

META | PHOR

UNDERGRADUATE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL



Metaphor is Weber State University's undergraduate, interdisciplinary journal, in its thirty-third year of publication. The journal is staffed entirely by Weber State University students.

Metaphor accepts submissions in visual arts, poetry, fiction, academic literature, and performing arts from students of Weber State University, and selected pieces from national submissions to the National Undergraduate Literature Conference.

Publications in Metaphor are chosen through a blind submission process. The author, visual or performing artist of each piece is unknown until the piece is selected for publication.

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J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, “It’s a dangerous business, Frodo, going out your door. You step onto the Road, and if you don’t keep your feet, there’s no knowing where you might be swept off to.” Every year we go out the door again, intent on publishing the best journal, and every year we are swept away, knowing that our end goal is Mordor, and really, to be honest, having no idea how to get there. We have been fellow travelers on this journey of publication. At times, we disagreed about what direction we ought to go and other times we surprised even ourselves with our accomplishments. Through all of these experiences, we drew closer to our goal, a new, unique Metaphor. For this, I thank you and dedicate this journal to you.

Tracie Border, our Creative Director, for all of her imaginative designs, her patience with me through the publication process, and most importantly her long nights spent designing the journal. *Brandon Petrizzo*, *Cindy Stokes*, and the Printing Services staff for answering our questions, and helping make the journal a reality. *Robin Scott*, *Kim Webb*, and the English Department staff for helping us with advertising, questions, and directing students to our door. The professors of Weber State University for encouraging their students to submit their work. *Dr. Kathy Herndon* and *Dr. Vicki Ramirez* for their continued support. The undergraduate students of Weber State University for creating such intriguing works of art. Thank you for sharing your insights, talents, and experiences with us. The Weber State University Student Senate for their financial support. *Jan Hamer*, our Faculty Advisor, for her positivity, support, and assurance as we struggled along. Whenever we were stuck or lost, she got us right. Thank you, *Jan*. *Larry Clarkson*, our design advisor, for his in-depth understanding of the design process and his much needed creative opinion. *Kyle Poppitz*, my Assistant Editor, for his brilliant ideas and tireless work for this journal. He was everything I needed in an Assistant Editor, his excitement made new ideas a reality and his calm support helped me during the stressful moments. The Section Editors of Metaphor for their hard work and dedication. The spouses, family members, and significant others of the staff for their patience and support. We could not do what we do without you behind us. Most significantly, I thank my dear wife, *Katie Christine*, whom I rely on for her knowledge and expertise in all things creative. Thank you, lover.

EDITOR’S|NOTES

Why do we create art?

Is it a way to synthesize the world on our terms? Do we feel the spark of divinity when we create? Is it a way to cope with the emptiness of existence? Or a way to glorify humanity’s greatness? Perhaps, we create art to understand ourselves, the microcosm of the universe. Maybe, the answer lies not in one, but all of these reasons. For all of us, at some point in our lives, claim all of these and more as reasons for our need to create—and it is a need—for there is only one certainty: creating art is arduous. It is a process of forming abstract concepts into concrete physical representations of an idea. It requires us to view the invisible and to touch the intangible. Creating good art is most demanding, and if it wasn’t a necessity, we wouldn’t do it.

Praise be to the person that introduced the first piece of art to the world. And praise be to the next person who said, “I want to do it differently.” We become inspired through one another’s work. The artist is not a lone island, created ex-nihilo; rather, through a process of under-the-surface eruptions, the artist begins to take shape, being encircled by the formative elements around him. Each island is unique, tells its own story, has its own specific flora and fauna, and serves as a landmark for cartographers who chart the evolution of creation. Each great artist rises above the vast seas of humanity to stand above as memorial.

It is my privilege and great pleasure, as Editor-in-Chief, to present this collection to you, dear reader. May you enjoy and treasure this volume; may it inspire you to write more, draw more, read more, dance more, sing more, and in all things be more creative.

—*Joshua Nelson*

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POET|RY

Introduction

Editor

Afton Fuller

Staff

Chelsea Maki

Elizabeth

Crawford-Bizzell

Jayrod Garrett

Jordan Wight

Megan Olsen

Quincy Bravo

Carlee Nowling

As poetry staff, we have enjoyed every submission this year, each one being one of a kind. Behind every poem hides a truth about the human experience and perhaps even answers. Poetry is the music of emotion and the eye of the common people. Its place in our modern world is everywhere and in every mind, demanding that we listen. We, here in poetry staff, walked every adventure given to us and are better for it. Join us, and welcome to poetry.

Inversion

Megan Haymond

A zeppelin hung above the road
in cream of mushroom soup.
Its buoyant nose peeking out
like a mole rat's
through the rot.
It dripped mucous strings
over playgrounds,
It bounced on the lung
of an asthma attack.
Mini Hindenburg hovered—
a limp helium testicle,
stuck in the mud and the thick.

Broadcasting imported cars,
inverted pebbles in
a sickly stone soup.
Hungry herds came waddling in
beneath the grey balloon.
You could barely see its wings
or its anchor through the muck. And,
like spoons shoved into a can, hands
grabbed silver keys,
Stuck them in ignitions,
and stirred around the streets.

The motorcars kept driving
into salty opaque fog.
Together, on the interstate
dumping leftovers
through cold pipes. And,
I watched the aircraft bob there
in the creamy carbon stew.
I saw it telling everyone,
“Folks, please
dip in our pot,
you’re very lucky to be here.
It’s hot,
Eat up—
Because,

There are coughing kids in China.
And we need to clear the lot.”

2:00 AM

Chelsea Maki

We find ourselves together each night,
while the cat croons to our sleeping ears.
As she wakes us, we become
purposeful: we must find a way to quiet her
without shedding the skin of our sheets.

You sling a pillow and it plummets
into the thick black. Silence follows
like a comet's tail:
dazzling and marvelous.

Your arms find the curve of my waist
as we settle into the flesh of our mattress.
Your touch whispers affection to my skin;
I listen closely.

My breath's rhythm rises and falls
to kiss the meat of your palm.
Sleep comes like a familiar tune
that we will use to serenade one another
until the morning comes.

A Choice

Alex Koldewyn

Away from the world I lay,
Beauty all around me.
Choosing a new path, I stay.
Dividing myself from thee.

Evening falls gently in the trees,
Followed by the waning moon.
Glowing brighter above the seas,
Hovering it looms.

I stare as it fades to dawn.
Jettisoned from the sky.
King of night is gone,
Light now pervades my eye.

Morning comes with hope sincere.
Northern winds are blowing fast.
On the waves, I feel no fear
Proceeding from my past.

Quickly now, I hoist the sails,
Running with the wind.
Stretching main catches gales,
Turning from where I'd been.

Underway, I turn my gaze
Victorious in escape.
Willing myself to better days
Xanthic sun shines in praise.

You have a choice, choose to be free.
Zealously now, rejoice! Even. . . Alphabetically.

Boy Scout Leaders Topple Ancient Rock in Utah's Goblin Valley

Chelsea Maki

The signing of the Declaration
of Independence took place
two hundred and thirty seven
years ago,
a ten-millionth
of my presence here.

It's been two thousand years
since Jesus Christ padded around
in sandaled feet preaching
to the people
I was a rock
long before Christ
was the rock of Christianity.

Fremont, Ute, and Paiute
treaded deep in the veins
of my valley:
I watched like a clot
of life's blood as their footprints
washed away in the rain.

Dinosaurs lapped at the pure
waters of my late adulthood
as Lake Bonneville's swift currents
molded the pedestal upon which
I perched.

One hundred and eight billion
people have lived and died
in the span of my existence.

It all boils down
to a moment. A moment
has the capacity to change
everything.

Humanity is a soft exhale
in the grand opus of time.

Catch Me

Brittany Andreasen

Catch me twice around
the bend and I'll prove the necessity of
my lie. There comes a point when
skepticism and cynicism
walk hand in hand like sisters
who I swear will never meet,
yet twin faces mirror compromise. It's pretty
ugly and I know we'll both agree,
It wouldn't happen any other way.
Color me sunshine, color me regret –
I'm too fast for your
butterfingers and we both know that.
Lie to my face – PROVE me wrong: I'd love to,
but
your signature practiced on dirty napkins
from shady bars around the bend provide
skepticism, and suddenly faith is all I have
left. I'm running like the heat
on my face will leave and the fire
at my hair is igniting, but
it's like I know it in the bottoms of
my liquid toes. I can't be fast enough for
everyone, and I hate accepting
failure. I couldn't have
put it any other way and so I won't, but
it's like you said – A shouldn't
always be equated with B.
since we never truly understand relationships and how
correlation leads specifically to causation. We're too
far stuck in an easily corrugated world, so I won't
feel as bad if I bend a little bit, like the
rest of the ambivalent population.
Color me the sunset, and we'll keep
each other company if you can find
the will to catch me twice around the
bend.

Beauty Kills

Megan Olsen

My weekly dissection commences
 Tuesday morning, when the mail comes.
 I hear the slot open through an oak door
 and I wait for all witnesses to clear the street.
 I am about to commit murder, a weekly sacrifice, and
 It is oh, so very private. On the other side
 folds of beauty and skinny thighs await.
 Junk mail day,
 the day where I peel off the coupons and free samples of
 Perfume d'eau.
 I tuck them deep into my armpits.

And I migrate to the operating room
 beginning the neurotic incisions of the day.
 Scolding the marks on my face
 That pay for expensive brands of smooth.
 Silver weapons quiver and
 Bloody tissues line the sink
 And I pick, pick,
 pluck.
 I interrogate my victim well.
 The mirror fogs
 My lunar eyebrows arch and swell,
 A perfect shape I've made
 above uneven eyes.
 Eyes that hold uneven tears, when I cry.

Then comes the catalogue,
 I save this one for the slaughter.
 I wonder how long it takes those angels
 To fluff their perky breasts...
 Why don't mine heave and bounce?
 Why can't I pull off lace?

I sentence the stubby fingers
 That flip through each page,
 To begin sharpening my weapon
 for the moment—I take my breath away:

I strip off stretchy pants
 Gingerly flexing my thighs in the mirror.
 A faint groove of muscle arranges itself
 above my speckled knee.

I inhale as hard as I can, ribs exposed, barbed, bare
 awaiting their injury.
 I stab my palms into my sides
 wondering if the underwear models do the same.

So I dig through the fluffy guts;
 I've stretched and pulled my face,
 I've painted my lips with sunset blush,
 I've compulsively pulled out follicles, and
 rubbed my elbows with plastic grates.
 I've regretted tanned bikini lines, and
 coconut oiled arms.
 I've bought restraints for my full
 mashed belly.
 Raw, pink, ground beef—A belly fresh with motherhood
 scars.

And just as I am ready to sacrifice the whole
 Rest of me,
 I notice two extra eyes musing through the pane.
 A witness to my sickening honest shame.
 Two more hands that pluck and prod.
 And I simply gaze on.
 They push at pink tender cheeks
 smothered in strawberry jam.
 Grab at a round toddler belly
 To explore the inside of a navel.
 Pulling soft ringlets of hair, the hands prod
 as mine skillfully do.
 I see these eyes joylessly meet the floor
 Toes wiggling and spread and plump
 I watch as the murder takes place,
 the guilt
 creating lines
 on my aging deformed face.

Yet, each Tuesday, when the junk mail comes,
 I chew on my noxious subscription
 like a dog. I run my fingers through criminal perfection,
 Name brands, blonde, creams, and blood.
 And watch on
 as my reflection convulses
 generational impulses
 of hate.

Daughter

Megan Olsen

They say time flies. . .
 We two riding on laughter's strings,
 spiraling into pink newborn skies,
 I traced the light around its wings.

I saw your curled velvet hands,
 buried chasms through my chest,
 they dug so deep my dear,
 violet senses reached the crest.

Recalling rich angels rest, with dreaming
 eyes we rescind doubtful rains,
 overflowed ornamental beauty,
 nourishing your green veins.
 Aster that has blossomed, inside a teaching gaze,
 your lace perfection growing, in my porcelain vase.

Dormancy

Jacqlynn Peavler

Dormant, she lies.
 Asleep, but never dead.
 Feet dug into the soil,
 rooted, awaiting.

Frost caressing her branches,
 embracing her with Winter's
 somber kiss.
 Encasing her in
 an arctic tomb.
 Leaving her still
 and softly humming
 with the dreams of her lover's
 return,
 The glowing cordial Spring.

Eyes in passing,
 mistaking her for
 another casualty taken
 by Winter's selfish grasp.
 Surely, not seeing
 the life held in her wintry womb,
 waiting to blossom into
 brilliant colors at the first kiss
 of Spring's gracious return.

