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The Pedagogical Value of *The Screwtape Letters* for a New Generation

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Introduction

Seventy years ago, C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* launched the public career of this quiet Oxford don.¹ In doing so, he inaugurated a genre of demonic epistolary fiction, where "good" is only good from the perspective of the demon who is trying to devour the soul of the human. Lewis' inverse perspective approach inspired dozens of writers interested in Christian formation and theological conversation. With ever-increasing copycats and millions of copies sold, *The Screwtape Letters* has made an impact.

But does it remain relevant to today, seventy years later and an entire worldview away? Based on two teaching units of a single religious studies class, I argue that *The Screwtape Letters* are relevant, both in genre and content, even at a secular undergraduate school with mostly generically spiritual, nonreligious, agnostic, or atheistic students. From the results of a spiritual perspective survey and various teaching methods, and including the analysis of 95 student-crafted Screwtape-styled letters reflecting upon their own culture, we see that the *genre* of demonic epistolary fiction is useful for giving space to creative cultural critique and the *content* provides inspiration for that critique.

Screwtape Letters in History

Although C.S. Lewis disliked writing from Screwtape's perspective (Hooper 2004, 830), he does provide his own second attempt, "Screwtape Proposes a Toast," a

keynote address by Screwtape to one of Dr. Slubgob's graduating class at the Tempters' Training College (Lewis 1959). Not only did he prefer not to continue on the Screwtape tradition himself, Lewis resisted some responses to the *Letters*. One fan, a Mr. Smoot, created an index that, if printed with the book, Lewis thought would give away the "joke" (Hooper 2004, 758). Lewis also rejected a proposal by BBC editor and playwright Lancelot Sieveking to adapt *The Screwtape Letters* for the stage. Lewis suggested he would be better as a literary influence: "All he really wants," Lewis asserted, "is the general diabolical framework" (Hooper 2004, 925).

It appears that Lewis' "general diabolical framework" caught on. The first *Screwtape Letter* was published in the Anglican periodical, *The Guardian*, on May 2, 1941, and was followed in print on February 9, 1942. Struck by the book, popular mystery author Dorothy L. Sayers began a conversation with Lewis through letters. A year later, Sayers sent Lewis an advanced copy of her plays, *The Man Born to Be King*, accompanied by a Screwtape-styled letter where Sluckdrib is the newly assigned demon, Screwtape the mentor, and Sayers herself the patient—what Lewis calls the human victim of temptation. In literary self-deprecation, Sluckdrib's assessment of Sayers is a kind of epistolary confession:

The effect of writing these plays upon the character of my patient is wholly satisfactory. I have already had the honor to report intellectual and

spiritual pride, vainglory, self-opinionated dogmatism, irreverence, blasphemous frivolity, frequentation of the company of theatricals, captiousness, impatience with correction, polemical fury, shortness of temper, neglect of domestic affairs, lack of charity, egotism, nostalgia for secular occupations, and a growing tendency to consider the Bible as Literature (Reynolds 2006, 199).

Lewis was evidently delighted in the letter, suggesting that “the Sluckdrib letter is obviously intended for human consumption,” commenting on its artfulness, and closing with a hope that their own epistolary conversation will last indefinitely (Hooper 2004, 573).

Lewis approved of the first *Screwtape* copycat letter, but I doubt he could have predicted the deluge of similar attempts that would follow. Publications in the genre have proliferated with book treatments and blogs, sometimes by academics and creative writers, but often clever attempts of bloggers and pastors at capturing Christian experience from the inverse perspective.² With book treatments and blogs, the tradition of demonic epistolary fiction continues among Christians as a form of self-critique and cultural evaluation. While a study of *The Screwtape Letters* would make sense in a Bible college, seminary, catechism, Sunday school, or Christian university,³ what is its relevance in an interdisciplinary course at a secular university?

Student Profile

I assigned *The Screwtape Letters* to 95 students in two subsequent sections (2011 and 2012) of the religious studies course RS104: Myths of Hate and Evil at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI). While most students knew C.S. Lewis as the author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, previous to the class very few knew of him as a Christian author. Only two students indicated they had read *The Screwtape Letters* previous to the class, and no one had read any of Lewis’

apologetic books.⁴ In conversation with students, some of the declared atheists or outspoken anti-theists knew of his apologetics, and evangelical students had heard him quoted in their churches, through social media, or in other books. There are a few evangelicals and conservative Christians within the Centre for Christianity and Culture at UPEI generally, and in the two sections of the class specifically (possibly twenty to 24 of 95 students, as we see in Table 1), but very few showed any critical knowledge of Lewis’ work.

Table 1: Religious Landscape

	RS 104 (/95)	RS 104 (%)	PEI (2001) ⁵	Canada (2006) ⁶	Canada (2011) ⁷	US (2011) ⁸
Christian	53	55.8%	92.8%	74.8%	64.8%	78.4%
Catholic	20	21.1%	47.4%	42.5%	36.6%	23.9%
Protestant	29	30.5%	42.8%	27.6%	21.3%	51.3%
Orthodox/ E. Catholic	4	4.2%	<0.1%	1.7%	2.3%	0.6%
Evangelical	20-24	21.1%-25.3%	8.3%-19.3%	12% ⁹	n/a	26.3%
SNRs	17	17.9%	n/a	n/a	n/a	20% ¹⁰
Not Religious	24	25.3%	6.7%	17.5% ¹¹	20.9%	16.1%
Agnostic/ Unsure	11	11.6%	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.4%
Non-Christian Religion	3	3.2%	<0.1%	7.7%	14.3%	4.7%

Moreover, while Prince Edward Island (PEI) has high rates of attendance at religious services, at 53% in 2003 with 92.8% of people declaring themselves to be Christian (Clark 2003), it is not a predominantly evangelical province. In the 2001 Census, 4.5%, 0.7%, and 0.2% were Baptist, Pentecostal, and Christian Reformed respectively.¹² Other conservative churches and undesignated Christians were recorded at 0.5% and 2.4% respectively, making a low ballpark evangelical count of 8.3%. In Prince Edward Island, Presbyterians (5.9%) and Anglicans (4.9%) may or may not classify themselves as conservative or evangelical; including these denominations would extend the evangelical count to 19.3% (StatsCan 2001). The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada admits the problems of counting evangelicals in Canada, but approximates that 12% of Canadians are evangelical (EFC), which lies

within our low and high count of evangelicals and indicates that an evangelical cohort of 1/5-1/4 in RS 104 is higher than average.

