and is not used to these kinds of people entering it.

On her first day at work, Marilyn meets her boss, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Thompson is Nietzsche’s version of the *Übermensch*. He believes that he has been given “divine” powers which he uses at will to rule over his office. Mr. Thompson overcomes morality by creating his own rules without reason (and ultimately firing Marilyn for a ridiculous and baseless reason). His chaotic manner is revealed by his use of ‘50s slang and leisurely attitude. He cannot take anything seriously without a moral code. Hence, his mockery of Marilyn with “‘Ha! Alright, so you’re one of the ambitious ones. We’ll have to watch you’” (Quis 34). This attitude in which it seems like Mr. Thompson exudes “self-confidence” is also entirely false. He is the antagonist of this story, even though both Mr. Thompson (Nietzsche’s Zarathustra) and Marilyn (Rand’s Galt) desire to fight against the current mixed morality of the day. However, again, the former wishes to eliminate morality entirely while the latter only wishes to purify it.

When Marilyn is frustrated by her first day at work, she comes home into the sweet arms of her soldier-husband, James. James is somewhat of a victim in this story, because he is unaware (as I believe so many people today are) of the mixed moral system that he has adopted. He is pushed into the workforce like many men of the ‘50s (as opposed the Marilyn, the housewife) and so he in some ways was made to adopt these values so as to live among his coworkers peacefully. But James seems to have “a bit more of his soul missing every day” (Quis 35). He is divided between Nietzsche’s *Übermensch* and Rand’s Galt – between Mr. Thompson and Marilyn. He tries to prepare a nice dinner for Marilyn after her first day of work by “carefully folding the fine cloth the way his previous supervisor had taught him” and thereby creating the world of order and morality in his own home (Quis 37). James also married Marilyn for that special fire that she had in her which he “wanted [...] all to [him]self” (Quis 39). This is a revealing moment, because James is acting upon the premise of his own happiness. He desires Marilyn and he takes action to be with her forever, however, with his mixed morals James tends to switch (not so seamlessly) between being altruistic and rationally selfish. For example, when he admits to Marilyn that one just has to “live a little” in order to survive from day-to-day (Quis 38). He also says, “[b]esides, why do you think that I have other hobbies on the side, like fishing? I use those hobbies to bide my time, and just...well, *cope*” (Quis 38). James continuously sacrifices his life by being altruistic in order for Marilyn to stay at home, but that is not what is making him happy. Sacrifice is a Judeo-Christian notion which both Nietzsche and Rand abhor, because it automatically (as stated earlier) enslaves one man to another in a coercive manner. In other words, one has to bend and compromise on their morals if they are to be happy in this current world which I find to be wrong.

Meanwhile, Marilyn still feels what she calls her “chainmail dress” weighing her down at certain times when she is feeling overwhelmed (Quis 34). This dress is a symbol for a society that wishes to break her moral code which Marilyn does not fully grasp until near the end of the story. She is alerted by her gut feelings to this larger, philosophical problem. There are also hints of her world being “structured” and her soul having this “spark” that is once again a reference to Rand’s Galt and his devotion to following a set of values that allow him to attain his own happiness

(Quis 38).

The dress appears again when Mr. Thompson fires her for not taking her time on her paperwork which he claims has been incorrectly filled out (even though she knows her coworkers sabotaged her work).

‘You’re fired,’ he said. ‘I’ve told you multiple times already to *slow down*. Do you see this form that you filed? It’s not filled out correctly, at all. That’s what happens when you become too hasty with your work – you end up doing a *sloppy* job. Sorry, but you’ll need to have all of your stuff packed up and out by this afternoon.’ (Quis 40)

Mr. Thompson uses his arbitrary and coercive powers to fire a woman who is trying her best, because he believes in the rumors spread by her coworkers. He lacks a moral code to know that this is ludicrous behavior. Meanwhile, Marilyn has gotten the answer that she has long been searching for – guilt. This guilt is something that she is suddenly freed from when she realizes what kind of a man, Mr. Thompson is. He is Nietzsche’s Übermensch. He is a man without morals. Marilyn feels stronger now and most importantly, free. After Marilyn is told to pack up her belongings, she says:

She didn’t lose anything, they did. After all, she was *free* from the constant harassment and isolation that the office brought her. She was also *free* from the dirty winks and fake smiles. She was *free* from the grime that she could not scrub off her work – there were no clean files here. Picking up her little purse and her home-made lunch, she touched the typewriter one last time, and closed the golden-letter door behind her – exhaling at last. (Quis 40)

This means that Marilyn is truly free from the mix and complete lack of morality. She has taken control of the situation, gained more confidence to combat the chaos, and allowed herself to follow her own moral values. Although money may be an issue for the couple going forward, Marilyn has gained more by the end in terms of loosening the chains of guilt from her soul.