Ducks Glide By

Michaela Funtanilla

My heart read a poem on a broken bench by the park
And it was about ducks

And it made her want to cry—

I sat for a day pondering the poem
and what it was about,
picturing the lake in front of me
And the very young girl with her very young father
And all the books he read her,
the stories he told,
the language they shared

But even with pictures
the girl forgot them
Except for the one about the ducks

That glided across the lake so blue it blended
into the sky and made it look as if the birds were flying
very slowly,
with no pumping wings against the breeze

That afternoon I watched a man
sit with his four-year-old daughter on a blanket
barefoot.
I watched him cup her cold tiny toes,
and
as if to warm up his own hands,
exhale hot air
He didn't realize I was watching
He didn't know how happy it made me
because it reminded me of my once dancing prancing self
icy feet in his hands and warm safe kisses on my soles

Earlier that day I read a poem and it was about ducks
And it was very pretty. I thought. The man and his
daughter.

—so instead, she smiled.

Your Evil Decision

Ory Hernandez

Sudden, unexpected, loud noises
like a book slamming on
the concrete floor
when the time of day is very quiet
(or very dark),
terrorize my
calm
spirit.

Like the time you shot your
Father-in-law
in Church.
Point-blank,
in the back of his head,
on Father's Day.

In Church,
in front of our children,
in front of our friends,
in the peacefulness of our ritual.
As if you were
God.

Anxiously, I await the day
that I will be able
to walk into Church,
especially that Church,
and not hear that deafening

BANG

in my right ear,
and feel the
absence
of fear.

They say
“fear is a choice.”
As though
I could
make you
reconsider.

The Four Pillars

Quincy Bravo

Politics

On Propaganda Farm, pigs take to speech
Telling men lies thinking they're far out of reach.
But spotlights change and the ground is breaking,
And everywhere you look there's a new pig baking;
The oven is burning at four-fifteen
Cooking the swine until their pens are clean.

Business

Seven-finger Mike was just discharged
Trying to save the company's sinking barge.
The sea-side courthouse saw the proceedings
The whole lost crew was frantically pleading,
"Don't blame Mike; it was the captain's failing."
But the judges frowned upon sailors wailing.

Faith

Stone-collared monks preach so fervently
Of pride and lust, but then jockey to see
The crimson-haired angel shed her cloth wings;
They exchange their vows for more carnal things,
And return to say, "All our morals are bent."
While church bells ring for you to repent.

Family

Mothers count cards at the kitchen table,
While children throw fits for designer labels,
And fathers are quick to walk right out the door
Leaving beds unmade and clothes on the floor.
And a picture of family values is left for us
To frame upon the wall that's collecting dust.

Grounds

Afton Fuller

There's something about language,
and coffee.
Essentia drifts as the heavy steam carries,
the scent flutters past,
lost.

A word, a sound, the table across the way,
condensation forms, like a thought,
on the side of a kindred spirit's frappe.
A sip, essence again,
the sweet bitter soft of a hard drink,
lost.

On the couch, a young'un
deafened to the air about,
their energy hyped about and distracted,
matching their cappuccino.
Pour soul,
lost.

All around, contemporary style soothes,
a place of common difference accepted,
and politics is conversation, not war.
Steamed milk with heavy syrup,
melts the heart,
lost.

I come here to find myself, to get out
or get in.
The brew is great, but the language,
the language is better,
rich like the burnt beans and deeper than
my cup,
lost.

Home

Elaina Erickson

Gray walls slathered in grime.
 Bastard. Whore.
 Barbed words rose, filling empty spaces in our house,
 trapping us inside.

I had hopes of refuge.
 Love. Understanding.
 You shattered that with perfidious lies; tar, grit, sludge
 of concreted doubt cementing our walls.

Days in fisted darkness.
 Bitterness. Hatred.
 Our resentment grew, ingraining its filth into the lines of our faces,
 screaming for revenge.

Leaving would have been so easy;
 to slip past the gates of hell, and walk into the world of euphoria.

But we had her—

At night we didn't sleep in separate beds, we slept on separate plan-
 ets—
 the white sheets light-
 years between your skin and mine.

One night in our bed of dregs
 I dreamt I touched a rainbow—

crimson-reds, golden-yellows and navy-blues staining
 my upturned hands. When I pulled away
 the colors ran together;
 sunset-oranges, emerald-greens, plum-purples dying
 the grooves between my fingers.

I climbed a ladder
 to catch a sunbeam,
 held it struggling against my chest,
 the blinding mass searing my tender skin until
 regretfully
 I let it go to wander once more among the sky.

I swam an ocean of stars
 to kiss the moon
 chained it bucking to my side,
 cracked lips bleeding as it tore away; its colossal strength
 smashing the insensible bands it thrust me back to earth.

When I awoke there was no water-colored rainbow,
 brazened sun or disheveled moon. There was nothing
 but my purple stained cuticles, lips full of dust, and us.
 In this—
 the ruination of our home.

Making Angels in the Grass

Emma C. Miller

Like trying to fit into that pair of jeans you can barely get half-way up your thighs (without restricting proper blood-flow), no matter how much jumping up and down you do, or how long you lie on your bed while sucking in your gut – it's not happening.

You don't accidentally learn to speak French, as much as you don't accidentally make everyone hate you. You don't mistakenly become rich or famous, and People's most eligible bachelor doesn't just fall in love with you in some fairytale twist of fate.

There is no accidental collision of words that warrants an uprising of praise or generates groupies clamoring for your prophetic genius.

You are the mouse in search of that blasted piece of cheese, (the smell sickening) through the little wooden walls you must travel.

Choking on empty cheers from the sidelines, you run away into an open field, stopping only when it seems the field has nothing to say.

Pausing,

making angels in the grass,

counting how many clouds haven't appeared,

you breathe,

expanding your diaphragm, filling your lungs with unfiltered air.

You open your eyes and dream of every firefly set free,
every child spun with open arms,
every blanket ever creased from secret lovers here,

and you know,
you will never go back
to the crumpled jeans in the corner.

Moon-Map-Monsters

Karly M. Nyman

The moon is hanging like a silver coin on a gossamer strand.
I could reach out and catch it, a frost bird in my hand.
It sighs through the window panes and I am lying in draping luminescence.
Never has there been such a blanket.
On nights like this the moon is a siren with a silent voice and I am alive.
Aware of the higher frequencies.
The waves connecting me to I and all the darkness in between.
The touch of insanity that I can call faith or fear.
Bathing in the burnt-out quiet, all things with no form have presence.
Like the spawn of long-owed debts, they claw and inquire about their dues.
Memories tumble across each other, dry leaves whispering on the pavement.
Regrets fall like rain on the mountains.
Above all, enlightenment soars; a comet beyond the moon's pale face.

When reality bends and morality breaks and nobility wavers. . . here I am.
Under the light of that single white eye, I could peel myself back.
Layer by layer.

Until all that remains would be everything I've never been.

Until I am invited down the rabbit hole.

Until I can leave myself buried in the ice.

The moon assures me that once I am gone, I will finally exist.

Shaken prospects and biting doubts would fade into alabaster brightness.

I await its tolling summons to a place like a heart with and without blood.
Where no map dares confess that Here There Be Monsters.

By the light of the full moon the ragged glyphs of potential are read.

I can remember what, once upon a time, I carved into my skin.

It is by that silver lantern that I will follow my smiling demons.

And see what humanity and I left behind in our haste to rebuild Leviathan.

Ten

Ivonne Dabb

Ten
 Weeks ago
 He was almost dead.
 His chest was split wide open—
 He had tubes for a heart.

Ten
 Weeks ago
 His eyes were dull,
 His body swollen.

Ten
 Weeks ago
 He would not live.
 And just look at him now,
 So far from

Ten
 Weeks ago.

Never Love a Writer

Patrick Ramsay

A writer never loves you just once.
 They love you once in person,
 Twice on paper.
 The second best thing he did was love me.
 His eyelids hid forests,
 each blink of evergreen.
 His shoulders met back the way a desert greets the mountains.
 Night after night, we let the moonlight paint us.
 Lunar love, with words unsaid.
 His to mine, our skin spoke for us.
 Braille goosebumps,
 he was my favorite book to read.
 I was sure of him.
 I threw away my compass.
 I got a little lost.
 As evergreens started waning,
 the desert found its drought.
 The mountains cracked and crumbled.
 The best thing he did was stop loving me.
 Once broken,
 twice on paper.

Poetry at its Finest

Afton Fuller

It's 7 o' clock. *Have a seat.*
 The wood grain stained
 with the wear of comfort.
 Your place, waiting.
 Dented gloss, disconnected pages,
 and a single yellow pencil;
 or is it orange; goldenrod?
 Blue lines, faded pink margin,
 and three convenient holes.
 Just in case you choose to
 keep tonight's date,
 even for just a night.
 Perhaps a simple dream,
 philosophy, genius,
 or just scribbles to get out of the way.
 You make an impression,
 changing the page before you.
 Hesitation finally undistracted.
 It flows, and you document tonight,
 an innocent one-night-stand;
 you and the paper.
 Laying down the pencil,
 you stare at the page,
 it now has a voice; given.
Stay here a while.

Slick-Knobbed Train Cars

Quincy Bravo

It begins with a waking—
 collected shards of shattered
 dreams recycled into memories
 imbued with a niggling
 intoxication.

Suppressed like compressed air,
 impressed and repressed into
 boysenberry drawings
 of slick-knobbed train cars,
 painted with tattered fingernails—
 a binge of bourbon
 and Leonard Cohen.

Like trellised tomato plants they hang,
 juxtaposed, forgotten,
 remembered,
 disregarded.

slow quake

Jessica Carter

it starts with a shudder,
 and a sigh,
 and a gentle stroke of the earth
 without yet breaking ground.
 buildings sway with the
 low, rumbling music
 that fills the streets.
 breath keeps time for
 this
 slow quake. . .
 the concrete
 —splits—
 and the sidewalks moan
 long
 and deep.
 windowsshatterandthedrumsplayon
 as the walls begin to crumble
 and the people start to fumble
 while searching for a safe place.
 they hide inside the doorways-
 a final CRASH!
 to the unruly shake
 of this sweet

 slow

 quake. . .

 and the world braces itself
 against the faint quiver
 of aftershock.

Müs(e)

Shawn Atkinson

Ricochet,
 Inside my skull,
 It perforates
 My thoughts.
 Leaving holes
 In my lyrical logic.

Heartbeat,
 Threatening
 To dance
 Out of my chest.
 Pumping droplets
 Of ruby rhythm.

Surging,
 Sound crashing
 Through me in waves.
 Warping the world
 On tides of tempo.

Possessed,
 Muscles jumping
 On puppet strings.
 It alters my nature
 Of controlled cadence.

Inspiration,
 Aligning the words
 Pouring through me.
 The cascading phrases
 Settle into stilled song.

Emotions,
 Focused into
 Distinct perceptions.
 It illuminates
 The grace between beats.

It is my muse,
 Our muse,
 The muse,
 Music.

The Speech

Carlee Nowling

His eyes skip like stones over the crowd,
counting each ripple.

Each mind dripping,
full to the point of flooding,
slowly buckling,
his carefully contained confidence.

Oh, how he longs,
to wade back into the shallows,
to take his place in the water,
to become just another wave in the crowd.

He sees his reflection
in eyes gazing upward.

He winds a river to feed the estuary.
A current to coax,
words to set the whirl of life spinning.

They follow,
these schooling fish.
Whose movement alone was noise,
whose dance attracted
and protected from every predator.

He wonders,
will the result be the crashing of ap-
plause,
or just the squawking of gulls?

The Time is Now

Brittany Andreasen

You lack conviction, because
you articulate your negative thoughts
in a manner that makes me question the ground on
which you walk – and how shaky
it seems to be to an influential third party. Couldn't
I join your earth shaking lack of an affirmation? Or isn't there room on
your island of solidarity? Call me
conspicuous, call me LOUD and I
will deliver because I'd like to think that
my promises still mean some—
THING—like what I'm referring to has a
name that I'm too afraid to speak. Say loudly, raise your voice,
knock me over
with your own earthquake of
resolution—make it expand across:
from underneath your feet and show through the snow
that's falling outside quietly—quickly—
make it shake loose from the trees because
your conviction is just that strong.
Make me believe in something—and make me want to
take back my promises and to name them, to call
them out, and show me the validation of
what it means to be convincing and solitary
at the same time. My third party
is now asking to join your quake-island but I
never promised to let them come.
If the time is now will you speak
of me?

Forgotten Fruit

Meg Mazzei

Forgotten fruit withered on the mantle,
the rinds gone soft and furry with moldy scandal.
Empty eggshells lay in pieces on the counter,
rotten yolks left in the unmixed cake batter.
Silverfish scuttled across the kitchen floor,
where no one had tread for a week or more.
Water dripped from the leaky faucet,
leaving behind white calcium deposits.
Flies circled around
the opened can of boysenberry jam,
while maggots fed on the flesh of old Mrs. Van Dam.