How do we account for this statistically interesting difference? We cannot account for it only by considering that there is a committed religious component within religious studies—only 14/95 students studied or intended to study religion at UPEI—but I do think that the nature of the course material is likely to draw in active believers as the course asks the big questions about evil, God, and suffering. I think too, perhaps, that the distribution of UPEI students—of 4600 students in Fall, 2010, 70.9% were from PEI, 17.5% from other Canadian provinces, and 11.6% from other parts of the world (UPEI 2011)—means that statistics from Prince Edward Island are only partially predictive.

All of the students in the 2011-2012 Myths of Hate and Evil class were between the ages of eighteen and 25, so what do the statistics say about Prince Edward Island about this particular demographic? Granted that Prince Edward Islanders are more engaged in their local churches, can we expect university students to follow this trend? Unfortunately, at 133,385 residents in 2001, PEI is too small to warrant statistically significant subset data or particular studies of populations. PEI does demonstrate a drop in church attendance from 1986 (63%) to 2001 (53%), indicating a generational shift in commitment (Clark 2000). Similarly, Warren Clark (2000) notes that monthly attendance among 15-24 year old Canadians was 26%—which matches our class survey at 24.2% (see Table 1)—while one-third of 45-54 year olds and more than half of senior citizens attended services regularly. In *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada*, Canadian sociologist Reginald W. Bibby (2002) argues that the downward trend of religion is a misreading of a more complex situation. Contrary to his previous research, Bibby argues that Canadians are satisfied with their religious commitments, are experiencing God, and evangelical churches are growing. In the early part of the last decade, Bibby argued

that something significant was happening in Canadian religion.

As the decade continued, however, Bibby (2009) observed a notable shift away from religious attendance among teens and young adults, much of which he attributed to “the failure of three traditionally prominent players to relate well to teenagers: the United Church, Anglican Church, and Catholic Church in Quebec” (i). Bibby (2009) goes on to argue that restless Canadians were polarizing in their commitment, leading young people to commit fully or disengage entirely. “Religion in Canada is not what it used to be,” Bibby argues. “The results are showing up in this latest generation of young teenage millennials. They haven’t learned religion like the alphabet” (10-11). So, while 53% of “Islanders” attended church monthly, only 24.2% of RS 104 students did the same, and more than half rarely or never attended, with 20% who had never been connected, 23.2% who intentionally disconnected, and 16.8% disinterested completely (see Table 2).

**Table 2:
Religious Commitments of RS 104
Students**

Describe your level of commitment to your faith	/95	%
Go to services at least monthly	23	24.2%
Go to services occasionally	12	12.6%
Private religious response	12	12.6%
Disinterested	16	16.8%
No longer involved	22	23.2%
Never connected	19	20%

Moreover, in the recent release of two key books about the emerging generation, *unChristian* (2007) and *You Lost Me*, (2011) David Kinnaman and the Barna Group argue that there is a fundamental change in the Christian experience of young Americans. Kinnaman (2011) calls it a “seismic shift” (14) and a “new mindset” (13) among mosaics/millennials, so that “59 percent of young people with a Christian background report that they had or have ‘dropped out of

attending church, after going regularly” (23). In chapter two of *You Lost Me*, “Access, Alienation, Authority,” Kinnaman argues that the emerging generation is different in its church connection because the culture is essentially changed—nothing less than a worldview shift. Disconnected teens become disappeared twenty-somethings and, unlike previous generations, Kinnaman suspects that these prodigals are not going to return when they settle down and have kids.

Bibby (2009) notes similar findings in Canada, and a spate of surveys and media reports suggest this movement with such titles as, “Canadians Split On Whether Religion Does More Harm in the World than Good,” (Ipsos-Reid), “Canada Marching from Religion to Secularization” (Valpy & Friesen 2010), and “Teens Lose Faith in Drove: Islam and Atheism are on the Rise while Christianity Fades” (Lunau 2009). This trend is suggested in our class survey, with 25.3% indicating they were not religious, including 11.6% who were agnostic or uncertain, and 8.4% who self-designated as atheist. The business of determining what is really happening among the “non-religious” segment of the Canadian population is difficult to read, as very few call themselves either atheist or agnostic. Although 6.7% of Prince Edward Islanders and 17.5% of Canadians self-designate as non-religious, surveys consistently demonstrate that about one in four Canadians do not believe in God (TheStar.com). In a survey of surveys, Phil Zuckerman (2007) shows that 19%-30% of Canadians fall under the definition of atheist (48),¹³ so our class survey represents the expected range even if it seems high for PEI (where more than 9/10 are Christian). Although Bibby (2007) continues to argue a counterpoint, or at least a correction of interpretation, religious disconnection seems to be a trend, and a more frequent than average agnostic and atheistic self-designation evident in RS 104 might actually be suggestive of a suspected shift in teens and twenty-somethings.

What is most difficult to analyze among religious trends in the last decade is

the category of Spiritual but not Religious (SNR). 10/95 students defined themselves as SNR, and another seven said they believed in God but had no religion, so that 17.9% broadly fit in the SNR category. There is no 2001 Census SNR category—nor a 2011 Census category for future research—and very few Canadian surveys of note. A 2010 Carleton University survey did find that most people still believed in God and heaven, and wanted to have a spiritual connection even as they were disconnecting from traditional religion (Boswell 2010). In the write-in portion of the class survey, a number of students expressed a connection with God, or Jesus and Christianity specifically. But a number of them expressed hope that God was real, even though they had trouble believing. Moreover, nine students wished they were more committed, and more than one-third believed in God. As one student said, “I believe there is something more. I’m spiritual and I remain optimistic,”¹⁴ connecting with the sentiment in Trisha Elliott’s 2009 *Observer* article, “I’m not religious. I’m spiritual.”¹⁵ Rather than a rejection of God—which fewer and fewer young adults have a family context for—we may be seeing a rejection of the traditional church.