She walks home with her head up and ready to take on this uneasy feeling that she has been combating throughout the story. Marilyn can finally breathe for the first time since all the trouble began. This change in her thought pattern occurs, because she sees the mixed morality that she has been trying to fight against in the flesh. She understands in that moment of realization that Mr. Thompson is nothing – he has no moral system and therefore no values, no self-confidence, no reason, no purpose, no life. The only thing that she can do is go back to her own home and fight for her moral code from the inside-out. She must start small and wait until society sees its faults. (She may even try to save James from his own implicit morals, but that is another story entirely).

Through a series of interactions with people of mixed morals, Marilyn has small epiphanies that eventually allow her to abandon altruistic guilt, because she realizes that it will hold her back from attaining happiness. She learns from Mr. Thompson’s Zarathustra-like belief of throwing out morality, to James’ comprised state of a modern mixed morality, and finally to Marilyn’s own Galt-like belief in taking back morality and making it her own.

The ability to analyze one’s own morals is a long process of observation and thought that can begin at any age, but always happens over time and never instantaneously. I do *not* believe that it is possible to overcome morality in its entirety as Nietzsche’s Zarathustra does. Man needs morality in order to act and Zarathustra remains static, and therefore, can only be a theoretical idea about Man, but not a practical one. This is also one of the reasons why Zarathustra is “timeless” in that he comes from the future and speaks to people of a century the readers cannot place. He can never be a role model or a true hero to people. However, it *is* possible to take control of your morality which Galt and Marilyn do. The revolution that Marilyn is waiting for is an acceptance of her uncompromised values and a good, moral system that is free from the Judeo-Christian system of altruism. Therefore, like Nietzsche and Rand, Marilyn desires change from the

norm. She does not want to eliminate morality, but to re-invent or purify it of the muddled mess that it has become over the centuries. She does believe in universal truths and she does believe that Man requires a moral code in order to attain happiness on this earth.

The Veiled Übermensch  
By Kaitlyn Quis

One early May morning, Marilyn had to run some errands. She arose tired, feeling the monotonous weight from the previous night's chores on her eyelids. Lying next to her was her hard-working husband, James. He had been injured in Okinawa and was not too long ago sent back to his home-base, where he slowly pulled his career back together as an accountant. Marilyn admired him. She smiled, as she remembered him bending down on one knee, his nose still all bandaged up, asking for her young hand in marriage. Tracing the slightly elevated line that cut across his nose now, she watched him sleep. His blond, bed-hair curling softly around his pale, little ear. Even after all the horrible things he must have seen, he still looked like a child. Every eyelash was defined and separated – always moving with his twitching eyelids. His harshly-built nose looked drawn on, too sharp to be real against the fluffy white pillows. The blue blankets just barely covered his rising and falling chest. He was a battered and bruised dream.

Marilyn was not quite like her husband. She had to-do lists pasted everywhere, shopping lists, gifts lists, lists, lists, lists. All the things she could think of would be written down promptly before she could forget them. Sometimes, her world seemed small compared to her husband's. James would tell her stories from the war and she would always have to put her hands over her ears after only listening for a few moments. He had seen awful things. But Marilyn saw the unseen. She gazed out of windows and would watch the soap bubbles collect around her wedding ring when she washed dishes. She even saw two birds mating on a fence right outside her home. Yes, her world was large in its own sense – for the closer one looked, the more vibrant it became. Marilyn grew sensitive to the ins and outs of her home – every sound she knew and every look that the animals or her husband gave her there she knew. But with this ability suddenly came a gut-wrenching feeling that something was wrong in her world...

Careful not to wake him, she slid herself out from beneath the covers and stepped into her fuzzy red slippers beside the bed. Trying to avoid the cool floor tiles beneath her, she made sure that her feet were securely placed in each slipper. She took her time tip-toeing toward the kitchen to start making breakfast. Of course, the dishes in the sink all had to be dealt with first.