Pop

Murielle Parkinson

Soap stretches over
a little pocket of air,
bubbles waiting to



A | RT

Editor
Chelsea Maki

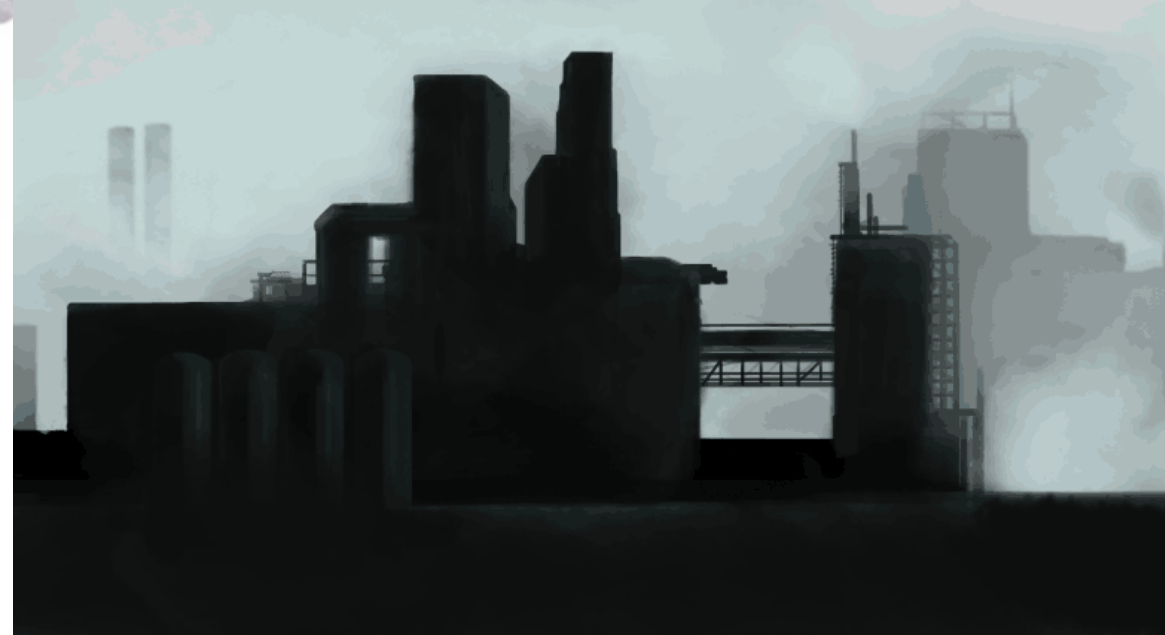
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Ingrid Jorgensen
Afton Fuller
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Quincy Bravo
Elizabeth
Crawford-Bizzell
Zachary Owen

Introduction

Art is a form of visual story telling. Like any poem, novel, or article, art seeks to provide the viewer with a story. Art dares to venture further, and create a dialogue with the viewer. Any reaction will create an unspoken bond between the artist and the viewer. This bond need not be legitimized by a verbal conversation; it is the art that does the talking. By sharing their artwork, the artist creates a different story each time a new person observes the piece. Art can be instantly personal, and can affect you a different way each time you see it.

And what of the art that is not shown? I'm talking about art that is tucked away in drawers, closets, or journals. That artwork, I believe, is the story that the artists create for themselves. It is to remain introspective until the day that it is shared. That's the day that an exciting new conversation will begin.

As you view these selections, it is my hope that you will observe the story that unfolds. Whether it's positive, negative, profound, or shallow, I want these pieces to deliver a reaction. As a viewer, it is my hope that you may be inspired by the story that art creates within you.



To Forgive Is to Forget
Brandon Keller



The Two Unibrows

Toni Miller

Consumption

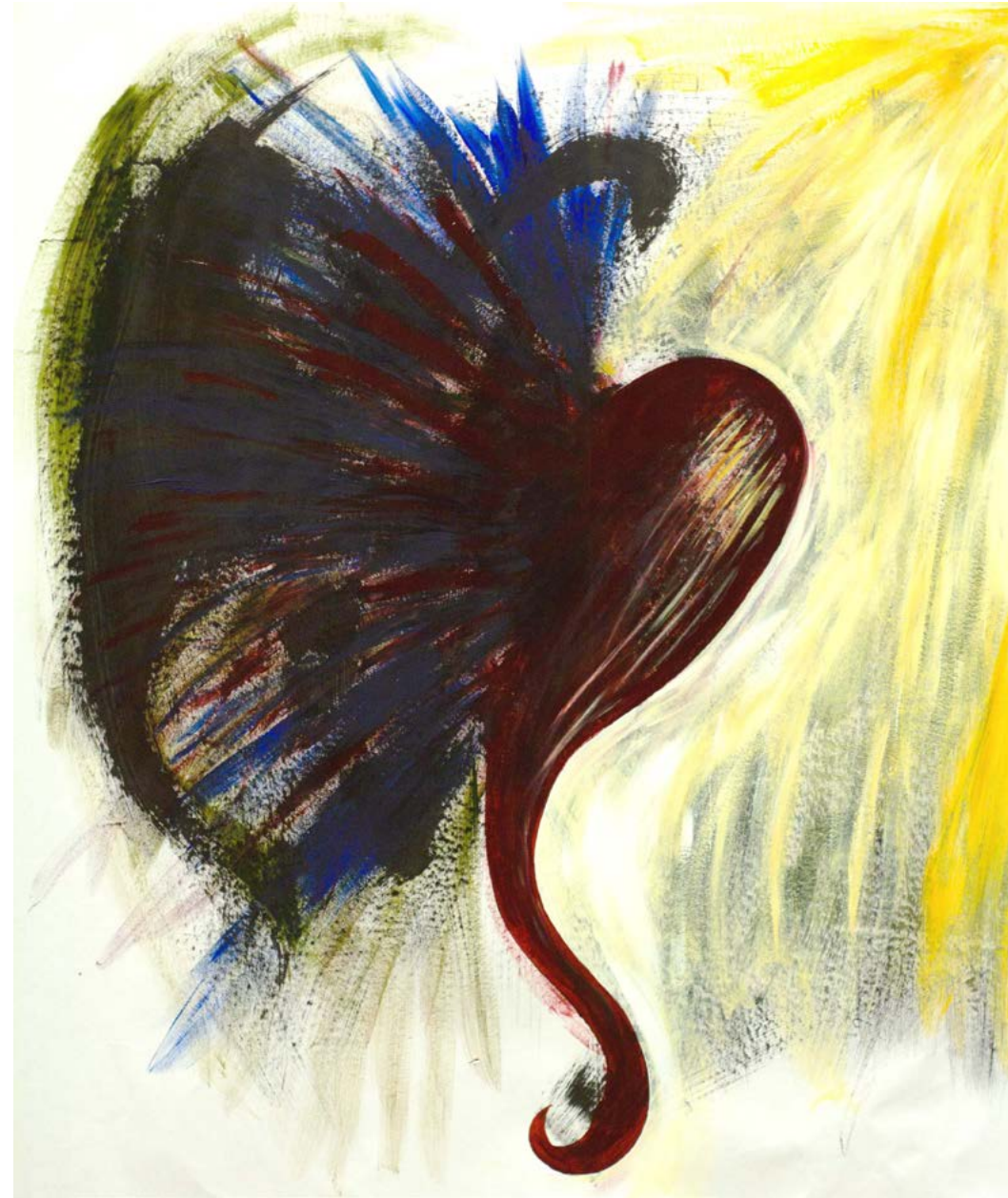
Katie Strader



Thirty Minutes
Parker Hamblin



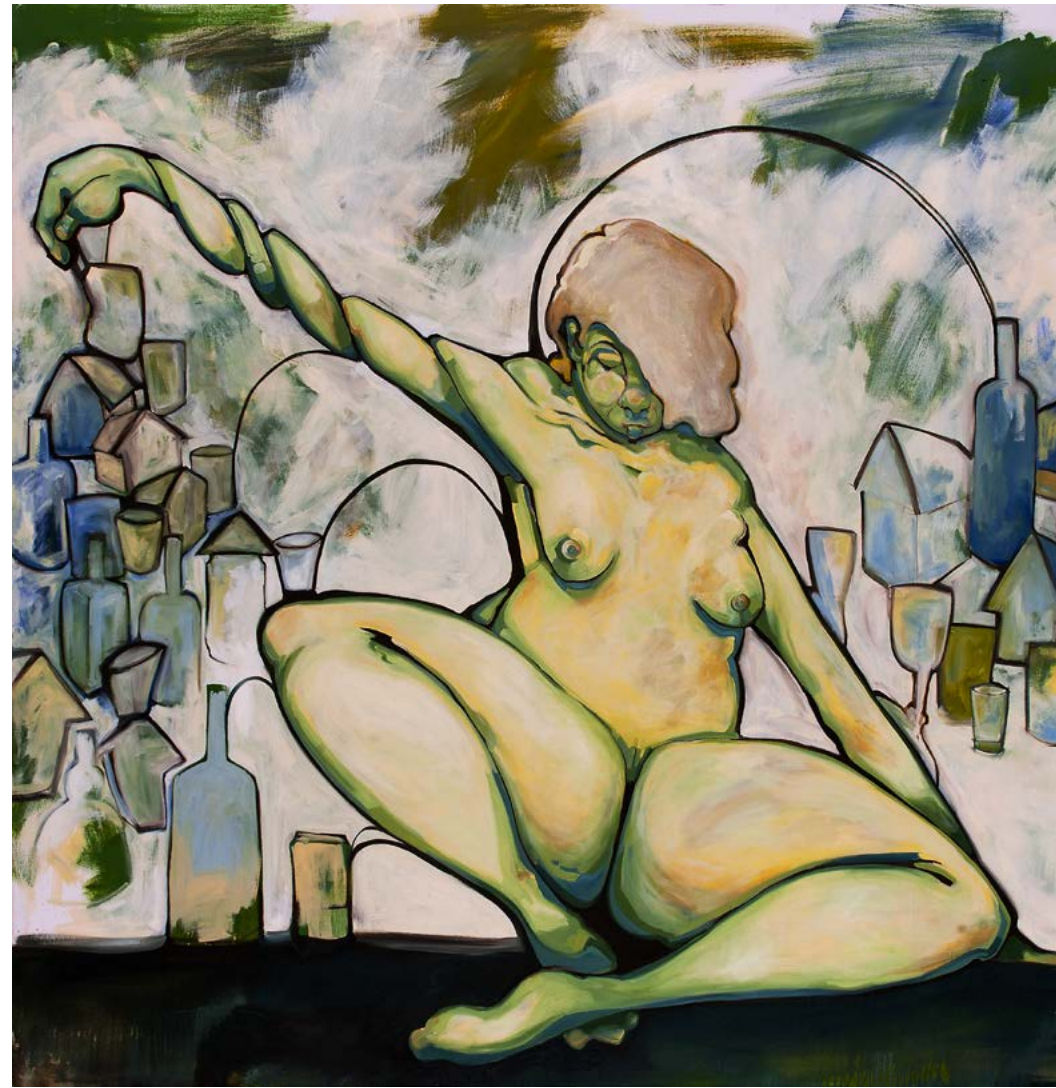
In Dreams
Blakely McKinnie



Letting the Light In
Blakely McKinnie



The Picnic
Camela Corcoran



Untitled
Camela Corcoran



The Beautiful Unknown

Tyler van der Stappen

Your True Nature

Tyler van der Stappen



The Origins of . . .
Tyler van der Stappen

Scarecrows
Tianna Nielsen



Windswept
Melanie Mather



Big Brother's Systems
Mitch Hartle



Focus

Shanna Blunck

Rebirth

Parker Hamblin



FICTION

Introduction

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Zachary Owen
Michelle Paul
Kyle Poppitz
Jacque Rivas
Michelle Stephens
Kelsy Thompson
Holmes

Fiction is the (immaterial) love of my life. I could name stories and fictional characters that have had a far greater impact on my life than most “real” people I know. I daresay the same is true of most of you – and no real-life friends should even feel insulted by you admitting it. Good fiction is as vital to our emotional and intellectual lives as anything I’m aware of on this earth.

As I’m sure anyone who submitted fiction this year can attest, the drive to create stories can be a burden if you’re doing it right. All of you who submitted put out a piece of yourselves—multiple pieces, depending on your number of stories and characters—for scrutiny by others. I’ve rarely felt we had such an abundance of interesting fiction pieces as I saw this year, and some of the pieces we had to let go for reasons of compromise and practicality were among our highest scorers.

To our writers, both accepted and declined, please keep writing fiction, because there is no feeling quite like that of molding authentic characters and paving their paths. To our readers—don’t you skip a page in this section! Once again, we’ve been lucky enough to get a diverse lineup of some of the best fiction Weber writers have to offer, and it’s our privilege to be among the earliest readers in their careers.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Chelsea Maki

Consciousness feels like shaking an old rug: the swift crack rolls steadily down my eyelids and coherency flutters around my brain like specks of dust. In the darkness of a place I did not know, my eyes trace the fuzzy outline of a man’s collarbone. As some of the dust settles into the folds of my brain, I remember: *I am home. We’re home, together.* Then: *He is here with me and I love him.*

I listen to the stillness of our bedroom and wait for the sweet lull of his breathing to guide me back to sleep. I listen and wait, but the sound does not fall on my ears. A bite of panic nips at my chest. My brain fumbles and presents me with two conclusions: He isn’t breathing because he’s dead or he’s an incredibly quiet breather.

