

Literary Strike-Outs

I recently broke into Yale's Beinecke Rare Books Library looking for a place to sleep. While sneaking around the premises, I found three early drafts of famous literary works. Several passages in these drafts had been struck from the finished versions. The *Record* now presents them to you as they flowed from the masters' pens.

On the Road

by Jack Kerouac

On a hot August day about a week before we were set to take off for California and the secret essence that is the soul of America, my driver's license expired. Dean Moriarty zoomed over to my aunt's house in Paterson in that big shiny Cadillac, the one that could zip on across the mysterious dark western landscape for hours and never tire with Dean balling the jack like a shaman, to drive me to the New Jersey DMV.

We pulled up to this crazy low, brown building surrounded by a huge parking lot. "Oh, man! man!" moaned Dean. "This is the beginning of it all, Sal! There's this parking lot and then inside we'll wait and then you'll fill out these forms and then we'll have IT, man! Your license, man!" Dean was the soul of America, what I had been looking for. He was sweating all over, and I felt awed to be at the DMV with this wild madman. We took a number and sat on these brown plastic molded chairs and it was like rocketing through outer space at one thousand miles per second. "God!" sweated Dean. "My buttocks! The chair conforms and supports! Ergonomics! Man!"

We bummed some tea and matches off these Mexican cats hanging around the left side of the cavernous DMV waiting room. I felt as though I had punctured through a sheen of metaphysical obscurity and saw the whole of ultimate reality

before us. The plastic Tensa-Barriers, the long wall of perfectly symmetrical windows, the angelically soft smooth jazz playing over the PA system, it was all here! *This* was the real soul of America and where I belonged.

After five hours of anguished cold interstellar existential waiting nihilism, they called my number. Dean was soaked in cold sweat, shaking all over and exclaiming, "Man! Wow! Life!" We strode determinedly to the window, where I signed with an unsteady hand the license renewal forms.

"Oh man!" yelled Dean. "Just imagine what it would be like to work here, in one of these crazy windows all day. Sorting out paperwork for the licensed drivers of New Jersey. Amazing, man!"

I knew what Dean meant. *This* was where I'd find my voice as a writer. No more wild, sweating, shaking jaunts across the country. The true nature of God was in here, inside the walls of the New Jersey DMV. I turned to Dean. "Let's not go to Frisco, man."

Dean wore an expression of ecstatic madness. "Oh man! Yes! The DMV! Man!"

Nineteen Eighty-Four

by George Orwell

"Bummer. It's April already," Winston Smith said as a distant clock struck thirteen. "Graduation is next month." A sickly wave of nausea passed over his frail body.

Next to Winston, O'Brien wore a troubled expression as he endeavored to keep the tobacco from falling out of his Victory cigarette. Winston's face drained of what little colour it had as he considered his surroundings. They were smoking in the rickety metallic stairwell of Oceania Public School 1572. They were only 17, and if they were caught, it would mean a trip to the Ministry of Love, where they would be tortured for months. Winston knew they were doomed anyway. *As soon as you so much as contemplate underage smoking, there is no escape*, he thought. *You have already committed the only smoking violation the Party cares about: thoughtsmoke. It may be months or years before they find you, but they will. And the torture sentence will severely impact your chances for college admission.*

"Word." O'Brien's interjection jerked Winston out of his paranoid yet completely justified reverie. "And you still haven't gotten laid, dude!" Winston nodded sadly in agreement as he stared at some rusted pipes through a hole in the floor. "What about that Julia chick? I think she's begging for a little bit of that patented Winston Smith sex machine magic, buddy!"

"I suppose," Winston returned morosely. He felt as though his guts were about to melt inside him and pool in his lower extremities. And that would make walking about quite an ordeal.

"Hey, man, I just remembered," O'Brien yammered excitedly. "Doubleplusgood-ass party at Sadler's tonight. Parents are over on Airstrip Two for some Minipax business. And," O'Brien gave a knowing look, "he has managed to procure a gallon of Victory Gin."

Winston groaned. Underage drinking was an even worse offence than smoking, and could result in banishment to the dreaded Room 101. There Winston would be tortured by



someone he had previously trusted until he betrayed everyone he cared for.