Still trying not to make too much noise, Marilyn only slightly turned the faucet on – its drops became a steady stream of water. She placed a generous amount of soap on the yellow sponge she picked up which still had flecks from last night's meal on it. Suds multiplied as she rubbed each dish clean to the point of perfection. The dishes were returned to their original state of purity when she washed them. She couldn't say the same for when her husband had to do the dishes. She would point out the specks still left on them, to which James would reply: "It's not in a man's nature to clean things until they're spotless." But Marilyn had made it an art. Each dish forgot what it was used for to create yesterday's meals. They were all given a nice rinse, patted dry with a soft cloth that smelled of spring, and then placed back into their proper homes.

But this morning, Marilyn felt that the sink could not contain all of the dishes its mouth held. In fact, the kitchen itself was cluttered and darker than usual. Strategically placing the large plates on the bottom, and the cups on top, with the silverware lining the outside lip of the sink, she began scrubbing away at the grime. Grime, in general, made Marilyn's heart pound. She felt the home was always battling this unrecognized disease of accumulating dirt, and she felt that when she *did* fight the spreading illness head-on she was ignored. It was consuming her very soul. Picking



up one plate after another to dry them and put them away, she saw that James had placed the clean dishes all upside down in the cupboards last night.

Her gut swung to the left.

Quickly setting down the plate, she immediately turned all of the cups upwards. Biting her lower lip she grabbed the dish rag and continued to dry the plates. A second passed, and Marilyn picked up the sponge – vigorously scrubbing the rest of the dishes. Marilyn could hear James’ footsteps in the hall.

Peering over Marilyn’s shoulder James asked, “Are you okay?” while still rubbing his eyes.

“Yes, I’m fine, love. Just fine...”

Marilyn continued scrubbing with her pruned hands.

“Are you sure?”

Her gut swung to the right.

“Yes, love.” Marilyn put the dish rag down and turned to face James. She tried to smile sincerely, but her body bent under the weight.

“Well, how about we go out to eat breakfast? I can see you’re too stressed out to do much right now.”

“That’s because someone decided to put the dishes upside down into our cupboards,” murmured Marilyn.

“Sorry, I forgot that you don’t like when I do that.”

Marilyn felt sorry for him for a moment, but then the rush of all the previous times he irked her with his forgetfulness chimed in. There were several occasions when she had expressed how she liked something to be done to which he would promptly “forget” to do it the next day. His laziness could sometimes drive her crazy.

“Why don’t I pay for breakfast? Will that get me out of trouble?” he proposed.

“Yes, I suppose, dear. But I think I’ll take a trip to the store before breakfast – it’s only 6 o’clock.”

She placed a hand on the floor and slowly pushed herself up. Walking back to the bedroom, she picked out her dress for the day and put it on. Her cotton dress unfolded each pleat as she walked with a sad kind of dignity. Afterwards, she dolled up her face with black mascara and some cherry red lipstick. Picking up her small purse, she gave James a peck on the cheek and walked out of the house.

Marilyn walked everywhere, because she was never taught how to drive. Her parents did not believe that women should. But she never minded – they lived close enough to the store and all that walking was good for her anyway. Still, she couldn’t help feeling a bit stranded during her grocery shopping endeavors, especially with four bags hanging from her arms while trekking back home.

Upon entering Rick’s Grocery Store, her heart began to prep for the race it was about to win. Grocery shopping had always been a race – get in and get out, *fast*. There were too many fussy mothers, with babies being pushed in grocery carts. They all seemed to give her the same look – one of tired dismay. It horrified Marilyn for some reason. Perhaps, they too felt unappreciated at home. Looking down, she couldn’t read the list she had between her bony fingertips, because they were shaking so much.

*I can’t do this. I have to find a restroom. Just breathe. Restroom? There, I think I see one. Thank goodness. What if I had passed out?* Marilyn breathed, her skirt still in place, and walked out of the restroom with new vigor. She could do this. *How hard is shopping, really?*

Glancing back down at the carefully constructed shopping list, she walked toward the soup aisle. She always bought the canned foods before the fresh ones. There was something

about ending on a fresh, natural tone that made her feel better. She listened to the small horse-clicks that her high heels made and she rolled her shopping cart down the right aisle – the flickering from the fluorescent lights made her feel dizzy. Picking up speed, the reds and blues of the cans started to blur. She just wanted to get to the Campbell's products. *There are so many choices. Too many.* Biting her left thumbnail, her hazel eyes skimmed the row of Campbell's soup – picking up the Hearty Beef Soup and then the Home-style Chicken Noodle Soup. She could not choose one. She wasn't hungry. Her lips quivered.