In this context, it might be strange to offer a unit on *The Screwtape Letters*—a book about belief written by an evangelical and published originally in a denominational magazine seventy years earlier. Moreover, just over a third of student (37/95) believed that Satan was anything more than a symbolic embodiment of evil, and only about a quarter (24/95) believed that Satan and demons tempt humans (see Appendix II). What possible relevance could a demonic epistolary fiction on Christian faith have to an unbelieving and disconnected generation in a secular university?

Description of Project

Since Lewis’ ostensibly Christian work is foreign to the majority of students, as are his spiritual assumptions about the world, I approached the unit using a number of

teaching styles. To prepare for the unit, I lectured on myths and mythology, and how authors like J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis used the myth genre to ask the question, “Is there more than there is?”—is our world merely material or is there something more?¹⁶ We then moved into a lecture on “Mythology and Genesis,” how Genesis asks and answers key questions that are still relevant today.¹⁷ Finally, during “Satan Week,” we talked about the genesis and evolution of Satan, beginning in the Old Testament creation narrative, going through the Bible and Christian history, and following the images of Satan and demons in art and popular culture.¹⁸

After setting *The Screwtape Letters* in the context of the biblical story of creation and fall, as well as historical and popular understanding of demons, we moved on to the book discussion. As the classes were larger than what is ideal for discussions—45-50 active students in each cohort—I divided the class into two discussion groups, each fifty minutes in length. Within the discussion group, students were assigned into break-out group to share quotable Screwtape moments. After some sharing with their break-out groups, I led a discussion that focussed on drawing out the best moments of Screwtape in order to demonstrate Lewis’ subtle approach to temptation, which stands in contrast to demons as imagined in pop culture. In preparation for the class, each student was required to write a concise critique and personal response to the book; following the discussion, students were required to answer exam questions, draw a picture of how they imagined Satan, and write an original Screwtape letter that is relevant to their world. They were also asked to complete an anonymous spiritual perspective survey, which helped create the baseline for understanding the spiritual (or non-spiritual) perspective of the class as a whole. (see Appendix I).

Of particular interest to this paper is the assignment to write an original Screwtape letter:

I want you to bring to the exam ... a single Screwtape-style letter. Think about Screwtape's approach to temptation: the slow, quiet, easy road to hell through small temptations so a person disappears into an imperceptible mist where God is distant and there is no self-awareness. What would be a relevant way of approaching the question of temptation today? Through Screwtape's voice, what method would you use today?

You can use any demonic characters you want to tackle any personal or cultural issue you'd like (you don't have to use Screwtape-Wormwood). Be cunning, wise, cutting, sarcastic, pretentious—whatever works. As long as it is creative, intelligent, and fits the demonic epistolary fiction style, I'm excited to read it.

In analyzing these letters, we can see the relevance of Lewis’ invented genre of demonic epistolary fiction in giving space to creative cultural critique and for thinking about temptation in general.

Student Letter Analysis ***Creative Framing***

One of the great outcomes of this unusual student project was the sheer inventiveness of the responses, particularly considering that this is a first-year course with students drawn from a variety of disciplines (see Appendix II). We will explore some of that creative content below, but the framing of the letters was a lot of fun. 54 students used Wormwood as recipient and Screwtape as mentor, staying with Lewis’ set-up rather than using “the general diabolical framework.” Most used Screwtape as the mentor even if they chose to replace the devoured Wormwood with another demon, like Pukewart, Z-Ro, Twigmentia, Tapeworm, Gallstone, Xanthanoplasokotons, Echo, #642, Millepedious, Memnoch, and three brothers of Wormwood: Prankpuke, Verin, and

Mungwort—bodily functions were popular, as were body parts, as seen in the clearly demonic “Muffintop.” There were some creative exceptions to *Screwtape* as the mentor, including Narcissus, Snake-coil, Hoarkin, and, intriguingly, Aunt Suetape—only five students had an obviously female demon. A number of students paid homage to pop culture, including Damian and Wigglesworth, Host-Buster (a 1980s hint?), Belthazer, Beatlejuice, Leonard (from *Big Bang Theory*), Wormtail and Ravenclaw, Hellsangel, Jadis, and Rebecca Black. There were some intriguing personal responses to the framing of the letters: two women used themselves as the senior demon, and one student wrote about a “real” demon named “Eba” he met during a Ouija board experience in high school. See Appendix III for a complete list of demonic names.

Creative Risk

The innovation of students was not limited to the framing, or to the cultural critique (see below), but the letters themselves were quite well done in general and the students took creative risks. The satire and sarcasm is biting, and many took advantage of *Screwtape*’s pretentious and verbose lectures to attempt various demonic voices. One of the letters came in as printout of a 90s-styled digital communiqué, and another was burnt along the edges with a smattering of blood (red ink, I hope) on top of a scripted hand. A handful of them included creative signatures. While hardly subtle, one letter that captures the humorous risk some students took has *Screwtape* writing to his *daughter*, Rebecca Black—the infamous Youtube viral celebrity of 2011, who received hundreds of millions of hits for her autotune vanity hit, “Friday”:

This could be the most influential tip that I could possibly ever give you Rebecca. Whatever you do, do not stop making your horrible, horrible music. Your music alone is bringing the Earth’s people farther and farther away from the Enemy and closer to our Father

Below. You must tempt your patient to believe that your music is the best music and get him to promote it to everyone he knows. This way hell on Earth will surely come ... at an extremely quick rate.

Another letter mentioned the “total satanic control” of the *Twilight* franchise. While students leaned on pop culture themes, extremely popular things were not well loved, as Lady Gaga was rejected in one letter in favour of K’Naan. Another ending captures cult classic film *The Princess Bride*: “Good night #642; good work; sleep well; I’ll most likely eat you in the morning, #7.

While this humorous critique lacks some depth in his risk, others get to the centre of the issue:

Don’t get so damn excited by his immediate suffering; your stomach will only growl more ferociously when it realizes you blundered such an excellent opportunity.

Disdainfully,

Mara

Creative Critique

I asked the students to write a contemporary *Screwtape* letter that provided some sort of cultural critique. Despite an impressive diversity of responses, there was a lot of overlap in theme—and a number of letters covered more than one theme, or used one thing to lead to another. The demonic attacks, however, fell along seven key areas: 1) Vocation; 2) Apathetic Arts; 3) Relationships; 4) Stuff and Status; 5) Teen Fall; 6) Mental Illness; and 7) Big Ideas.