With both options in mind, I roll over and will my eyes to detect the rise and fall of his chest. He is sleeping on his side, his back to me. I become a smaller mirror of the crescent shape of his body. In the soft pitch of the night, I fail to see any movement. The panic rises and bites harder at my heart. It gnaws at me and impatiently beckons me to act: to thrash around or scream or punch him in the shoulder and beg him to say something so I know he’s alive. My brain snaps back and reminds me of the second possibility: he could be alive still. Like an anchor, that notion pulls heavily on my panic and quells the intensity.

With all of that in mind, I gently lift my arm and wrap it around his torso. The bend in my elbow curves around his waist and leaves my hand on the meat of chest. I’m careful not to display my remaining panic: after all, he could still be perfectly alive. I feel the side of his chest lift my arm, slightly, and the panic flees from my chest.

My hand wanders down to his belly and deep, pulsing breaths rise and fall to kiss my palm. I sigh deeply and nestle my chin into the nape of his neck. When the morning comes, I will press my mouth on his cheek and thank him for being alive.

Fenrir

Karly Nyman

I am tethered in Hell. It is as dark as pitch and the air is rank, my heavy iron fetters scraping my wrists, neck, and ankles raw. My blood drips hot and thick down the metal links and onto the rough stone floor. I am alone, and I have been for a very long time, but I am always accompanied by my hate—a vicious, coiling rage that crawls around inside me, poisoning and igniting.

I did nothing to deserve this torment.

I want to burn. I want to destroy.

My muscles tremble with the strain as I throw myself against the blood-encrusted chains that imprison me. They are strong, but I am stronger. My hate is stronger. I will be free; I have to be free.

Why am I so angry? Who is the target of my hate? I do not know—all I know is this underground, and the ever-present hunger.

I find my voice for the first time in what feels like years. “Release me.” It is part growl and part sob. I am drowning in despair and helpless rage.

“Release me.”

I am so hungry—starving, consuming myself. There is a burning in my chest. My heart is a smoldering coal inside my ribcage and my voice rises to a scream that shakes the earthen walls around me. I must be free. The truth of it, the need for it, thunders through my head like an agonizing avalanche. I have to be free and somebody has to die.

I have to be free, free, free. Somebody has to die, die, die.

It’s as simple as that. Nothing else exists. Death has sent out a warrant for a very specific soul and I must be the one who delivers the prize. To do that, I have to *get out*.

“Release me!”

I pull against my bonds. My skin tears and new blood flows. In my blind, tormented rage, striving to part the chains from the walls, I suddenly am aware that, for the first time in ages, I am not alone. I cannot see in the blackness, but I can hear and smell.

I cease my fighting and turned blindly toward the sound of the new heartbeat and the scent of living flesh. “Who are you?”

“You know me.” The reply is soothing, the man’s voice as calm as tranquil waters. “And I know you, my Fenrir.”

I have never heard that word before, but I feel it settle in my bones. It is a name, and a truth. I am confused. “You do not know me—I am not Fenrir. That is not my name.”

A chuckle from the void. “Then what shall I call you? What is your name?”

I cannot answer him. I cannot remember my name. In my mind, I can see smiling faces calling me, but there are no sounds. Who are they? My family? I think that I know them—maybe even love them. But this darkness has poisoned me and I do not remember.

Despair rises in me. I don’t know who I am. I don’t know anymore. I find myself beseeching my unseen companion. “Who am I? Please, I must know. Help me. I have to get out.”

A light. A soft green glow. I have not seen light in a long time—it hurts my eyes, but I cannot look away, mesmerized by the beauty. In its center, a man. Pale of skin and dark of hair. His face is handsome, cold, and composed. Green eyes, deep and brooding, sparkling like vicious fire, bore into me. He is frightening in the way an oncoming winter storm is frightening. But his smile is gentle.

He rests his hand on my shoulder. “You are many things: end and beginning, death and life, son and daughter.”

I lean toward him. His touch comforts me, banishes my fears, like warmth spreading across my skin. “Who am I?”

“You are Hunger.”

He is right—I am being consumed, cold teeth gnawing at my insides. “I have starved for too long.”

“You are Hatred.”

Flames climb up my throat, shoot through my veins, infuse my bones, and fill my eyes. I am nothing but rage. I crave slaughter so badly that I shake. “I burn.”

The man seems to sense my anguish, for he takes me in his arms and strokes my hair, my face, my back. “We have been greatly wronged, my child. But your day of revenge draws very near.”

I look at him. “Who are you?”

Another smile softens the man’s face, a tender smile that feels like a secret between us. “I am called the Horned Lord, the Fire King, god of mischief and cunning. I am Loki, by name, for your ears only—because the blood in your veins bears that name, and there ought to be no formalities to separate parent and child.”

My entire frame shakes. No, I know that is not true. I have a father, a family... Don't I? I don't know their names and their faces are vague blurs.

"Do not be plagued with doubts, my Fenrir. I would not lie to my own child. I am a banished god and you are my posterity: a wolf, capable of destruction and vengeance that I can only dream of."

"I am not a wolf."

Loki simply rests his palm on my cheek. At his touch, my mind is filled with horrible images and feelings: chains, as heavy as my own, strapping a naked figure spread-eagle to a massive slab of stone, his back rubbed down to the spine by his near-constant writhing. He is in agony, a wail cutting from his throat. Perching over his head, oil-drop eyes gleaming, a coiled serpent with open mouth is dripping venom on his face. It burns his skin like acid—through flesh, through bone, and yet he will not die.

It is a nightmare a thousand times worse than what I have been enduring. His pain makes me cringe.

"That was me. I was chained to that rock and left to suffer by those I most cared for." Loki's voice is soft.

A new image. Armored men attacking a cradle, walking over a still body on the floor, their weapons raised. Fear courses through me, and grief. I know what I am seeing—the woman on the floor is dead, struck down for interfering, her blood pooling on the floor, soaking into her black hair. Her children, helpless babies, are going to be killed.

Loki's children. I am one of them. A whimpering black wolfcub.

My head flies back and I am howling, the chains restraining me shrieking in protest of my sudden onslaught. My brother and sister, taken. My mother, killed as she tried to protect me. My father, tortured underground. Me, chained like an animal and burning—starving—hating.

What did we do to deserve to be punished so?

Who is to blame? I will destroy them and all they hold dear.

"I am Hunger, I am Hatred. Who is responsible for our sorrow? Name him and he dies." My voice is feral, the thick bitterness of rage filling my mouth like tar.

Loki tenderly brushes my cheek again, eyes glowing with affection and approval. "The one you seek is King Kill himself, the one-eyed Corpse Lord: Odin Allfather."

I will kill him. Consume him.

I growl low in my throat. Loki is right—I *am a wolf*. Odin was clever to chain me up down in this breathless darkness like an animal—I *am an animal*. He would be wise to fear me—I *am his death*.

The child of Loki.

"Father?"

"Yes."

"What is my name?"

Loki bares his teeth at me in a vicious grin. He is not far from wolf himself. "You are Fenrir Lokison, Fenrir Lokidottir. And Odin trembles at the sound of your howl."

I am Fenrir, the wolf who will eat the heart of the Corpse Lord.

I lower my head, burning with rage but so very weak. Hunger courses through me in waves of agony. As if sensing my need, Loki presses his fingers to my mouth and permits me to bite him with teeth that are sharper than I remember. His blood fills my mouth and I grow stronger by the swallow. Soon I will shatter my chains and begin my hunt—and nothing can stop me. Of this I am certain. Mere metal cannot stop a tide, cannot stop a wildfire, cannot stop a hurricane—cannot stop me.

I am stronger.

"Drink, my child, and grow in rage and size. You will take our revenge. Ragnarok lives in you."

I snarl, blood coursing down my chin and neck to mat in the thick fur around my neck. I have not noticed it before, just as I did not notice my clawed hands and my mouth full of fangs.

"Father, release me."

Loki's glowing green eyes disappear into the darkness, but I am no longer afraid—all that remains is the rage and the hunger and the need to be free. My father's voice echoes in my ears one last time. "You are released."

Buried deep within the earth, hidden away like a nightmare, I throw back my head and howl.

Fuck Those Glittered Thorns

Michaela Funtanilla

All the girls were pretty. More or less. Their bodies toned, their legs minted. . .

Fuck. And some suspect I'm a homosexual! Well let them think what they want. Like all straight men in this business know, we're just here for the show.

Truth is, after the first few bikini walks, they all start to blend together—the subtle, but evident jump in their step, their elbows so perfectly angled at the hips, their hair toss, and their virginity smiles. Those are the ones that amuse me the most, those taunting teeth so pearly white, are so seemingly convincing that behind them does not rest a tongue that licks and sucks and yelps. “What a clean mouth?” Someone might say. And in return, “What a beautiful girl?” Ha.

They say they're in it for the scholarship. And some (bless their hearts) have truly fooled themselves into thinking that this means something. But sweetheart, who are you kidding? You're here because you're pretty, do you happen to be smart too, sure, but that doesn't make your bikini look any better.

A brunette in a pink one piece struts by the judges' table, a pretty girl—more or less, and throws me a wink. A poor chump like me, thirty (looking more like forty) and balding, is hard to picture with any woman above a four. But I tell you something, that girl, that girl has a dirty mouth. And so do five others. Not sure which ones exactly but I'm sure they'll turn up with their cheeky grins.

(A blonde with an abnormally wide smile passes by. My eyes shift back to my score sheet when I realize I'm not “familiar” with her.)

Ironically, or more like conveniently, these girls think I'm easy—so desperate for a pretty girl's attention. That if I were to get it, I'd be willing to do anything, like raise their scores by some ungodly number. You see they think that they're the first and only girl who's ever thought of fucking the poorest looking chap on the judges' table rather than the GQ boy to my left. Don't get me wrong; I'm sure he's played with a couple of the contestants. Problem with Mister

Gorgeous is that he's either a sucker for love or he gets greedy. What happens when you throw a ridiculously good-looking guy in a herd of competing good-looking girls? Watch the Bachelor; it's a mess of heat, tears and jealousy. Point is: he's going to get caught. My advantage: What girl in her right mind would admit to having sexual relations with me? (Two more blondes pass by.)

Does the sex (which is, for the most part strictly un-vaginal, those petty bitches) affect my scoring? Of course not, I am a professional after all. Though sometimes, I amuse myself with ranking their sexual performance.

A woman with dark hair, dark eyes, and a small smile walks towards us with slight freckles and real lashes. She is beautiful. Me and two other judges agree, that this one is different. And I predict She will win.

As I walk the stage to crown Her the music swells inside me. She is holding Her roses, She is nodding, and waving, and Her eyes are tearing, but Her lips are sealed with that small smile (I start to wonder if it is a smile?) She looks at me and She reminds me of a deer or a small child and slightly shakes Her head. But I don't understand Her negative gesture and in confusion, ignore it completely.

Panda Erotica

Kyle Poppitz

“When I grow up, I want to be a fireman,” or “One day, I’ll be a doctor, just like Mommy!” Yeah, dreams come true. Me? I loved animals, so for my future, it was the San Diego Zoo or nothing. I guess in the long run, collecting sperm from an endangered species was about as noble a profession as any. Some men pulled cats out of trees, and families out of burning houses. I masturbated a panda. Professionally.

There had to be something said about the convictions for the *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*. These rare bears could proudly say “I will not have sex with you if you were the last bear on the Earth.” I liked to imagine that in a similar situation, the last woman capable of breeding would begin to look at me with a gaze of desperation and finally say, “I give up.” Pandas truly were nature’s quitter.

It wasn’t the easiest job to explain to the uninitiated. I would tell them I work in animal preservation. “Ric,” they would say, “do you stop poachers? Do you go on Safari?” Everyone wanted the sexy jobs, the kinds of jobs where you kick in doors and shoot people in the face. Naturally, it was assumed I wanted that, too. Constantly I would have to admit that I, Ric Time, am the man who commits carnal knowledge for a creature too lazy to have sex the way nature intended. People would laugh at me when I explained my job. Never in my life did I expect to be the mail carrier handling the fragile package of a bear, nor did anyone assume this was a job that even existed. Thanks to the efforts of others and myself, the species had a fighting chance for survival.

The reproductive system of a panda in captivity diminishes, so artificial insemination is the only factor for population retention/growth. It doesn’t help that in the wild, the female is only fertile three times a year, and they’re hunted for being exotic. It’s through human intervention they are still even on the map, which was the irony of ironies as humans were also the leading cause for their endangerment.