“I don’t know, O’Brien. I’ve got all these articles to rewrite and photos to airbrush ever since—well,” Winston lowered his voice to a whisper, “since Vice Principal Withers became an... unperson. Plus, I hate Sadler. He was the one who gave me that atomic wedgie sophomore year, remember?”

“Aw, you can’t blame him for being a little overzealous in support of the Party doctrine. He honestly thought you were illegally keeping a LiveJournal, and that’s a serious infraction. Come on, Winston, you’re such a loser. Everyone’s going to be there.”

Winston slumped against the railing, then winced as a sharp screw jabbed him in the back. “All right. I guess.”

“Yeah! All right, buddy! You’re going to get laid tonight, man!”

Clutching the varicose ulcer above his right ankle, Winston shuddered and vomited onto the ground.

Waiting for Godot

by Samuel Beckett

Set: Bleak, gray, existential vacuum.

ESTRAGON: Let’s go.

VLADIMIR: We can’t.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR: We’re waiting for

Godot.

ESTRAGON: Why hasn’t he arrived yet?

VLADIMIR: I don’t know. That boy said he would be here today—oh! There he is! At last! Godot!

ESTRAGON: Where?

VLADIMIR: There, some distance down the road. Just to the right of that gray swamp symbolizing our imprisonment in this meaningless existence.

ESTRAGON: Which one?

VLADIMIR: He’s right there, stupid! The guy wearing the Winger t-shirt.

ESTRAGON: I could sure go for a few buffalo wings right now. Isn’t there a Popeye’s over behind that hovering, grimy fog that represents the soul-crushing repetition of modern life?

VLADIMIR: Idiot! Winger was a successful hair metal band from the late 1980s.

ESTRAGON: Oh, I know. I prefer Ratt, though.

VLADIMIR: You would. Look, Godot’s almost here! How do you do, Mr. Godot?

Godot arrives on stage dressed in tattered jeans and a Winger t-shirt. He carries a low-end boombox.

GODOT: Hey, man. How are you guys doing?

VLADIMIR: We’ve been sitting here in this horrible landscape for what seems like an eternity, feeling an utter despair about the future and complete hopelessness that our lives will ever have a purpose. We’ve been

contemplating hanging ourselves, but we didn’t have a strong enough rope. And yourself?

GODOT: Doing great, man. Thanks a lot for letting me borrow your Aiwa.

VLADIMIR: It was nothing. I wish you had returned it sooner, however. I feel the beautiful strains of “You Give Love a Bad Name” just might relieve our terrible depression and inspire us to direct the course of our own lives.

Vladimir holds up a CD.

GODOT: Yeah, I’m sorry about that, bro. It’s just, you know, I had some things to take care of. I mean, I sent my little brother out to tell you I was coming to give this back to you. I’m sorry I kept getting held up, dude.

VLADIMIR: Well, at least you made it eventually. Estragon, thank god, our long wait for our boombox is over!

ESTRAGON: Great. I’m tired and hungry. Let’s listen to Bon Jovi and then hit up Popeye’s.

VLADIMIR: That’s the best idea you’ve had so far. *He puts in the CD, but Richie Sambora’s masterful guitar work and Jon Bon Jovi’s raucous vocals are not heard.* What’s wrong with this? It won’t turn on.

GODOT: Oh yeah, man, I forgot to tell you. I ran the batteries down and I didn’t have any C’s at my house. I’m really sorry.

VLADIMIR (*distraught*): You have no idea how much we were looking forward to listening to this!

GODOT: Oh, jeez, it’s totally my bad, man. I’m sorry. Tell you what, I’ll run over to Stanardsville and get some batteries. I’ll be back in a few days, man. *He leaves.*

VLADIMIR: This is terrible! Who knows when he will return with those Duracells!

ESTRAGON: That doesn’t mean we can’t get Popeye’s now.

VLADIMIR: That restaurant is at least three days away. He could be back before then.

ESTRAGON: O life, why must you torment us so?

They stare at the ground for a long while.

ESTRAGON: Let’s go.

VLADIMIR: We can’t.

ESTRAGON: Why not?

VLADIMIR (*his head in his hands*):

We’re waiting for Godot. ☹