Vocation

While distraction and procrastination is covered under Apathetic Arts, there was a sense among students that a demon’s time would be well used in making it difficult for students to complete their education, which would have consequences for their feelings of self-worth, or make them “harmoniously

hopeless,” as one student put it. The “caring mentor,” Pravusimia warns Millepedious that humans:

exist on a day-to-day basis, with pitiful dreams to keep them going. Most humans will continue to have these dreams while never actually making any moves toward achieving them.... What you must realize is that these creatures are lazy, and while this may not seem like a big and grand sin, it is the essential quality that turns these humans from able, strong creatures to unsightly lumps of flesh so caught up in self loathing that they will never see anything but their inner loss and pain. When they are this focussed on themselves; their failures, their lack of worth, and their jealousy of others there is no possible way for the Enemy to turn them from our path.

This student captures the subtlety of Screwtape’s approach as especially emphasized throughout Letter XII: “Murder is no better than cards if cards can do the trick. Indeed, the safest road to Hell is the gradual one—the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts” (Lewis 1996, 61). The context of the temptations looks like it has changed—instead of “cards,” Millipedious need only look at “their consumer driven society—they want and need and will spend any amount of money” on toys, as Pravusimia puts it—but the shift is a small one, from a 1940s distraction to a 21st century one. The base human loss of dreams to every day mundane lack of vision is the same, as we see in another piece of advice: “Keep her mind off playing music, make her believe it is pointless because it will get her nowhere in the future.” From a demonic perspective, one dream can be easily swapped with another.

One of the vocation letters hints at Sayers’ own Sluckdrib letter. “I am pleased that we have learned that your patient is a writer. Writers are a rare breed that are quite easy to exploit, draw into darkness and drive into madness.” Screwtape encourages

Wormwood to have some fun torturing an already tortured soul through writer’s block, rabbit holes, and technological failure, but gives a particularly Screwtapian warning:

But a word of caution. Writers are often creative thinkers. You must not let the writer come to imagine things he cannot possibly understand; especially the workings of our system. The writer may be just clever enough to figure out the tactics we use to attempt to bring him to the dark side and if he does so, and writes about it, our game is over.

The student, an aspiring writer,¹⁹ truly captures the struggle of threatened dreams.

Apathetic arts

Wasted Time was the specific focus of eight letters, and referenced throughout the entire collection of RS104 student responses. From the perspective of students today, procrastination seems like an important demonic element—perhaps some felt that temptation in doing this project!—though the results of this kind of distraction are not always emphasized. It was generally hoped that technology would cause the greatest wastes of time, including television, the Internet, online multi-player interactive games, text messaging, and using social platforms like Facebook or Twitter. For a couple of students, that wasted time could even come from music—not just as a digital soundtrack to their lives, but a focus on discovery of new music or getting lost in what he or she loves.

Besides of the sheer waste of time, the result of losing one’s self to technology is a kind of dependence or addiction: one cannot go back to older platforms, people feel a “craving for disaster,” or stammer for confirmation of self-worth, and there is a need for access (which tries patience and leads to frustration when unavailable). Social platforms and the internet in general cultivate “a sense of comfort with dishonesty due to the anonymity of the entire thing” and

a sense of dissatisfaction with self. In the assessment that the human is “little more than a cluster of appetites,” through gaming, connection, and pornography there is the “bombardment of stimuli [that] is a wonderful weapon to be used against them as it dulls their senses”—another approach to the refinement of the Apathetic Arts. One student summarized this temptation well in a complement from The Father Below to an on-duty demon, Z-Ro:

Never did I expect that under your watch, the patient would come to the realization that a wasted life has nothing to do with wasting talent, but everything to do with not enjoying all that it [life] has to offer.

Such is the sublime nature of the inverse perspective.

Relationships

Given the stage of life our Screwtape letter-writers are in, it is no surprise that the topic of relationships—both romances and friendships—would emerge as an important theme. In general, though, these letters were not as critical or as invested in risk-taking. Lust was the focus in nine letters (sometimes with technology as the gateway), and adultery the focus in six, with another drawing out jealousy as a key precursor to adultery. One more letter used sex to draw the person into buying into the idea of the “here and now” instead of focussing on eternal realities. Intriguingly, only one of the sexualized scenarios brought up the idea of trust—for most, it was the badness of adultery or lust that was the key focus, not the consequence that sex or lust or broken trust would have on the soul of the sinner. There was also little consideration for the collateral damage of this sexualized sin, no thought of the porn worker or used partner.

In general, the letters were ambiguous about whether love was good (i.e., bad). One, however, captures Screwtape’s perspective well: “Although love is our enemy, lust is our friend.” Puppy love and

Valentine’s day are good distractions from real love, and broken love was generally considered a good opportunity to attack.

Although consumer technology is sold as a means to draw people together, with some demonic help students believed it could destroy relationships and move people to the point where they are relating to almost no one at all—in trying to “connect” they create isolation: “What very few of them seem to realize, is that these devices allow them to communicate base facts with one another, but not really connect with any other human; they never touch another’s soul.” The theme of division and loneliness was particularly poignant in the 2012 letters. Overall, four students used dislike and annoyance of friends as a key factor in temptation (much like Screwtape suggested to Wormwood for the Patient and his mother in letters III, IV, and X), and this tactic was referenced in other letters. As part of the lead up to the Teen Fall (see below), three student letters specifically focused on the bad influence of peers—but again, peer pressure was generally a gateway to demonic success.

Stuff and status

Certainly Lewis would not have understood the phrase “indie cred,” but one paper, among a handful of letters that tried to hold status and stuff together, used “indie cred” to capture that feeling of status that comes through fashionable sensibility or being set apart. From the student perspective, the “stuff” supports and defines the status of the individual within relationships:

Make your patients assume the positions on the hierarchy of what they call “indie cred”. Grow what is already implanted within them; a score board for tabulating their laughably vain credentials by which they will keep track of their own personal power. This, more stimulating, way of tabulating ‘indie cred’ which demolishes pleasurable, true, companionship based on non-judgmental exchanges of experience, and the lack of power

relations... Your patients will see, almost transparent, like a windshield of their visual field, a colourful, digital score-keeping system. By this, they will learn which behaviours to discontinue based on the score, whether, high or low, hot or not, like or dislike, which is gauged by the social groups reactions to the patients' behaviours.