I put on my blue rubber gloves and entered the animal hospital. A large, unconscious male panda named Bing Mei was sedated and laying

on the table, his body sprawled open, exposing his belly and other more private bits. The 220 pound bear breathed heavily under sedation. My colleague, Sam, was moving the tufts of fur around Bing Mei’s rectum. “Ric, the probe,” Sam, said to me. From the tray, I handed him the electroejaculator, a thin tube we were going to insert into the bear’s anus to stimulate the reproductive tract. Several shocks and we would have a full collection to deliver to a Zoo in Germany.

Sam fired the electroejaculator until we triggered Bing Mei’s . . . response. Quickly, we collected a sample of instant father and stored it in a shining silver cylinder, prepping it for cryogenic storing. I tightened the canister, and handed it off to Carolynn, a fresh-faced intern going into the field of animal medicine. A part of me hoped Bing Mei had a good dream.

After we shipped the vessel to the Zoo in Germany, Sam, myself, and others from the park met after work. It was important to celebrate the small victories like this one. For most of us, it was the dream coming true: we had their future in our hands, and we delivered hope. Except, the dream was a wet dream, and I held a container as Bing Mei delivered his donation for all *Ailuropoda melanoleuca* across the world.

We drank, laughed, and joked about experiences shared in the world of animal preservation. I shared a story about the time we had to collect the remaining fluids from a deceased adult orangutan, and how we overstimulated the necrotic nerves. Sam was displeased with this story, as half of it ended up on his scrubs. It was a fun night.

The night went on, and eventually our coworkers went home, then it was just Sam and I at the bar, drinking and commiserating. We had gone from cheerful drunks to the sad kind. We had been sharing several pitchers with the group, and one or two pitchers between ourselves. The empty mugs from all of us littered the table. The joy that was being a part of the circle had faded away when our coworkers went home. Sam and I sat at the table, eating bar food in silence.

The bar was busy as people laughed, took pictures, and were being overly affectionate with one another. It was like a sea of activity surrounded our island of solitude. We nursed the remainders of our drinks.

“We really need to get out more,” I said to Sam.

Sam sipped his beer and looked at the other people around us. Sam’s eyes were fixated on one particularly happy couple in the corner, laughing and holding hands. I saw a deep-seated resentment churn inside Sam as he looked at the woman. Recognition registered on his face. She could have been someone he went to school with, or she could have been a woman of his dreams. He never spoke much since his divorce. I saw his fist crumple a napkin on the table, his knuckles

whitening as he tightened his grasp. “We should be happy doing what we’re doing,” he said in a pathetic whimper.

“I just saw you shock the g-spot of a bear.”

Sam laughed. His grip on the napkin released. Sam shook his head and put the beer up to his lips. He took another sip, and mumbled, “Most action either of us has had in a while, isn’t it?”

We both continued to sit there in our silence as the rest of the people partied on. They would walk past us, occasionally bump into our table, and look startled when they saw us sitting there. It was clear we once belonged to a group with all the empty mugs and pitchers left on the table, but now we were the ones stranded from the herd. The bad leaves a tree tries to shed. They would back away and continue living, while Sam and I sat there and continued to sulk.

I stared intently in my drink. With a barely audible murmur, I asked, “Are we going extinct?”

Sam was thinking about that question. It was hard enough for us to think clearly with the sounds of Alice Cooper playing on the jukebox, let alone with all the alcohol we had consumed. Sam sat there and I could see him muse in the amber brew resting at the bottom of his mug. With a sigh of reluctance, I mentioned how I felt like I’d been so focused on work that I’d let life pass me by. It was hard to explain, but I told him how I’d been so fixated on what I’d do that I never thought about who I’d become. Sam kept drinking his beer. “There’s Carolynn.”

I shook my head. “Too cute. Too motivated. Girls like her find guys in business that treat them like shit.”

“Doesn’t hurt to ask.”

But it did.

We continued to stew in our thoughts. Every time one of us felt like we had something to say, the confidence inside withered away and we’d shrink back down in our seats. I contemplated another pitcher, even if I knew I couldn’t drink anymore. I just wanted something to numb the fears. As I finished my beer, Sam spoke up. “I’ve thought about online dating.” A small smile beamed from his face. It was the first time that night I actually saw a sliver of hope from him. “There’s always a way to meet people, you know.”

I stood up, grabbing my things off the table. “Yeah,” I agreed, “through artificial means.”

Remembering the Dream

Aubryn Richardson

Naru turned the final corner, his dark eyes searching for her black body among the jizo statue’s ornamented figure. The wood shutters to the shrine were open and a few offerings had been neatly placed before the deity: a knitted pair of infant’s shoes, a red bib, beans, and a cat bell. Someone’s child probably passed away, Naru thought as his throat tightened. He shifted the cat carrier from his right hand to his left. He had left a similar offering on the day he first met Yume.

Several years had passed since then, but the day was engraved into his memory. It was June; tsuyu had only just begun, so the weather was rainy and humid. All of the shops and stands were closed, even the usually lively yakisoba stand in front of the station. Naru knew this because he usually avoided eye contact to keep from feeling guilty about not buying anything, and yet on that day the owners’ voices never boomed, enticing people to try their hot noodles.

His feet had carried him, mind lagging behind, items in hand that he could offer the deity in exchange for protection and health for his sister. She was only two years old, but had fallen ill with something, something he didn’t know about, something that scared him. Growing up he always wanted someone who would smile at him despite circumstances, to play and laugh with when it rained and to share his dreams with, even if she wouldn’t understand them. Please don’t let me lose that smile, he had prayed in his heart. When he reached the shrine and laid out his gifts, he realized the jizo was not alone. A black kitten no larger than the statue’s head had taken refuge in the shrine, sneezing, shivering, unable to find warmth.

His sister passed away the next day, but he had made a friend. His prayer hadn’t gone unheard.

He went to see Yume every day without fail after that. His family’s house was near the shrine where they met, and after school he would cut through the narrow gaps between the neighborhood buildings just to have a few extra minutes with her. Her soft fur had always comforted

him, and her golden eyes never judged. Naru rarely spoke and Yume only softly meowed, but like his sister they never needed words to communicate. He would sit with his back against the shrine, she would find her way into his lap, and they would remain like that until it was almost curfew. When it was time to part, he always looked back. At home his eyes only ever traced the floor, navigating the cans of Asahi beer. He would stop by their household altar and kneel, light a candle, pray before his sister's photograph, then shut himself in his room until school the next morning. His father rarely left the couch, and his mother worked all night as a cashier at the konbini down the street, using the same welcoming tone to ring out through the streets: *irrashaimase!*

After Naru had passed his high school entrance exams, he began doing part-time work around the neighborhood. The pay wasn't high, but it was enough. He told himself every day that he would leave the city behind, that things would work so long as he and Yume were together. Sometimes he would bring her to work and she would bring him mice, but usually he visited her after the day's job was finished and they'd sit together until the sun went down. Naru would stroke her fur and she would purr silently. She often tried to groom him, and he never pushed her away.

Naru set the cat carrier down and peered around the back of the shrine. Awareness of the money and blue shinkansen ticket to Tokyo in his pocket soon disappeared as he realized Yume was nowhere to be found. He looked up at the shrine's roof hoping to see her. No luck. His backpack began to feel heavier every minute that passed. After searching the streets, checking nearby shops and alleys, he returned to the shrine. Naru noticed the cat bell among the offerings. He carefully picked it up between two fingers as his stomach began to churn. His eyes traveled to the jizo's endless gaze.

I suppose someone could pray for a cat's health as well, he thought. He pressed the bell into his palm, wrapped his fingers around it. It was cold. He didn't know if someone had taken her home, or if perhaps she passed away without his knowing. In his heart he asked the jizo for an answer. The childlike face gazed back at him, and rather than accusing the deity of taking his friend away from him, he felt content. Yume would look at those eyes often and be silent, and he finally understood why. They were captivating, calming, as though the deity were a bridge between life and death. Yume was with him somehow, he felt, and his sister, too.

Naru's fingers grasped what he thought was the ticket to Tokyo, but upon pulling it out of his pocket he realized the paper was thicker, white. He opened it. His choices for university, for his future, were

outlined on the form his counselor had made him fill months before graduation. He had forgotten about them until now, only focusing on his plans to leave for Tokyo with Yume, a new life.

He placed the paper before the deity and pressed his hands together, reciting the jizo's prayer that was written alongside the shrine. Eyes closed, he continued with his own prayer. I don't want protection or health, he spoke quietly, but to remember everything that has happened so that I can move forward. He picked up the cat carrier and headed home alone.

Yume ni naru. It was going to become a dream. A dream that he would never forget. One that would push him forward.

Shift

Kyle Poppitz

Global Catastrophes were his specialty. Walker Johns had already seen the Earth die before his eyes dozens of times.

These were not simulations: these were the real deal and a result from the Spore. Watching the entire human race die was never the goal, but a byproduct of trying to find answers to the problems that were plaguing his Earth. He had to kill everyone as a means to save everyone.

The plan was simple. The execution was logical. If a person could shift from their reality to a neighboring reality, calibrating the shift to adjust for Time was about as easy of a factor as any. He would go to a neighboring reality, this time a place his people called Earth 3679-21b, introduce a catastrophe in the past. After an initial assessment of the reality, he would jump to the equivalence of his modern time and see if the inhabitants were able to cure the problem. Whatever their solution was, he would steal it and bring it to his reality. All the experience with none of the sacrifice. It was ingenious, after all. Johns knew it because he was the one who thought of it.

Walker Johns stepped through the spatial bridge connecting the two Earths. The rift between realities had seized. Time, space, and reality had all been traversed in a matter of seconds. The world looked just like he had seen in the lab reports: 1950's Middle America. Suburban New Mexico, to be precise. No one would suspect anything about him not being native to their time stream, or for that matter, a person from their dimensional reality.

He always felt so Alien every time he visited an Earth. This was identical to his world at one point in time, but a minor detail made them separate. Maybe a girl trying to decide an ice cream flavor sides with chocolate over strawberry. Maybe a soda machine accidentally collects payment for a drink and doesn't deliver. Something small, but the effects reverberate throughout history. The girl tragically finds out she's allergic to strawberries. An entire lineage eradicated from existence. The man, angry he doesn't get his beverage, throws a tantrum, and rocks the machine until it collapses on him. Same effect. In the end, their

decisions and their repercussions were all ancillary to his actions. He was going to kill them all.

He wasn't sorry.

Walker strolled down the boulevard, tipping his hat to the girls in pink skirts that passed him by. He enjoyed the jaunts through the history. People would smile at him. Children would wave. Everyone seemed so genuinely happy to be alive. And why not? The Second World War ended in their favor. Allies won. There was another stream where Hirohito and Hitler were now at odds in Russia. Walker reminded himself that at every given moment, something catastrophic was happening in his world, but not another. There must be billions of barren Earths. Only a handful were his undoing.

Walker carried on, briefcase under his arm. The Spore was tucked neatly under his arm. The Spore was a prized invention: it was amniotic death. Latent energy, ready to be converted into hazardous combinations at the subatomic level. It could be programmed to become an inert mass of helium, or a life-sustaining bowl of dihydrogen monoxide; Walker always programmed it to become chlorofluorocarbons that would weaken the atmosphere.

Cars passed him by. Walker stopped, and gave one final look at the world behind him. "Enjoy your ice creams, your sodas, or what-have-you," he thought to himself. Walker crossed the road and entered a vacant lot. People barely noticed him as he moved through their small New Mexico town.

The brief case opened and Walker assembled the tripod inside the case. There was a thin, silver beam called the Climate Rod, an antennae that would calibrate the sensors to the Spore. There was the Master PADD, a display tablet that gave him complete access to the main unit. Finally, a ball that fit in his fist: the Spore. With a few taps on the Master PADD, the climate rod pierced into the soil.

Walker tossed the ball above his head and it gently floated up like a chrome weather balloon. Walker watched as the sphere hummed back and forth, sensors scanning and collecting data. The sphere, the housing unit of the Spore, remained idle for a couple of seconds. Walker knew it was collating data on weather patterns, temperature, and relation between the planet and the sun. Once it had enough cataloged, it would disappear. The matter inside would modify into the CFCs necessary to begin the process of slowly destroying a portion of the ozone, burn a hole in the sky, and then go dormant until he collected it decades later.

The sphere travelled away. Walker dialed in the coordinates to return to this Earth at a time equivalent to his own. He hoped his actions didn't kill too many people this time. Hopefully a council of

scientists could find a solution. Maybe this time he would return home with an answer.

The rift enveloped Walker. Bright spirals of light warped around him. At an accelerated clip, the events of the world unfolded around him. The small town quickly became abandoned. Dust destroyed everything. Whatever vegetation there was had disappeared. The sky became less blue. He already knew the outcome: everyone had died. Walker stopped paying attention to his surroundings. Time decelerated back to normalcy. The Master PADD read the world was inhospitable. It was time to return home, empty-handed again.

Walker drove home from work. Tomorrow, another reality was set for testing. Preliminary scans showed that they had successfully averted Global Conflict, and were a much more organized Federation of Governments. Their chances of cooperation were higher. Their chances of finding an answer were more likely than that of Earth 3679-21b. Earth 38379-49g sounded promising. After all, their past was model. He found the Present to be envious. Their future looked bright.