Shoving the soups back onto the shelves, and knocking a few of the smaller, hand-sized jugs of soup onto the ground she turned and left the store as quickly as she'd come. Marilyn's heart crossed the finish line once outside of the steel-framed doors of the store.

Marilyn slowed down her pace only once she reached her home. Pulling out her keys, the frustration mounted as the key would not fit into the hole – her hands were too inebriated to make it in. The lock began to move on its own, and she thought she had lost it. She had finally gone crazy. Her chin dropped and once she raised it, she was face-to-face with the checkered pattern of James' shirt. He smelled like fresh linen. His furrowed brows looked like two caterpillars kissing, gently cooing up to one another until they had to part again.

“What's wrong, dolly?”

“I didn't get the groceries....”

“You looked stressed. Look, it's okay, we'll just go out to eat.”

“Are you sure?”

“Positive, dear.”

James' muscular hand touched her tense face – the blue veins popped out of his thin skin. Marilyn wondered whether those veins would look as powerful when he was old. His skin would sag, and like yellowed paper it would crinkle. Sun spots would cover his beloved hands, and those veins would swell and dictate where the skin would fall around them – and not the other way around.

James then grabbed her hand gruffly and that reassurance made her smile. She felt safe in his tight clasp, he was her foundation. He took the lead as he led her to the car. Opening the door for her, she got in. He took the wheel and they went to a diner for breakfast. The crowd usually consisted of elderly married couples. They did not belong. Marilyn tried listening to James discuss his work, she really did. But her mind kept disengaging, and thinking about other things. Her apprehensive mind finally decided to cling onto that throbbing pain she was experiencing in her side at the moment. *What is causing that pain? It's so sharp, perhaps I pulled something? Oh-no, now I feel nauseous. How do I tell James without making him worry? I have to find a restroom to calm down...*

“I just can't understand this man, he wants me to give him a check for—“

“Excuse me, love.”

“Yes? What is it, I was just about to get to the real meat of the story.”

“I know, but I need to use the restroom.”

“Oh, sure. I'll wait here and man the food until you come back.”

“Thanks,” said Marilyn, giving her best fake smile. Getting up, her dress felt as heavy as chainmail which made her woozy. Her heels were sinking into the ground from the weight, making her stand still in place. James gave her a funny look as she struggled to move forward.

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Meanwhile, James played with the napkin in front of him staring at it as if it was the most interesting object in the diner. He felt compelled to tell Marilyn about his longing to return to his base in Japan. Perhaps, he only took away from the experience the sincerity of his comrades and the “cleanliness” of the battle – it was simply good versus bad over there. But here at home he

always felt ambivalent about things. Who was good and who was bad? Why, when his wife called his name did he feel ashamed? Why, when his boss called him did he feel disgusted? On some days, James believed that he came to the conclusions he was seeking before. As on Tuesday, when he saw his wife's innocent eyes challenge his cold ones. How did he become so cold, especially toward the one he loved so dearly?

James turned the napkin over and wrote: "Marilyn is good and my boss is bad." And then in even smaller letters beneath it he wrote: "Tell me, what am I?" Confusion blurred the last sentence and James shut his blue eyes closed.

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Finally reaching the restroom, she took out her lipstick and drew a wiggly line over her mouth. Her face was ruined. The morning was ruined. *Everything, just ruined.*

She reached for a paper towel, and without putting water on it, began vigorously rubbing her lips with it. This aggressive scraping soon moved from her lips to her cheeks, and her chin, and her eyelids, and then her forehead. Placing the towel down, and staring back at herself into the mirror, Marilyn saw the raw, red complexion she had kept hidden.

She wanted a job.

She walked toward James, who was now combing his slick, blond hair back. His nose was still just a bit too animated to be real against the restaurant's curtains.

"I think I want a job," said Marilyn.

"You have a job – it's in the home," said James, cutting into his morning toast and eggs.

"You don't appreciate the job that I do there. I feel like I need something *more*."