The reader can truly see the emotional tensions young adults feel in the relational struggle that is status. The mentor, Snake-Coil, is afraid that complex web of in- and out-group assessment will be too much for his mentee, Host-Buster. But he encourages him to see through the complexities: "Just implant this digital system, and not to worry, the patient will not suspect any change in their original state, as they had evolved to think in terms of computer software anyway."

Some of the letters in this category focused on the pure materiality of stuff or the vainglory of status. Fame, as fleeting as it can be, was the lust-choice of some demons, with the inevitable moral compromise that it brings: "to make sacrifices in order to further her successions in the path of fame and fortune." One demon, Percitus, noted that, after all, if you make one successfully stolen patient famous, you can steal the souls of millions more.

Although materialism in general was hinted at throughout, money was a more common theme in 2012, with two focusing specifically on the idea of dependence, where demons work slowly to help the patients build up their fortune, and then have it taken away.²⁰ In one letter, the demon's focus was the experience of lust, and was indifferent about whether that was done through money or sex. Feelings such as entitlement and an expectation of access fuel a kind of consumerism that feeds selfishness. While some focussed on the Stuff itself—a desire for "what's hot" and the newest gadgets as a goal in and of itself—others saw the end of consumerism, which is loving what is "man-made over man," that humans can believe

that stuff is more important than people. One critical letter pointed out that people could be a kind of stuff—relationships themselves are the key status symbols.

Teen fall

One theme that I had not anticipated—though I probably should have—and that Lewis himself never addressed, was the theme of the teen fall, the sense of the innocent teenager slowly slipping into hell-bound adulthood. Typically this is best done by sex—at least six letters made that a focus—and is often pre-empted by drinking and partying. As Bitteruse writes to her son, Daidark, "what your infirm interpreted as *freedom* and *independence*, he was actually making himself much more vulnerable to failure."

Not all of the letters under the theme of Teen Fall were the big teen sins, however. Self-image was a struggle brought up by three as key points, once in reference to the media specifically, where media was a tool to manipulate self-image and generate a sense of failure, not unlike Letter XX of *The Screwtape Letters*. While friends were never recruited specifically as co-tempters (except in one letter, possibly), the temptation of a teen's circle of friends was hinted at in the self-esteem and loneliness letters.

Overall, students were aware of the dangers that they can experience at a vulnerable age, and the temptations fell into the two general camps of partying and a struggle with self-image. None of them, however, came close to the Kinnaman and Hawkin's (2011) analysis of why older teens and twenty-somethings are really leaving the church.

Mental illness

Admittedly, I was surprised by how few papers dealt with mental illness as a topic, particularly considering the prevalence of debilitating depression, substance abuse, and mental disorders on campus.²¹ One of the letters on drugs deals with addiction in a way

that practitioners would define as a mental illness, but only one paper overtly mentioned mental illness. In a letter on depression, the patient has become aware of her depression, so her demon, Belthazor, must work to ensure she continues in a downward spiral. The letter is critical of doctors, who merely prescribe addictive drugs that become “her only ally,” and uses fear to keep the patient from truly sharing her feelings with anyone who matters. In this case, the patient’s boyfriend’s demon, Bearthroat, will cooperate to make him realize he is too young to be supporting someone with so many problems. “If all goes as planned within the next month she will have broken up with her boyfriend and have lost all those closest to her.” While one could critique the letter, arguing that God would have an understanding of the physiological conditions of the vulnerable patient, the letter captures truth beyond the illness itself. *Screwtape* encourages Belthazor to work hard in making every day worse than the last, and that he must “keep her away from music, laughter and even crying,” keeping emotion in until she pushes love away forever. It is a poignant letter.

There were other letters that hinted at mental illness.²² One spoke of loss that leads alcohol and drug addiction. Most of the addictions, though, were about social drinking and media—the draw of technology, the lure of disasters and excitement, etc.—not really about addiction as we understand it medically. Even in the discussions of pornography, the focus was not about addiction, but about habit or the badness of lust itself.

Big ideas

Given the context of the class and the diversity of student experiences, I was surprised big idea pieces did not dominate the student response. Perhaps since we emphasized *Screwtape*’s subtle approach, big questions seemed to push past the boundaries of the assignment. Three pieces were entirely about questions of life, the universe, and everything. Two pieces tried to

strip the patient of a sense of absolute truth, one in the area of ethics, leading to moral ambiguity. Three students used the cause of the environment as the focus of their letters. One used it to bring out pride and idolatry in morally superior environmentalists (“the best environmentalists had foggy minds and pride in their work”), one as a critique of environmentalism as a kind of idolatry (the only “true religion”), and one from the other angle, where demons are working to create hell on earth through environmental degradation.

In 2012, pride became a theme in four letters (including two letters where *Screwtape* attempts to usurp power from the Father Below). One of these pride letters demonstrated a sophisticated path from an awareness of the “other,” to a discomfort with those who disagree, through spiritual pride to a hatred of the other that is equated in the patient’s mind as love for God. The subtext of religious hypocrisy and Christian self-righteousness in some of the letters is drawn into connection directly with bigotry through pride in this letter. Within a faith perspective, despair, lack of hope, and unanswered prayer emerge as manipulative tactics. Surprisingly, though, direct temptations to reduce or remove faith were relatively rare. One letter talked about how small habits can lead to sin and destruction, and others touched on fear of death, un-forgiveness, and doubt in general.

The original *Screwtape Letters* are filled with Christian self-critique, but this inward lens was lacking in most of the letters. There were critiques of casual Christianity and hypocrisy, as well as a scathing letter encouraging the patient to take a consumer approach to church:

The best image you can put in his mind of the pathetic place the humans call church, is a place where he is not required to do anything, rather a place where he pays his money, and then leaves it up to the ‘employees’ to make him feel comfortable.