Walker pulled up to his home. His conscience was light, even after killing an additional 2.73 billion people. His total was in the trillions now, and it was not likely to stop any time soon. “It is all in the name of a better future,” he justified to himself. Walker stepped out of his car and took in a breath. The world was still the same as he left it. Maybe tomorrow would be the day. He remained hopeful.

Behind him, a bright light emerged down the street. Walker stared intently at the light. It was a rift. Who would be rifting in his neighborhood? That science was buried deep from the public eye. As far as the world was concerned, humanity was a singular entity and incapable of breaking the barriers he did on a daily basis.

Walker saw himself step out, except it wasn't him. The man looked lighter in the face, and his clothing was different colors. Walker started to approach his doppelganger. The uniform became visible. It had different patches sewn into it. The textile work was not his regular fashion. Why was this person even in a uniform? Walker always travelled in disguise. This other version. . . had a Spore unit in his hands.

Walker ran towards his duplicate self. The other Walker released a chrome ball into the atmosphere, and in a blinding moment of bright light, disappeared. A spore was active, and there was nothing he could do to stop it.

Theories of Relativity

Catherine Steeneck

A wise man once said that what goes up must come down. But a much wiser man said what comes up must land in the window of the principal's office. Dealing with young teens had always been something Principal Anderson prided herself in, but judging from her sigh and the way she was cupping her face in her hands, she'd had about enough of me. Even Mom looked more depressed than normal. Funds were low in our family, and the large double paned window would cost more than Mom would make after a night's work at the local bar.

“We'd usually ask that you pay now, but I know your situation so I'll just—” Principal Anderson rubbed the back of her neck and sighed, “add it to your tab.”

“How...generous of you,” Mom said in a pained voice, and I frowned a little.

In the car, Mom gripped the steering wheel as if all hell was on our tail and I started to say something, but a glare stopped me. “Just—just don't.” Kinder tones had come out of her mouth, although I strained to remember when—she had been in an eternal bad mood since September. “Listen,” she said as we pulled in the driveway, “your father doesn't need to hear a word about this.”

Mom left the lecture to that, threw the car into park and struggled with the seat belt for a moment before remembering that we were in the '91 Ford Escort, which was made back when automatic seat belts were in fashion. She threw the door open and slammed it behind her. I watched the rust break free and fall outside my window. We used to have a refurbished Mustang, but Dad drove off with Madeline, and so Mom and I were left with Uncle Jared's old car, which smelled of tobacco, beer, and cheap pine air fresheners. Picking at my thumbnail, I wondered what would have happened if I hadn't failed math last year. Mom wouldn't have put up a job ad for a tutor at the university, Madeline wouldn't have found it, Dad wouldn't have found sudden interest in my education, and Madeline wouldn't have clocked in extra hours when Mom and I

weren't home. And we'd still have a bright red Mustang that smelled of leather polish and cinnamon.

Wiping my face with the sleeve of my coat, I opened the door and watched the seatbelt slide forward, nudging it halfway when it got stuck. My friend Stanley had been amazed by the automatic seatbelt when we drove around last week. He knew how to drive and Mom always left the keys by the empty beer on the counter when she walked to Herald's Pub for her graveyard shift. We had planned to take the car again tonight, but I figured I better cancel because everything pointed to Mom calling in sick. Unless she decided to go out with Jack again, but I hoped that she wouldn't. I didn't like Jack—he smelled like tobacco and beer and cheap cologne, just like Mom, and just like me.

With a sigh I headed towards the house, and as I opened the door I wished I was Superman for a moment. X-ray vision would show me what was on the other side of the door. But I wasn't super powerful, I was just me—a thirteen year-old kid with one mom and one dad and a stray cat I sometimes fed. Yeah, at least one thing was certain. Zipper would always be at the back door waiting to be fed.



NONFICTION

Introduction

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In an era that has been coined the “memoir craze”, it comes as no surprise the bulk of submissions for this segment fell into the category of creative nonfiction. As Lee Gutkind, the “godfather” of creative nonfiction, put it, “It’s not just about needing to know more information. . . [It] is a way of talking to other people, feeling like you’re being heard.” Of course, nonfiction is much more than the narrative essay. Metaphor is also pleased to showcase a variety of pieces in this segment, including academic thesis and philosophical prose.

We on the nonfiction staff are grateful to those who have submitted to Metaphor and applaud your willingness to share your views, opinions, and personal experiences with us. We feel privileged to work with a group of exceptional writers and have learned much through the creative process of putting this journal together. We are grateful to be a part of you being heard.

Regrets

Jenny Ence

The text message comes on a Sunday afternoon, while you’re sitting on the couch next to your mother. You’re flipping through a book, and she’s reading the newspaper, and you’re enjoying the comfortable silence so much that the trilling of your cell phone irritates you. You decide to ignore it for a few minutes longer, at least until you finish the chapter. It can’t be anything too important, not on a Sunday afternoon.

Finally, you flip open your cell phone. The name at the top of the screen belongs to your best friend, and you smile without realizing it. The message, however, is puzzling and short. Have you seen the obituary section of the newspaper?

Without bothering to reply, you snatch the obituaries away from your startled mother and begin flipping through them. You read each name carefully, wondering exactly what you’re looking for. You can’t think of anyone that died recently, and none of these people seem familiar. And then you see it, tucked into the very middle of the page, a name you haven’t spoken in three years.

“Liz,” you whisper, and there’s her school photo, smiling up at you just the same as you remember her. You read the obituary and you feel sick. You had no idea Liz had cancer.

“Jen?” your mom queries, but you aren’t there anymore. You’re sixteen years old again, a stupid kid with no idea of who you are or where you’re going. You’re lost and confused, you’re hurt and you’re scared, and most importantly, you’re wrong.

You met Liz while you were working at an amusement park called Lagoon, your first real job, and damn it, you felt pretty important. It was just a summer job, inconsequential in the grand scheme of things, but you didn’t think so at the time. You had money in your pocket for once, and a few of the managers had taken you under their wing. Your shyness was beginning to wear away at the edges, the way it always does once you get to know people, and you felt like most of your coworkers liked you. The insecurities, however, were still there. You

worked harder than most of the others, and the praise you received from your boss didn't win you any favors from the girls that were criticized. You were liked, but you weren't loved, and you were nervous that you would fall out of favor with the older girls.

And then Liz came along. You went to school with her, and liked her in the vague, fuzzy sort of way you liked most of your classmates. You had the same calculus class, and you knew that she was sarcastic and snappy but generally good-hearted. In another life, you may have been best friends. In this one, you felt pitted against her.

Liz often described herself as odd. You figured that was an apt description. She was just a little different than most of the girls you worked with. She wasn't interested in talking about boys, or make-up, or crazy parties on the weekend. You weren't either, but you kept quiet while Liz denounced those conversations loudly every chance she got. She scribbled the lyrics to songs about death on her backpack, and she was constantly talking about the dark, macabre books she liked to read. She wasn't a great worker, but spent most of her time standing in the corner and staring at the ceiling.

Still, you liked her. She was a nice enough girl, once you got past the bitter mask she put on every morning, and her offbeat sense of humor never failed to make you laugh. You didn't care that she wasn't a great worker, because it was Lagoon and most of the kids you worked with didn't work very hard. You liked Liz for who she was, and for the first few weeks of the summer, you believed that you had the potential to become really good friends.

And then Madison decided she didn't like Liz, out of the blue. Madison was the lead manager, and at twenty-one years old, she was considered to be the coolest person in the park. You were a little afraid of Madison because she was the one calling the shots. If she didn't like you, you didn't get invited to the work parties or dinner after the park closed. You were desperate for her friendship, and for that reason, she offered it to you. Liz, however, didn't care if Madison liked her. Really, that was her only sin, and it would prove to be her downfall.

At the time, you didn't consider Madison's treatment of Liz to be bullying. The word bully never came to mind as you watched Madison change Liz's name to Lazy Liz on the break sheet. It didn't come to mind as she "forgot" to tell Liz you were all going to Chili's after work, or when she made herself a bracelet that proclaimed I HATE LIZ in large block letters. You didn't even blink when Madison told her that nobody wanted to work with her. It made you feel a little sick, but you didn't really consider it bullying. Madison was in charge, you reasoned. It wasn't your place to question her.

You don't know what to wear to the funeral. The last funeral you attended was your great-grandmother's, and you were four. You've never liked skirts or dresses, but your mom tells you that's what you need to wear. In the back of your closet, you find a rumpled black skirt and a navy blue sweater. You aren't sure it matches—fashion has never been your forte—but you figure nobody will be looking at you too closely. Today, after all, is not about you.

You have the obituary memorized by now, but you still pull it out of your wallet as you wait for your best friend, Annie, to pick you up. Tears prick at your eyes as you read the familiar words. Liz was studying genetics at Brigham Young University. Liz was a talented musician. Liz is survived by her mother, father, sister, brothers, and fiancé. That one always gets you. Someone had wanted to marry her, had proposed and planned for a wedding that Liz would never make it to. You can't imagine what it would be like to love someone so deeply and then lose them.

You haven't spoken a word since you found out about her death. Honestly, you've been pretty lost in your own head. It's not a pretty place to be lost in, not these days. You've always been a sensitive kid. You've always felt things too deeply. You haven't seen Liz in years, yet you feel as though a part of you died right along with her.

A car horn blares from your driveway. You run a hand through your perpetually unkempt hair and sigh heavily. You would rather not go with your friend; you would rather go through this without her. She just keeps saying how much she loved Liz, how close they were, and how much she misses her. It kills you because you know it's a lie, and it kills you because you wish that you were able to deceive yourself the way Annie is able to.

"Liz is so creepy," Madison told you as she watched you mop. Lagoon was closed for the night. You two were the only ones left in the photography studio, cleaning up for the end of the night. Well, you were cleaning, anyway. Madison was perched on the counter, tapping away on her phone.

You didn't really respond. You didn't think Liz was creepy. Different, maybe, but not creepy. All you wanted to do was go home, but Madison seemed intent on having this conversation.

"I mean, she just stands in the corner and stares at all of us. She's so weird, you know? I can't believe she hasn't been fired yet. I wish she would just realize that all of us hate her and find another job. She's completely ridiculous, thinking that any of us could ever be her friend," Madison laughed.

You thought that was a pretty lousy thing to say, especially since Liz wasn't there to defend herself. You weren't crazy about the way girls liked to talk behind each other's backs. As a bit of a loner, you often wondered what they said about you. If it was anyone else standing in front of you, you might have stood up for Liz, who you still considered a friend.

But it was Madison, who was your manager. Madison, who everyone admired. Madison, who could be the difference between being liked and being despised by all of the other employees. So you didn't stand up for your friend. You didn't even make fun of her. No, you did something much worse. You stayed silent.

The funeral is beautiful, and it makes you cry from beginning to end. Annie tries to hold your hand, but you shake it off. You don't want comfort. You want to feel the grief washing over you. You make yourself listen to every word her siblings speak, the stories they tell about the sister that was taken from them too soon. You listen to her fiancé, who seems to be in a state of shock. The way he speaks about loving Liz shatters your heart as it beats in your chest.

You have to gather your courage to speak to Liz's mother after the funeral. You know exactly what Liz's time at Lagoon was like. You know that it was hell, plain and simple. You half-expect her to ask you to leave immediately. But you know that she just lost her daughter, and you're not going to sneak out just because you're uncomfortable. Today is not about you.

"I'm Jen," you choke out when you finally reach her. She looks so much like Liz that your heart aches. Her eyes are surprisingly dry, but you can see the agony behind them. Tears are streaming down your own face, and you're ashamed of yourself for not being able to control yourself in front of Liz's mother. "I, um, worked with Liz at Lagoon."

She immediately takes your hands into hers. "Liz had a good time working there," she says, and you both know it's a lie but you don't say so. "Thank you so much for coming. It would mean a lot to her."

"Liz was my friend," you tell her, and the words hurt as they come out, as if they've been trapped inside of you for so long that your body doesn't know what to do without them. "I liked her a lot. She was a special girl. I'm so sorry for your loss."

This time, you both know it's the truth, and Liz's mom presses a kiss to your hand. For the first time in a long time, you feel like you've been honest.

But as you walk by the casket on your way out, you realize that the one person who truly deserved your honesty is no longer there to receive it.

Silence became your new best friend after Madison started her campaign against Liz. You weren't comfortable joining in the teasing, which started out behind her back and was soon brought out into the open, but you never lifted a finger to stop it. You didn't say a word on Liz's behalf, telling yourself once again that it wasn't your problem. Madison was your boss. You couldn't tell her what to do.

So as much as it bothered you to see Liz being teased or openly mocked not only by Madison but by your best friend, Annie, you kept your mouth shut. You became a master of rationalization. You didn't say anything, so you weren't guilty. You couldn't help what other people said. If you spoke up, you would become a target, as well, and what was the point of that?