James looked up at her. "Sure, I appreciate your work."

"No, you don't. You think that buying a new dish or soup is so easy. That scrubbing the greased-up stove is child's play. That making sure your things are back in order when you come home is the work of magic."

"Calm down. I understand your frust-"

"No, James, I feel like you don't."

"Well, what kind of job would you like? Your high school mostly taught you typing, right?"

"Yes, so I was thinking about becoming a secretary. Anything. I just need to get out of this house. *Please?*"

"Well...alright, I want you to be happy, baby. *But* I also want the house still functioning," he said with an arched brow.

"Don't you worry, I'm sure that I can manage both. Thank you, dear."

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Marilyn woke up that early June morning for her first day of work. The previous week she had circled the ad for it in the newspaper and called the number on the house telephone. She was given an interview the next day and wore her nicest dress. She woke up excited for her first day of work.

Again, she tried not to wake her sleeping soldier. His eyes doing their twitching dance as usual, his blond hair that would never gray, his large lips that were just meant for the sensual. She bent forward to kiss James' pale forehead. He was not at fault for not seeing her quietly suffer these past few years, he was even her crutch at times, that she needed to lean on no longer.

Gathering her things, hands shaking, she walked over to Coverly Road where there was a government office that needed a secretary. Pushing through a door that had gold letters etched into it, she walked through it, closing her eyes. She immediately came upon the front desk, where a rather large old woman sat. Her face made into a grimace, she looked the young, twenty-

five-year-old Marilyn up and down. Her eyes scanning for one defective part to make fun of to no avail. She looked perfect. Disgusted, the woman pointed gruffly at Mr. Thompson's door. He was to show Marilyn to her work desk and give her a brief tour of the office as the boss of this department.

"Ah, nice to meet you...Marilyn? Is that right?" said Mr. Thompson.

"Yes, that's correct, sir." She tried to stay calm, but her elevated voice gave her away.

"Marilyn, imagine this as a home away from home. We have family and friends in these offices. We talk, and laugh, and work. Then, by five, or sometimes four, if you're higher-up, you get to leave this all behind ya!" Mr. Thompson gave her a wink.

"Oh, well that sounds fun. But...I'd also like to produce the best work possible for this office," said Marilyn.

"Slow down there, don't have a cow! We don't have that much work for you. Besides, why fuss over a few transcripts and some paperwork every day?"

"Mr. Thompson, I *like* working. It's mostly been housework – but I'm good at it and I think those skills can translate into anything I set my mind to."

"Ha! Alright, so you're one of the ambitious ones. We'll have to watch you." And with that, Mr. Thompson pointed her to her space in the center of the room.

Marilyn felt lighter now, walking to her *own* desk. She also felt less constricted somehow. It made her jittery. She skimmed through the small pile of papers forming on her desk, fingering each one with grace. She glanced around the office. Although there were no windows nearby, she still had a little fluorescent light over the desk itself. It was relatively close to other desks with the same setup, but hers still took center stage which made her feel special. She had a small black chair and a nice oak desk with a typewriter set in the middle. Marilyn looked at the lists of things to do that was left from the previous secretary, and began. She focused her entire mind on these few menial, paperwork-related tasks. And in a matter of a few hours, as opposed to the *days* these papers were meant to take her, she finished. Calling Mr. Thompson over, she looked up with joy – only to be met with a sour face.

"Listen Marilyn, I appreciate the enthusiasm, I *really* do. But you just can't work this quickly." He drew in closer to her ear. "You're making other employees look bad, capeesh?"

"I...w-what?" She had never heard of such a thing before. Her chainmail dress began to form again. She breathed heavily.

"Sir, I'm not sure that I understand. This was easy, and I wasn't *really* working my fastest. *Please*, sir, I came here to *do* something."

"That's lovely, sweetheart. But not how this office – or any other – works. You walk around, talk with some of your peers for a bit, dabble with the coffee grinder in the staff lounge, then come out here to work on one piece at a time."

"But that's so inefficient. I mean...at that rate, I might as well take half the pay, sir."

Marilyn stared in complete loss at her typewriter. In her life, she had always been told to work *more*. Mr. Thompson gave her a quick shrug and said, "That's just how it is," before turning around and heading back toward his office.

