

This book is further proof that the sun will indeed come out tomorrow, that when the world gets us down, we should just turn our frowns upside down and rejoice in the gift—nay, the miracle—of life because we, as God’s children, are all part of one big happy family. :)” -*Albert Camus*

“If I weren’t dead for over two millennia, non-English-speaking, illiterate, and blind, I’m pretty sure I would like this.” -*Homer*

“I mean, *Hamlet’s* okay and everything, but like, this is so totally WAY awesomer.” -*William Shakespeare*

“I laughed. I cried. It was better than *Cats*.”
-*T. S. Eliot*

“If you don’t like this book, you are so dumb. You are really dumb. For real.” -*Antoine Dodson*

“Whether it is right or advisable to create things like *Quixotica*, I do not know: I scarcely think it is.”
-*Charlotte Brontë*

QUIXOTICA

The Journal of the Dead Poets Society
of Camden County College



Spring
2011



CCC
DPS

FOREWORD

About a year and a half ago, I was approached by a former composition student of mine about serving as the advisor to a creative writing group she wanted to found. That student, as you may already have surmised, was Robyn Giles, and that club, the Dead Poets Society. By the end of its first term, the group had held countless (if not endless) theme meetings on a variety of topics, such as religion, horror, and madness in literature; a handful of homages to individual authors like Whitman and Plath; a well-attended faculty reading followed by an open mic; the first installment of a newly-reestablished Lit Live (a reading by faculty, administration, and staff for the entire CCC community, from the president's office and library to the cafeteria and physical plant); and—the grand finale—an American Idol-style recitation contest complete with prizes and snarky faculty judges (myself among them). The summer saw the creation of a web page, a Facebook account, and—yes—even business cards, one of which I carry in my wallet to this day.

By the end of our second term, we had added regular writing workshops (occasionally hosted by faculty members) to our by-then-customary theme meetings, open mic's, and ever-popular 'Poetic Idol'—all the winners of which, as you will find out soon enough, are collected herein. We had likewise hosted the inaugural reading of what will with any luck become an annual series for prominent authors to visit the campus and share their work. Our first guest was the poet, translator, critic, and essayist Rachel Hadas, an interview with whom is also contained in this volume, along with two of the poems she read that evening to a conspicuously sophisticated and fully engaged audience (if the quality of their questions was any indication). Several of her books have since resided in the recently-established DPS Library in my office, alongside dozens of donated copies of literary journals and sundry classics, all of which are available on loan to group members.

Meanwhile, the group's work has continued to extend well outside the campus grounds and far beyond the school term. Last summer, for instance, distinguished DPS alumna, Heather Mallette (now the founder of a similar, but doubtlessly inferior, knock-off group at Rowan), attended the West Chester Poetry Conference, which specializes in formal verse—precisely the kind she exhibited such a precocious talent for as a student here, as her contributions to this journal make plain. This past February, the entire editorial board—Robyn Giles, Andrea Quinn, and Destiny Byrd—traveled to Washington DC for the vaunted AWP writers conference. Reports on both of these events can be found in these pages, as well as one about our group trip to a joint reading at Princeton by poet Paul Muldoon and critic Michael Wood on Yeats' poem '1919.' Other activities have included attending a decidedly avant-garde performance of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a review of which also follows.

The journal you now hold in your hands represents, I believe, the culmination of all of the group's various pursuits in a single, defining enterprise. The poems and stories are largely the product of our workshops, the interview of our reading series, and the articles of our forays as a group into the professional literary world outside the school—if not the region as well. I would argue, too, that it represents the consummate expression of its various excellences: diversity of styles, multiplicity of forms, and—above all—both the vigor and rigor of full-contact, deep-impact commitment *to* and engagement *with* language as a mode of artistic creation. These are students, after all, who read the Brontë sisters and write sestinas recreationally, who habitually spend half of a free afternoon at an Owing Our Ignorance club symposium on the nature of free will and the other half at one of our own discussions on the comparative merits of various film adaptations of canonical literary works.

In short, these are students who give the lie to all of the alarmist hysteria currently in vogue about the decline, if not extinction, of American culture at the hands of maniacal video games, salacious rap songs, and brainless Twitter accounts. These are also students, I might add, who have been so gracious as to turn the otherwise fairly tedious job of club advisor essentially into that of a glorified mascot. In fact, day to day, my job consists of little more than signing the occasional form, donning the odd scarf, and—after the group has held yet another formal meeting from 1 to 3, followed by the requisite informal one from 3 to 5, then yet another impromptu loitering/heckling session during my evening class—telling them it's closing time and they'd better go home before they get locked in. Essentially, pretty much all that's required of me in my "official capacity" is to hang out with them (albeit at near-interminable length), which hasn't proven half so odious as one might first assume from looking at them. But have no fear—I'm proud to report that, in addition to everything else I've just described, the club boasts a prodigious collection of homemade bookmarks, constructed—on the sly—from cut-out pictures of me. True to form, the group has exhibited dazzling ingenuity at coming up with ways to turn their venerable advisor into an object of ridicule.

All of this is to say that, in defiance of just about every educational trend theorized about on televised "roundtables" by professional statisticians, these students have proven not only skilled writers, perceptive readers, and passionate interlocutors, but most important of all, good company—in person and in print—as you are hopefully about to discover for yourself.

—Keith O'Shaughnessy
Advisory Editor