In the letter featuring the Ouija Board demon, Eba, Christian unity was the key concern, but Christian division was not a popular theme. Because Valentine's Day was close to the discussion due date, it appeared here and there. One student's Screwtape cackles with success at the evolution of this originally Christian holiday:

The true meaning of this day has been lost to the vast majority of the hairless apes for centuries, fading into the rotting history books that very few care to even glance at, much less open and read. Instead of honouring the fallen martyrs of the old (and indeed far more dangerous) Christian religion of the third century A.D., humanity has twisted this once dangerous (one might even say perilous) day to the cause of Our Father Below into a capitalist, corporate, financial driven day. Humans of course are completely oblivious to this (it is rather amusing how little they know of their own history!), and therein lies the point in which you must focus your efforts.

Given that only a quarter of students are actively involved in churches, perhaps only punctuated moments of Christian self-critique should be expected.

While Screwtape encouraged Wormwood to surround his human with people who were "superficially intellectual, and brightly sceptical about everything" (Lewis 1996, 49), two people argued that taking science at university would be a lock for disbelief. As one student wrote on her spiritual assessment survey, "I believe in God, but my boyfriend believes in science." It was evident that some students believed that free thought and skepticism would be problematic to the Enemy, but others saw critical thinking within a Lewisian perspective: "The arenas of the Young Minds, these so called universities, are places where free thought is encouraged. *What a vile concept that the Enemy allows such insects to march where Angels once tread.*" Even in this letter, though, the young minds are as likely to be won over to belief in

"something rather than someone," so not really a victory at all, at least from the Screwtapian perspective.

Evaluation and Critique

Assigning students to write letters from a demonic perspective as a pilot project has some risks. There is the possibility that nontheistic students could misunderstand the assignment and feel trapped into adopting a Christian perspective, though that does not seem to have been a concern. The assignment is designed to draw out critical thinking—which the above data demonstrates successfully—though it probably favours literature students, artists and writers, and students with more experience at university (and life in general). However, of the students that completed the project as assigned, none of them failed, and the grade distribution was high, but not unusual, with class averages of B+ on the project (in a class with a B-average).

From a teaching perspective, these letters were a lot of fun to read. They gave me insight as a teacher into the things that undergrads are thinking about. I would have written different letters to critique our shared *zeitgeist*, but that is precisely the point: with these letters, I can see the world in which I am teaching from another point of view. Moreover, the upside down student letters allowed me to see how students were processing *The Screwtape Letters* in a non-test setting. At the very least, this assignment gives another avenue for processing a book that is relatively foreign to most students in language, culture and religious perspective.

Perhaps the biggest critique is that a number of students completely lacked Screwtape's shrewd approach, the slow, even road to hell. The teen fall section largely lacked that subtlety, viewing partying as an end in and of itself. One demon encouraged her mentee to lead her human toward boys with tattoos so that seduction would be certain. In three of those letters, the casual drinking would inevitably lead to problem drinking. Certainly I want our students to be

concerned about substance abuse, but the drop is a steady one. I also want students to be concerned about racism—we do a unit on “Hatred and the Holocaust”—but two papers moved from annoyance to stereotype to hatred to violence in a single letter. One letter tackled problem gambling, going from the first lottery ticket to entire family loss in four paragraphs. The subject of alcoholism and drugs was the focus of three more letters, and one demon with high ambitions attempted alcoholism, sex, war, and suicide in the same temptation!

Some also confused the means with the end. The letter that captures this concern best is the one that begins with “cell phones are the greatest example of evil in the world today”—perhaps some global experience would help the student see the cell phone as a means to either good or evil, and how her demon could harness that evil to his nefarious purposes.

It is not that these students all did poorly in their assignments. One student who spoke to me about her own drug addiction wrote this note to Wormwood: “after a child has experienced the substances for some time they become completely and utterly devoted to them, which means they become completely and utterly devoted to us.” Another demonstrated how the patient’s “slip into reality-altering substance use seemed rather unforced,” which will lead to a loss of his school year, new habits, and unnecessary debt. Some of the bolder letters were quite good. It is simply that in a minority of letters, students chose a method that was the opposite of *Screwtape*’s “surest way to hell,” the imperceptible decline that will avoid awakening the human patient to his (or, occasionally, her) real condition.

This lack of subtlety causes me to consider including a lecture on *The Screwtape Letters* going into the discussion or in preparation for the letter-writing assignment. Perhaps I did not emphasize well enough what I think is Lewis’ own best analysis of his work: “that *far* the strongest card in our enemies’ hand is the actual course of the world: and that quite apart from particular

evils like war and revolutions” (Hooper 2004, 747). I think, however, that the combination of teaching approaches to the material listed above is sufficient to cover the material. Moreover, I want students to bring their own ideas to their work. In the end, regardless of the approach or even the subject of cultural critique, students who wrote thoughtfully, creatively, and critically did quite well. It is worthwhile, however, to consider revising the assignment description to provide more specific guidance.

Conclusion

Despite some letters that were weaker in cultural evaluation or in using *The Screwtape Letters* to form their own *Screwtape* critique, the inverse perspective was valuable in two key ways. Even at a secular university where a majority of students are non-active or non-religious, the genre of demonic epistolary fiction is helpful for giving space to cultural critique and the content provides inspiration for a creative response to issues in their world. For example, while Kinnaman is concerned in *You Lost Me* about a generation addicted to access and consumed with entitlement, the *Screwtape* genre helps students think about their relationship with technology and peer groups critically. Most of the responses were concerned with the consequences of an action, and not just the action itself. Given the diverse response and the high quality of the letters, it seems that the assignment gives space also for students to develop literary artistry. It is no surprise, then, that demonic epistles have emerged outside of Christian circles, tackling issues of pedagogy, psychotherapy, creativity, and war. There is even a letter of luciferian advice to a junior Palaeolithic archaeologist critiquing a contemporary theme in archaeology (Shea 2011). Evidently, both the genre and message of the *The Screwtape letters* continues to be relevant among academics, pastors, and writers, and is demonstrably relevant to thinking students of all backgrounds.

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Appendix I: RS 104 Spiritual Perspectives Survey

To give the class a sense of what kinds of students we have, and to aid in a piece I am writing about *The Screwtape Letters*, I would appreciate if you completed this anonymous survey.