A few minutes later, Derek, the man at one of the neighboring desks started laughing. Moving his head around to see her, he gawked and then pulled himself together.

"Let me guess, you're a housewife who thinks that working a 'real gig' is some sort of noble quest to 'find yourself.'"

"I mean...I suppose you could put it like that..."

"I think you'll learn pretty quickly here that that isn't the case. You see, men inhabit

these god-awful offices all over the world. We live in them for half our lives, slaving away for our women and our children. Some of us also have hour-long commutes. Have you ever watched the tired and bored, the soulless and the weak try to ride on the train back and forth from work? There's no light in their eyes – men just can't wait to run out of their tiny hells and back into the comfort of their clean, bright homes."

"I never saw it like that. My husband doesn't seem to mind his commute, and he certainly loves his job..."

"Sure, some have it better than others. But he's probably just faking it. Your husband is only smiling because he has *you* at home. Do you have children?"

"No, we don't, but someday we may have some."

"Well, then he just loves coming home to his wife, and his comfortable home. But believe me, he comes home with a bit more of his soul missing every day. He may have sweat spots under his arms one evening, the next a single gray hair, and before you know it, sunken eyes and a beer belly."

"I take good care of him, and he has never come home disheveled or unhappy before." Frustrated with her coworker, Marilyn turned her chair around only to be greeted by the other worker behind her.

"Sorry to barge in, but I overheard your conversation. I'm Sue, but my friends call me Candy. Good to finally see another woman in this office." Sue gave a similar wink to Mr. Thompson which sent chills up Marilyn's frail arms.

"Are *you* able to work well in this office, Sue? Am I really working too fast?"

"Tell you the truth, honey, sounds like you're going to put us all out on the street soon. I have a feeling that you'll be let go in a couple of weeks. You can't work yourself to death. Now I have a question for you. Why leave your duties as a housewife? If you don't mind me asking, are you poor or something?"

Surprised by the question, she cleared her throat before speaking.

"No, my husband and I are not poor. I chose to get a job because staying in the house all day was making me...crazy."

"Well, I bet that in three weeks you'll go crazy right here in this office. *Good luck.*"

Marilyn's chainmail dress came back on in full force, and as she stood up to get some air, she fainted.

Blinking several times, she opened her eyes a bit. She felt a breeze, and saw the brown cuff of Mr. Thompson's suit jacket. The hazy figures became one and she realized that she was lying down on the office carpet, right next to her desk.

"Marilyn, please go home and get some rest. Come in tomorrow if you're feeling better," said Mr. Thompson.

"Oh, no I'm fine. Really."

"Go," Mr. Thompson said.

She packed up her purse and lunch bag, and walked out of the office wondering if she would be allowed to return tomorrow.

Back at home, James had the day off for once, so he had decided to prepare a congratulatory dinner for his wife's new job. He thought this would help, carefully folding the fine cloth the way his previous supervisor had taught him. *First fold the right triangle over to the left and then...*

Marilyn came in, trembling through her thin suit jacket – her chainmail dress wearing her down with every step she took. He thought that she looked ten inches smaller than this morning.

"What happened, love?"

"Work."

“It didn’t go well?”

“No.”

“Do you want to talk about it?”

She pushed a piece of brunette hair behind her ear and took a seat at the celebratory table, sighing.

“My boss doesn’t want me to do my best. He doesn’t want me to work harder... just slower. Painfully slower. My coworkers feel threatened by me. The previous one, Sue or whatever her name is, just told me that I’d go crazy in the office after three weeks. I’m *scared*.”

Slowly Marilyn’s face scrunched up and she started to weep. Loud tears came splashing down all over her jacket. She couldn’t hide her feelings anymore. She felt trapped – unable to breathe.

James kneeled down by his wife’s side.

“Baby, working isn’t a joyride either. I’m told the same thing sometimes. Granted, I’m not working a secretarial job. But even accountants are told not to work so hard. We spend much of our lives there, so we try to make the best of it and live a little. That doesn’t mean that I don’t feel fulfilled or not busy. Besides, why do you think that I have other hobbies on the side, like fishing? I use those hobbies to bide my time, and just...well, *cope*.”

She looked into her husband’s eyes. They were such a clear blue, but something about them looked a bit dulled – not like a dead fish, but awfully close to one. Maybe he *was* losing a bit of his soul, for her.

“James, I had no idea. I...I mean...why can’t we change that?”