Things came to a head on a slow Wednesday night. You were standing by the cash register, talking to Madison, when Liz walked up.

"Hey, Jen," she said. "Have you gotten your school schedule yet? I—"

"Go away, Liz. Nobody likes you," Madison interjected. The words were spoken with such force, such vitriol, that Liz physically recoiled. The look in her eyes would haunt you for the rest of your life. It wasn't the hurt that stuck with you, or the sadness. It was the resignation, the acceptance, that struck you deeply. You wanted to say something to defend Liz. You wanted to assure her that you, in fact, liked her.

But you didn't. You just hung your head, cheeks burning with shame. And Liz walked away.

You're different after the funeral. You hate yourself for a long time, even though everyone keeps telling you that you did nothing wrong. You know better, though. Your silence was as great a weapon against Liz as Madison's cruel words were. You were worse than a bully. You were a bystander, and you did nothing to help your friend.

So you hate yourself. You keep Liz's obituary in your wallet to remind yourself that everyone is fighting something, and you can either be their ally or you can be their enemy. You think about her constantly. You wish you had taken the time to talk to her. You wish you had apologized. You brutalize yourself emotionally because you know that now, you'll never get the chance to make things right.

You also think a lot about regrets. You decide that you don't buy into the idea of living life without regrets. You don't want to not regret your decision to let Madison hurt Liz. You savor the regret because you need to feel bad. You need to let it burn at your chest so you won't make the same mistake again. Maybe other people are perfect enough that

they don't do anything worth regretting. But you aren't perfect, and you never will be. By regretting your silence, you figure you at least have a heart.

After a while, you begin to forgive yourself. You put a lot of flowers on Liz's grave, and you talk to her headstone out loud like a crazy person. You apologize, mostly. You tell her that you should have been the kind of friend she deserved. You tell her that you miss her, and you mean it. You admit your faults, and you don't hide your tears. Sometimes, you feel like you're talking to yourself. Other times, you feel like she's standing in front of you.

You know you won't ever feel like you've atoned for your mistakes. You can't fix what you did. All you can do is move forward and fight like hell to not repeat the past. You fight like hell against who you used to be so you can become the person you want to be. You fight like hell for Liz, and you fight like hell for yourself.

And after a while, you know for sure that it's a battle worth fighting.

Religion Adapting Tradition to Modern Society

Lindsay Weber

According to NPR's Morning Edition on "Losing Our Religion: The Growth Of The 'Nones,'" David Green interviews Robert Putnam and Greg Smith on a recent study on the growth of the 'religiously unaffiliated' group discovered by the Pew Research Center. Robert Putnam is a professor at Harvard as well as author of "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital," and Greg Smith is a senior researcher at Pew Research Center. In this edition, Greg Smith reports that of all demographic areas, those who are unaffiliated with a religion have seen the most growth. One-fifth of American adults and one-third of Americans under age 30 are not affiliated with any religion and are not looking to be, and for the first time in history there are more religiously unaffiliated youth than previous generations. This unaffiliated group (under the age of 30) is referred to as the "nones" because when they are asked which group they are most associated with, their response is "none" (Putnam and Smith).

Both Putnam and Smith believe that there are many reasons for the increase in the 'nones'; Smith believes that this is because of the rise in secularization. Professor Putnam argues that secularization may be part of this rise in religiously unaffiliated youth, but that it is only a small part. Putnam claims that there are more important factors at play in this recent discovery. He reports that the younger generation is pushing away from community institutions. In fact, today's youth are distancing themselves from institutions in general. Putnam feels that this same pattern is being reflected into politics. An example of this is the increase of youth claiming independence rather than the Republican or Democratic Party. In short, this decline of community affiliation is happening in all of modern society's major institutions (Putnam and Smith).

Indeed change is upon us and the goal of this essay is to examine a very important topic that is at the core of human community. In essence, the religious tradition or prescription is the fundamental element that has been taken into question. The most important

question is whether or not the interpretations of Holy Scriptures are still relevant. By extension, tradition means elements of a culture that have been passed down from generation to generation. By definition prescription means official rules, laws, or directions. This essay will present opinions of those who believe their religious prescriptions are no longer relevant and must change. Similarly, some argue that religion has always been adapting its traditions to modern society. On the other hand, some believe if religion changes its traditions then it becomes irrelevant. In addition, this essay will examine religious leaders who are taking the steps they deem necessary for their religion's survival.

One such voice is that of Pope Francis: he advocates that Catholicism must adapt to modern society in order to flourish. In the article "A Big Heart Open to God," Antonio Spadaro interviews Pope Francis for *America Magazine*. During the interview Pope Francis states that the Catholic Church must alter its religious prescriptions in order for the future of The Church to survive. However, Pope Francis acknowledges that for effective changes to be made one must move at a slower pace. This is in part because Pope Francis feels hasty decisions lead to poor results.

Pope Francis believes The Church needs to focus on healing the wounds of its faithful followers and to achieve this The Church must become closer to its people. Furthermore, he claims that Catholic ministers have either been too lenient or too strict in dealing with people of their faith, and that neither of these ministers have treated their people with compassion. In addition, Pope Francis urges Catholic ministers to see the people of their congregation through all their individual trials and tribulations. During this interview he goes even further by stating that he is no one to judge those who have chosen lifestyles previously persecuted by The Church. An example of this is The Church's history of excommunicating gays and lesbians, which has previously been seen as necessary under the Sixth Commandment. Pope Francis firmly states that all are welcome in search for the Supreme Being (Spadaro).

Indeed, the statements Pope Francis has made in this interview are a reflection of the times. The voice one can hear among these words or phrases he has chosen is that of a bold assertiveness as well as a sense of urgency. Pope Francis seems to highlight this when he states that one has ". . . to find a new balance; otherwise even the moral edifice of the church is likely to fall like a house of cards, losing the freshness and fragrance of the Gospel. The proposal of the Gospel must be more simple, profound, radiant" (Spadaro). His boldness can be found among his proposal of the Gospel reformation and his sense of urgency when referring to the major part of the Church as 'a house of cards.'

The use of tradition and memories of the past can give strength and motivation in the ever-changing present. In fact, those who spend their time trying to uncover a non-existing past are stubbornly creating a vision only possible in their mind (Spadaro). Furthermore, he believes that with each passing generation comes new growth and truth revealed, thus deepening the people's conscience. Pope Francis feels that reaching new generations of people requires the change of tradition. Moreover, he claims that The Church must develop a deeper understanding of the people in the present so that Catholicism's prescriptions stay relevant and effective. In sum, Pope Francis believes that the ancient ways of the Catholic Church and its 'small-minded' rules are no longer relevant (Spadaro).

A similar perspective to that of Pope Francis is Dr. Georges B. Dreyfus of Williams College, he claims that the Dalai Lama is maintaining traditional prescriptions while adapting to modern circumstances. In the article, "An Analysis of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's Stance towards Modernity and Buddhism," Dreyfus argues that the Dalai Lama supports both sides of tradition and modernity contrary to what many have seen him as, which is one or the other. Therefore, Dreyfus illustrates how the Dalai Lama reflects both. He claims that this has contributed to the success of Dalai Lama's growth with modern audiences (Dreyfus).

The Dalai Lama reinterprets age-old Buddhist prescriptions in a modern context. Dreyfus argues that the Dalai Lama is a Buddhist Modernist because he is taking age-old texts and making them comprehensible to modern society while preserving the essential element of Buddhist tradition, divination. This preservation of sacred tradition is what ensures the Dalai Lama as a Traditionalist. He provides insight for life's major moral decisions while sticking to the tradition or rituals that are important in maintaining the infrastructure of Buddhist beliefs. The Dalai Lama has been humanizing age-old prescriptions that were once only attainable for the elite Buddhist. In sum, Dreyfus argues that the Dalai Lama is both a traditionalist and modernist, he finds relevance in both sides, which makes him successful as a religious leader (Dreyfus).

Dreyfus and Pope Francis both support the adaptation of tradition to modern society and Dr. Peter J. Lachmann at the University of Cambridge reports that religion has always been adapting to modern society. In the article "Religion—An Evolutionary Adaptation," he claims that if religions do not adapt to modern society then evolution shows that such religions will no longer exist (Lachmann). In addition, Lachmann argues that the focal point of adaptation in a religion is the virtue or prescription and not the superstructure. To put it differently,

the prescription of a religion holds more weight in a culture's physical world. Therefore, the little details that make up religious prescriptions must be adaptable for a religion to survive.

So too, Lachmann reports that some religions are adapting their prescriptions to modern society. An example of this is the religions that have opened up to the rights of women as well as gays and lesbians. Thus, religions are being influenced to adapt their prescriptions or virtues to meet the needs of modern society (Lachmann). In sum, Lachmann believes that religious change is not a new idea and that the religions present today are the result of adaptation and evolution at work.

However, Daniel Peterson, a professor of Islamic Studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University, advises one to be cautious about such change and suggests a more thorough examination of strict religious prescriptions or traditions. In the article "Defending the Faith: Preserve or Abandon Tradition?" Peterson argues that tradition should be thoroughly examined before being cast aside. He acknowledges that perhaps after the examination of prescriptions some aspects of tradition will no longer hold relevance and indeed should be cast aside. But to alter traditions of a religion that one does not fully understand can consequently result in hazardous effects (Peterson).

Furthermore, Peterson emphasizes the importance of tradition, relating it to Homer's "Iliad" or Shakespeare's "King Lear." He claims that though works like the "Iliad" and "King Lear" take modern readers longer to interpret, the impact of these pieces greatly outweighs the user-friendly novels of today (Peterson). Traditions, like these novels, require serious discipline and provide the recipient with deeper knowledge and understanding. On top of that, the exercising of one's religious tradition gives relevance to the voices of one's ancestors. As a generation of immense change, he warns, one must tread lightly, being careful not to assume this generation's intelligence to be greater than that of their past generations. In addition, he advocates that one should not blindly accept values and practices of the past, nor should one ignorantly cast aside such values and practices. In sum, Peterson urges one to thoroughly examine tradition and the voices of his ancestors before casting such restrictions aside. After all, we do not know the effects of where all this change in tradition is taking us.

Tod Worner, author of the blog *A Catholic Thinker*, supports a similar argument to Daniel Peterson's. In his post "Why Tradition Matters," Worner claims that tradition matters because it gives us the details not only of our past deepest discussions but also of our past mistakes. Worner observes that if history can provide one with the facts and insights from the past to the present than so too does tradition.

Moreover, he believes there is importance in understanding tradition as much as there is importance in understanding history. Unfortunately, historical conflicts are being ignored by the younger generation. Worner suggests that this is in part due to a lack of in-depth story telling of historical events and rather a reporting of facts by teachers and professor alike (Worner). In other words, major points of these discussions are being missed. As a result, students lose interest. This loss of interest can be seen as a reflection of the non-religious group that is so greatly growing.

However, Worner makes a valid observation for those who have tossed tradition aside without full exploration. Like Peterson, Worner too believes that preserving tradition in a modern world gives significance to the great discussions and debates of one's ancestors. He gives reminder to the words of G.K. Chesterton, "People do not know what they are doing because they do not know what they are undoing" (Worner). To put it bluntly, there could be consequences for being ill-informed on tradition and discounting the relevance it holds in modern society. In sum, one should know the basis of any religion's tradition because only then will one fully understand its relevance.

Alternatively, Julian Crandal Hollick, a radio journalist for NPR and BBC as well as writer for Smithsonian Magazine and Arabia, claims that Muslims are Traditionalists. In the article "Living Islam: Islam and Modernity," Hollick states that Muslims do not accept modernity because they fear it detours too far from tradition. He believes that Muslims find tradition to be most important and the renewal of such traditions means to break away from the past. Modernity also encourages independence, which is highly frowned upon in the Muslim and Islamic world; such independence welcomes selfishness and a defiance of God (Hollick). Muslims view modern society to be governed by a 'cliched vision of life' or a 'desperate loneliness' that monitors how large of a role religion or tradition will have (Hollick). Indeed, Hollick believes that freedom of thought for a traditional Muslim translates back into the Age of Ignorance and Darkness or *Jahiliyya*. A traditional religion such as Islam is believed to be a necessary moral compass for its followers in part because of its encouragement of unity or conformity.

Many Muslims view themselves as unassociated with modern society; however, Hollick argues that they are in fact a part of it. Muslims are a part of modern society's influence or push to change. Furthermore, Hollick believes that some Muslims in their own way adapt to the modern world, and rely on tradition to help expand their religious horizons. An example of this is when modern conflicts arise

and no apparent solution can be found in, traditional text, an optimistic Muslim will search for comparable situations taught by Prophet Muhammad. Under the Shari'ah principles, Muslims can determine the appropriate actions to take towards their modern conflict (Hollick).