I will answer the questions:

- Yes No

What are you studying/intending to study at UPEI?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sciences/Pre-Vet | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology/Anthropology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering/Math | <input type="checkbox"/> Religious Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Women's Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business | <input type="checkbox"/> English | <input type="checkbox"/> Political Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nursing | <input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Economics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer Science | <input type="checkbox"/> History | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Arts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychology | <input type="checkbox"/> Classics | <input type="checkbox"/> Nothing Specific |

What is your religious background (choose what best fits you)?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agnostic | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anglican/Episcopalian | <input type="checkbox"/> I believe in God, but have no religion | <input type="checkbox"/> Reformed Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheist | <input type="checkbox"/> Jewish | <input type="checkbox"/> Roman Catholic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Baptist | <input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran | <input type="checkbox"/> Shinto |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist | <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual but not Religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Charismatic/Pentecostal | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-denominational Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> United Church |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eastern Catholic/Orthodox | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-religious | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Describe your level of commitment to your faith:

- I'm pretty hard core. I pray regularly and go to services most weeks.
- It is important to me. I go to services at least once a week.
- I am committed to pray or meditate privately, but I don't go to services often.
- I wish I was more committed. I go to services occasionally and pray when I think of it.
- I still go to services occasionally, but I'm not as strong as I used to be.
- I don't go to services very often at all. I'm just not interested.
- My religious background makes very little difference to me at all.
- I used to be involved, but now I don't believe or am not sure what I believe.
- I've never been really connected and don't believe.

What do you believe about the supernatural (check as many as apply)?

- I believe in a personal, good, all-powerful God who loves humanity.
- I believe that God is more like a force, or part of all reality.
- I believe there is a Devil, Satan.
- I believe that Satan is an embodiment of evil, a symbol of bad things.
- I believe that Satan and demons tempt and test humans.
- I believe that someone can be demon possessed.

Imagine there is a personal Satan with demons that tempt humans (as traditional Christianity teaches). Which sentence do you think best applies?

- Demons used to be big, but aren't really around anymore.
- C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* captures well the cunning and subtle nature of temptation.
- Lewis was too subtle. Demon activity would look more like *The Omen*.
- There is a constant spiritual battle over human souls that happens invisibly in the spiritual realm.
- People struggle with things because we are human, so demons just nudge us in certain directions.
- The vast majority of what people call demon possession has been mental or physical illness.

Describe Your Faith Perspective In Your Own Words:

Appendix II: Spiritual Perspectives Survey Student Responses

What are you studying/intending to study at UPEI?

22-Sciences/Pre-Vet	9-History
1-Engineering/Math	2-Classics
9-Business	14-Sociology/ Anthropology
0-Nursing	0-Women’s Studies
1-Computer Science	1-Political Studies
19-Psychology	1-Economics
0-Music	5-Other Arts
14-Religious Studies	6-Nothing Specific
14-English	1-Fine Arts (write in)
2-Philosophy	

Undergraduate Faculties/Schools

24-Sciences	81-Arts
9-Business	6-Unchosen
0-Nursing	

What is your religious background (choose what best fits you)?

7-Agnostic	0-Hindu	3-Presbyterian
1-Anglican/Episcopalian	7-I believe in God, but have no religion	2-Reformed Church
8-Atheist	0-Jewish	20-Roman Catholic(-4 cross-listed)
7-Baptist	0-Lutheran	0-Shinto
0-Buddhist	1-Muslim	10-Spiritual but not Religious
5-Charismatic/Pentecostal	8-Non-denominational Christian (-2 cross-listed)	5-United Church
4-Eastern Catholic/Orthodox	9-Non-religious	

Other:

- 1-Jedi
- 1-Wiccan
- 6-Raised Catholic
- 1-Protestant (unconnected)
- 4-don’t know, confused, unsure
- 1-plan to study Buddhism

Religious Background

49-Designated Christian	17-Spiritual but Not Religious/Belief without religion (SNR)
24-Specifically designated not religious or spiritual	11-Agnostic or unsure
20-Roman Catholic, including 4 converts (Wicca, Baptist, Atheist x2)—Roman Catholicism was unusual as 6 self-designated as “raised Catholic,” presumably to indicate separation	6-10-Other protestant
20-24-Evangelical (Includes Baptist, Pentecostal, and Reformed; Presbyterian, and Anglican may or may not be evangelical; non-denominational probably are evangelical)	4-Eastern Catholic/Orthodox (likely includes Maronite given the Lebanese community in Charlottetown)
	3-Non-Christian religion (Islam, Wicca, and Jedi—21,000 Canadians self-designated as “Jedi-Knight” in the 2001 census)

Describe your level of commitment to your faith:

15-I’m pretty hard core. I pray regularly and go to services most weeks.
 8-It is important to me.
 12-I am committed to pray or meditate privately, but I don’t go to services often.
 9-I wish I was more committed. I go to services occasionally and pray when I think of it.
 3-I still go to services occasionally, but I’m not as strong as I used to be.

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- 7-I don't go to services very often at all. I'm just not interested.
- 9-My religious background makes very little difference to me at all.
- 22-I used to be involved, but now I don't believe or am not sure what I believe.
- 19-I've never been really connected and don't believe.
- 2-Did not answer

What do you believe about the supernatural (check as many as apply)?

- 34-I believe in a personal, good, all-powerful God who loves humanity.
- 39-I believe that God is more like a force, or part of all reality.
- 21-I believe there is a Devil, Satan.
- 30-I believe that Satan is an embodiment of evil, a symbol of bad things.
- 24-I believe that Satan and demons tempt and test humans.
- 24-I believe that someone can be demon possessed.

Imagine there is a personal Satan with demons that tempt humans (as traditional Christianity teaches).

Which sentence do you think best applies?

- 1-Demons used to be big, but aren't really around anymore.
- 36-C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* captures well the cunning and subtle nature of temptation.
- 1-Lewis was too subtle. Demon activity would look more like *The Omen* or *The Exorcist*.
- 15-There is a constant spiritual battle over human souls that happens invisibly in the spiritual realm.
- 37-People struggle with things because we are human, so demons just nudge us in certain directions.
- 11-The vast majority of what people call demon possession has been mental or physical illness.