He smiled. “You mean, why can’t we change how jobs are nowadays? I ask myself that all the time. I often blame the Commies or the Japs, but it’s also just human nature. Most people go to work, and they see it as a chore, so they work the least amount for the most amount of money. Simple economics. But then there are those few people who *never* lose the spark that they had in their youth. Those people are the leaders, the soldiers, the ones who see their job as an opportunity, who work harder than the amount they oftentimes earn. But those people are *so* rare, Marilyn. We can’t change anything without them, but there just aren’t enough of them. And so we just sit and wait.”

“But why would you wait? You’ll never accomplish anything if you don’t say something. I’ll file some sort of complaint or...or tell the papers!”

James brushed his slick blond hair back, while he continued to smile to himself.

“Do you think something is *funny*?” she said.

“No love, I just admire you. You’re an angel, and that’s why I chose to marry you. You didn’t think that I saw that spark hidden there inside you? You didn’t think that I noticed how my slippers are always in the right spot by morning, or that our stovetop is always squeaky clean, or even those delicately-made meals you make? But I did, and I kept it hidden from the world, I wanted it all to myself – that diligent work ethic of yours. I didn’t want anyone to blow it out. But it seems like today, they tried.”

Marilyn blinked. She had never known that he saw her passions, her anxieties, her thoughts. She assumed that he didn’t recognize her work around the house. Yet he did, he saw it all and she loved him. He saw her battle against the grime that now filled both her home *and* her workplace. James was a good man and perhaps he could be saved. Marilyn fought on her own scale, but it was one that was appreciated by *all* the innovators of the world, like James. She suddenly felt very naked in her own skin.

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Marilyn returned to work for the next three weeks – fighting all the way. She awoke as usual. She worked on her daily chores, made her husband and herself lunch to take to work, and

then slipped out at eight-thirty to walk to the office. Now, Mr. Thompson's winks made her feel like he had a nervous tick instead of a self-confidence that filled the room. Her coworkers started to ignore her, but she did catch them glancing at her every now and then – probably wondering when she was going to crack. Waiting. Praying that they wouldn't lose their jobs before her. Her coworkers began telling Mr. Thompson about all of the paperwork that she seemingly filled out incorrectly – hoping that somewhere she would mess up. But she worked at the same pace, regardless of the rumors. Typing until her hands throbbed with pain, she continued to get a week's worth of paperwork done in a day, perhaps because she felt that her very soul was at stake. Her head ached by the evening, and she could feel her anxious thoughts creeping up in her conscious mind about feeling trapped. She tried to shove them out by repeating her mantra – relax, relax, *relax* – but they were becoming too strong. Her unease started to control her life again, and she watched as the office began to shrink around her. She was sealed airtight in this box, leaving no more room for oxygen. Mr. Thompson called her into his office at the end of the third week.

“You're fired,” he said. “I've told you multiple times already to *slow down*. Do you see this form that you filed? It's not filled out correctly, at all. That's what happens when you become too hasty with your work – you end up doing a *sloppy* job. Sorry, but you'll need to have all of your stuff packed up and out by this afternoon.”

Marilyn stood up, her legs trembling, but she tried to ignore it. It was clear to her in that moment that her coworkers must have filled out a document incorrectly and passed it off as her work – tired of waiting. She would have *never* made such a foolish mistake. They had simply wanted her gone. The demons in her head snickered, but she pushed them aside as much as she could. She didn't lose anything, they did. After all, she was *free* from the constant harassment and isolation that the office brought her. She was also *free* from the dirty winks and fake smiles. She was *free* from the grime that she could not scrub off her work – there were no clean files here. Picking up her little purse and her home-made lunch, she touched the typewriter one last time, and closed the golden-letter door behind her – exhaling at last.

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**Author's Bio**



Kaitlyn Lansing was born on 3 January 1994 in New York. Kaitlyn studied literature and philosophy throughout her education which shaped her creative voice. Her published works include: *Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Poems*; *Unveiled: An Anthology of Nonfiction*; *Urgency: An Anthology of Short Stories*; and *Marginalia from the Snake Pit: A Novella*. Kaitlyn's unique perspective and raw prose bring light to matters that are often left untouched. Readers can see more of Kaitlyn's work at [www.kaitlynlansing.com](http://www.kaitlynlansing.com).