Appendix III: RS104 Demonic Names

- Pukewart (Rotlung)
- Azazel (2x, 1 with Katherine-self)
- Twigmentia
- Ruinspike
- Z-Ro
- Twistwire
- Muffintop
- Maplesnail (Hammeruller)
- Oxbottom (Zipperlodge)
- Slogbottom
- WormWizzLE
- Jubble Heartguzzler
- Leechgrub
- Sonneillon
- Damian (Wigglesworth)
- Host-Buster (Snake-Coil)
- Belthazer
- Bearthroat
- Tapeworm
- Gallstone (Beatlejuice)
- Succorbenoth (Sonneillon)
- Shotglass
- Xanthanoplasokotons
- Memnoch (Lasher)
- Leonard (Sophie-self)
- Earwax (Grub)
- Millepedious (Prausimia)
- Potis (Deumos)
- Buer (Paimon)
- Wormtail (Ravenclaw)
- "comrade" (Eba, a real demon)
- "subordinate tempter" (Hellsangel)
- #642 (#7)
- Atrotack (Hoarkin)
- Prankpuke, Wormwood's brother
- Verin, Wormwood's brother
- Mungwort, Wormwood's brother
- Echo (Narcissus)
- Rebecca Black
- Jadis (Akuma)
- Father Below (2x)
- Kelsa (Mara)
- Daidark (Bitturuse, female)
- Kassar (Aunt Bonespawn, female)
- Lola (Aunt Suetape, female)

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¹ The infamous *Time* article on Lewis in 1947 traces Lewis' career as a Christian celebrity to the publication of *The Screwtape Letters*. "Since 1941, when Lewis published a witty collection of infernal correspondence called *The Screwtape Letters*, this middle-aged (49) bachelor professor who lives a mildly humdrum life ("I like monotony") has sold something over a million copies of his 15 books. He has made 29 radio broadcasts on religious subjects, each to an average of 600,000 listeners." "Oxford's C.S. Lewis. His Heresy: Christianity," *Time*, September 8, 1947. See also Bob Smietana, "C.S. Lewis Superstar," *Christianity Today* 49 (December 2005):
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/december/9.28.html>.

² For a fuller review, see Brenton Dickieson (Feb 6, 2012) "Screwtape Writes Again: A Note on Contemporary Screwtape Letters," *A Pilgrim in Narnia*,
<http://apilgriminnarnia.com/2012/02/06/screwtape-writes-again-a-note-on-contemporary-screwtape-letters/>, written in preparation for this paper.

³ See Marvin D. Hinten, "An Approach to Teaching *The Screwtape Letters*." *Lamp-Post of the Southern California C. S. Lewis Society* 28:3 (Sep 2004): 3-9. Dr. Hinten offers some creative approaches to teaching *Screwtape* in a Christian liberal arts college.

⁴ *The Problem of Pain* (1942); *Mere Christianity* (1952; 1961); *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (1947; 1960).

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⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, "U.S. Religious Landscape,"
<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports#>.

⁹ An approximate number provided by The Evangelical Fellowship of Canada, "About Evangelicals: Statistics on Christianity in Canada," <http://www.evangelicalfellowship.ca/page.aspx?pid=776>.

¹⁰ Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious* (Oxford: OUP, 2001).

¹¹ The 2001 Census reported that 16% reported “no religion,” up from less than 1% in 1971 and 12.3% in 1991. See <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/rel/canada.cfm>.

¹² By contrast, in the United States, 16.3% are Baptist and 2.6% are Pentecostal/Charismatic or Assemblies of God. See Adherents.com, “Largest Religious Groups in the United States of America,” http://www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html.

¹³ Phil Zuckerman, “Atheism: Contemporary Rates and Patterns,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, edited by Michael Martin (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2007), 48. Zuckerman argues that, “Guth and Fraser (2001) found that 28% of Canadians ‘show no evidence of religious salience or activity.’ According to Norris and Inglehart (2004), 22% of those in Canada do not believe in God. According to Bibby (2002), when asked ‘Do you believe that God exists?’ 6% of Canadians answered ‘No, I definitely do not’ and another 13% answered, ‘No, I don’t think so,’ for a total of 19% classifiable as either atheist or agnostic. According to Gallup and Lindsay (1999:121), 30% of Canadians do not believe in God or a ‘Higher Power.’”

¹⁴ I have chosen to print student responses as is, with any grammatical concerns there may be. The most devilish aspect of our generation is not the inability to use a semi-colon.

¹⁵ Trisha Elliott, “I’m not religious. I’m spiritual,” *The United Church Observer* (June 2009): http://www.ucobserver.org/faith/2009/06/not_religious/. See Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual but not Religious* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), who writes about the “20 percent of Americans who develop a vital spirituality exclusively on the basis of nonecclesial beliefs and practices.” There are a number of researchers in the University of Waterloo-Wilfred Laurier research group working on the Spiritual but Not Religious question in Canada, so perhaps clarity will be forthcoming.

¹⁶ See the Prezi here: <http://prezi.com/f4rnecwnglxb/on-myths-and-mythology/> and here: <http://prezi.com/u2uiynheyeye/day-2-of-on-myths-and-mythology/>.

¹⁷ See the Prezi here: <http://prezi.com/osuwuxfpy-nc/mythology-and-genesis/>.

¹⁸ See the Prezi here: <http://prezi.com/snwlp1c6kdk8/the-genesis-of-satan/>.

¹⁹ Artists narrowed in on this theme. The writer talks about writers and darkness, the musician about music, and the visual artist about the usefulness of laziness in crushing spirit.

²⁰ Like what many families experienced in 2008-09, though it was not overtly mentioned. There was not a whisper in any of the letters of the global economic crisis, economic inequality, or the Occupy movement.

²¹ Considering the complexities of tracking mental illness on campus, I can only speak anecdotally about teaching at UPEI. I have personally encountered an increasing number of students unable to function because of depression or substance abuse. See CBC, “Mental Illness Rises on Campus: Studies” (Aug 12, 2010): <http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/story/2010/08/12/mental-illness-college.html>.

²² One student did a letter based on the speculative world of *The Giver* by Lois Lowry (Toronto: Random House, 2006), where pain is used to create conditions for suicide. However, suicide in the book is not a condition of mental illness in Lowry’s book.