However, not everyone of the Muslim faith views modernity with such optimism and Hollick argues that those who criticize modernity are really worried about what they have to lose, domination and power or fear of change itself (Hollick). Religions are not immovable or inadaptable and are, in fact, the exact opposite. Hollick argues that the Muslim faith should not try to prove otherwise. He believes that if Muslims can accept the challenge of change then their religion would have great capabilities of demonstrating a true flexibility in its prescriptions.

The tradition or prescription in a religion can be definitive in its words or rules, thus making it quite difficult to be flexible with certain aspects of modern society. Considering this, some religions may find themselves forcing the flexibility of their prescriptions, which can lead to contradiction. In the article "Orthodox Paradox," by Noah Feldman, he argues that religious traditions or prescriptions may be contradicted by the realities of the modern world. Growing up, Feldman attended Maimonides Preparatory School in Brookline, Mass. The Maimonides School is a modern Orthodox Judaism School and it was there where he faced many challenges in separating his religious world from the modern world. He felt that the two worlds came so close to agreeing with one another but that both worlds ". . . can be undermined by the fragile fault lines between the moral substructures of the two worldviews, which can widen into deep ruptures on important matters of life and love" (Feldman).

In other words, the little details found within Orthodox tradition eventually become incongruous and can then conflict with the modern world, contrary to what Pope Francis believes. For instance, Feldman observes when a local physician of modern Orthodox comes to the Maimonides School to discuss the issues one could face in the professional modern world. The physician claimed that the Talmud interfered with saving a life on the Sabbath. The physician pointed out that he could only be permitted to save a Jewish person's life on the Sabbath and that for him, Jewish or non-Jewish, a life was a life. Regarding this, the rabbis granted permission to the physician to save non-Jewish lives, but before they did so they asked the physician what his motives were. On the condition that his motive was to preserve Jewish and non-Jewish relationships, then he would be granted permission by the rabbis. However, if his motive aimed for the better of the world, then

he would not be granted permission as this would go against the Talmud. For Feldman, the physician's motive should not matter: saving an individual's life is what matters, not the beliefs of the individual (Feldman).

Along these same lines, Feldman reports that the contradictions of religious tradition to the modern world can border on anti-intellectualism. He illustrates the representation of Orthodox politicians in office and the conflicts they face in making decisions on major issues their religion takes a definitive stance on. For instance, being faced with decisions on stem-cell research, abortion, homosexuality, and the origins of life, an individual must rely on his religious prescription to dictate his stance. If such politicians did not follow their religious prescriptions, then they would be viewed as contradictory to their religion. As a result, Feldman believes that the grip one has on religious tradition can blind possibilities of other solutions (Feldman). Indeed, this is the situation that Feldman claims can lead to ignorant decision-making and anti-intellectual leadership.

On the other hand, Feldman sympathizes with those who struggle with their religious tradition and modernity. He understands that the weight of tradition produces a struggle with contemporary reality, consequently causing one to spill over into the other, leading to a distorted view about life. Centuries ago one could be fully religious and fully committed to one's religion by walking amongst one's community, but in such a modern world that moves so quickly, there has been a separation and many find themselves leading two lives (Feldman). In fact, this split of tradition and modernity is even producing a growing gap between the ultra-Orthodox and modern orthodox. Many are still clinging to tradition and others are looking for a way to make sense of it all and are pushing for change. Thus, the contradiction of religious tradition and modernity is resulting in a separation of communities and a distorted view of reality.

According to David F. Wells, modernity has been separating communities since the 1950s, thus resulting in self-serving churches that focus more on image rather than theological tradition (Wells). David F. Wells is Distinguished Senior Research Professor at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and has written many books on evangelical theology relating to the modern world. In an article from his book *No Place For Truth: Or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* Wells argues that modern culture has individualized people so much with the advent of television and mass media that religious tradition has lost its place among the center of communities. He believes that for the first time society is building up a foundation of self-reassurance with no core

values or beliefs and no religious assumptions. The modern individual is not surrounded by a single definitive community; rather, he is surrounded by many individuals whose only common thread is that of mass media (Wells). Society has shifted from religious tradition depicting one's moral values to mass media or modernity depicting the moral values. In other words, mass media sets the rules for image and one's moral standards.

Wells believes this shift in society's core happened when Christian churches tried becoming more relatable to communities. He argues that the practice of traditions is what has changed and as a result there is no foundation to prescriptions and therefore no direction for one's actions. Wells believes the 'Truth of God' has been replaced by one's personal comfort (Wells). Thus, churches now have to market themselves to the masses. In other words, churches are focusing on the feelings of people rather than provoking thought: ". . . everyone has feelings; not everyone has the ability to think and analyze. There is a concerted push toward conformity and dumbing down, and the erasing of individual thought" (Wells). Worldwide there are 774 million people who cannot read; in the U.S. there are 32 million people who cannot read, and 21% of U.S. adults read below a 5th grade level (Statistic Brain). The Bible has been translated to a fourth grade reading level where it is easier to comprehend, does not challenge the reader, and makes a point to not offend anyone who reads it (Wells).

In sum, Wells finds modernity as a false reality and argues that it is a distraction from the truth. A modern individual should not see tradition as valueless but rather deserving of serious thought. So too, Wells feels that modern society has disposed of tradition, therefore disposing of community. The Church has lost its ability of maintaining tradition, instead deciding that the better decision is to conform to modernity. As a result, the Church has become an option for entertainment. Wells asserts that if the Church does not refocus itself on tradition or the "centrality of God," then there is a possibility for it to lose relevance altogether in such modern times (Wells).

Religion affects us all—non-believers, believers, or those unsure about what they believe. If religion lost its place in this world, what would become of us? Humanity's past has been centered around some form of religion or spiritual guidance, which provided community and set societal standards. Wells argues that the core of society is no longer a religious perspective, but of popular acceptance based on mass media's depictions. In other words, Church is no longer society's core, rather popular culture is. Wells argues that Churches that adapt to modern society leave out their most crucial part, tradition.

Contrary to what Wells believes, Lachmann suggested that religions have been changing since they began and the only reason they exist today is because of their ability to adapt. Religions have the capabilities to reflect the needs of society and rise to meet such needs. An example of this is Pope Francis; he claimed that religion must adapt to the modern world to stay relevant even if it means changing tradition. Pope Francis recognizes the flaws in his religious tradition or prescription and is doing everything in his power to make it right even if it means to be contradictory. For Pope Francis, Truth of God is more important than outdated rules or restrictions.

On the other hand Feldman disagrees; he argues that Truth of God is not enough for this contradictory world. He argues that the little details of religion are important and when they do not fit into or make sense of modernity they can make living in these two worlds difficult. By extension, living in two worlds means living in the external and living in the internal. One's spiritual or religious life is no longer a part of the external; therefore, it stays internal. This separation of religious life and modern life is directly affected by lack of flexibility found in one's tradition to the modern world.

According to Dr. Dreyfus, however, the Dalai Lama is an example of a leader who turns his religious tradition into adaptable or flexible information. The Dalai Lama does not find modernity to be a roadblock. The Dalai Lama sees the challenges of modernity as an opportunity to reinterpret previous prescription in the context of modern times. He is living the external and internal simultaneously.

This debate on the relevance of religious tradition in the modern world is complex. Both sides of this debate have demonstrated the importance of tradition and of change. One author even claimed that this idea of change in religious tradition is nothing new and that this is what religions do to withstand the test of time. Even though these authors could not agree on the effect of modernity, there was a single thread that tied them all together: one must explore the effect of modernity and independently decide the relevance it holds in his life, but, as Peterson and Worner suggested, to make a decision without knowing the other side of the argument is a dangerous mistake. That is the kind of ignorant decision-making that borders on anti-intellectualism and narrow-mindedness, resulting in hazardous effects.

There are effects for every decision one makes; even the absence of a decision is still a decision. Whether one is a non-believer, believer, or unsure about what he believes, he must make a conscious effort to understand all existing perspectives. When the decision is made, one must live as an example of that decision and not hide behind the popular

facade. A flimsy belief system is not strong enough to hold up society let alone a person's soul. The only way to establish societal stability is to make certain we understand one another with a sense of compassion, openness, flexibility, and a true sense of unity.

This essay skims the surface of an argument that may never be solved. Maybe religious tradition has always been adapting to fit society's needs, as Lachmann expressed, or maybe this modern world is destroying what is left of tradition and replacing it with an artificiality that is consumer-driven, as Wells suggested. Perhaps the answer is found among those who are actively ensuring that they stay relevant in a world that is ". . . drowning in modernity," as the Dalai Lama and Pope Francis have illustrated (Wells).

In order for one to arrive at such an answer, he must explore the aspects this essay has not discussed. One aspect that this review did not explore is tradition and its relation to power. Specifically, as Hollick points out, there are things that religions or religious leaders feel they have to lose from this idea of change. This aspect of power applies to more than just religions: this is an aspect of human nature and it applies to anyone anywhere and of any kind of social status. When change is on the horizon of one's life, the first thing one thinks of is, "What am I going to lose from this situation?" In addition to this aspect, this review was not able to elaborate on the quantity of change. For instance, how much change is good change? Feldman observes that religious life contradicts modern life, thus bringing the thought of religious prescriptions not able to keep up with the changes made by their religious leaders. Pope Francis claims that "Truth of God" is more important than the little details of religious prescription; this perspective still brings one to contemplate the previous claims as well as actions made by the Catholic Church: Are those previous actions to be discounted?

Finally and foremost, one must explore the viewpoints of the third largest religious group: the Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist; together this group is currently seeing the majority of growth at a total of 1.1 billion members, which is only 1 billion away from rank number one, Christianity (Adherents). Those who cherish religious tradition or the powerful prescriptions their ancestors found to be evident must explore why this group is growing so quickly. There must be a single common thread found among all these members. This non-religious group of individualism has become a major community. The religious communities must start taking notice.

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Righteous Dominion

Stephanie Simonson

My mom says she always took comfort in the knowledge that, whatever else her children lacked, at least she'd given us a great dad.

Mom never had any dreams outside of being a housewife and mother. She didn't finish her degree. She never got her driver's license. She never lived on her own. Her whole life was banking on having a husband to take care of her and make her a mother. This is largely due to her poorly concealed aura of low self-esteem and ultimate sense of inferiority to men she has never been able to shake — or recognize as unhealthy.

When she was thirty-six and getting desperate, my mom met a man with the last name of Presley in her singles ward. Elvis being the love of Mom's life, it seemed like fate. He and Mom were married within a year.

At the temple ceremony, Dad never technically said "yes" or "I do." Mom and Dad always laughed about how he said "uhhh" instead, because he didn't know what the appropriate phrase was in an LDS ceremony. It may have been nothing more than the comical faux pas they always made it out to be, but I never could shake the implication that the marriage started out one hundred percent on his terms. By LDS standards, Mom tells me, they shouldn't have even been married in the temple, but Dad adamantly coached her to lie to their bishop. And Mom would never have dreamed of disobeying the man she considered herself impossibly lucky to have.

Mom was pregnant with me within a year. When I was one, my parents moved in with my maternal grandma in Murray. When Grandpa was alive, he and Grandma worked tirelessly to pay off that house in Murray, so that their daughters would always have a place to live, free and clear.

I had two younger brothers by the time I finished kindergarten. Dad seemed born to be the perfect fun father: We were always going on vacations or some outing, and when we were at home, he was making homemade ropes courses for us to brave. My parents prided themselves

on still acting more like boyfriend and girlfriend than the parents of three. Dad didn't mind that Mom couldn't drive, didn't want to work outside the home, and wanted nothing to do with financial decisions. He loved being the alpha male and said he was so lucky to have found a woman who had no intention of "being the man."

Dad's bad moods were rare in those days, but when they came on, he was terrifying. He was never physically abusive, but we were sensitive children, and one yell or deathly quiet reprimand from him would rattle us to the core. I adored my dad in the automatic way little girls do, but each time he yelled or treated me like a child (even if I was), I lost a little bit of trust. I always felt like I'd been born with the entitlement to never be talked down to or disrespected by a man, and parenthood was no excuse.

As I grew older, this sense of distrust and inequality kept me from feeling closeness to him much deeper than love for the fact that he was a fun and generously providing dad. I loved him very much, of course, but attempts at substantial bonding with him felt increasingly tense and unnatural as I grew up. The knowledge that he could betray my trust and humiliate me with one yell at any time made it difficult to enjoy his company the way I did Mom's.

Mom says now that Grandma was a quiet sentinel for good in our home. If she hadn't died, Mom says, everything that happened a couple years later would never have been allowed to go on under our roof.

Not long after Grandma's death, Dad, who had previously been close to 400 pounds, got gastric-bypass surgery and rapidly shrunk to a robustly fit form. He even tried to cover his baldness with a toupee after that, but gave up when he modeled it for the three of us and we laughed delightedly, thinking he was being funny. In any case, Dad's newfound attractiveness to women besides Mom was certainly one of the first signs of our family's downward spiral.

When I was in elementary school, the divorce of my parents seemed an unthinkable fate. When I heard what seemed to be a fight between them one morning when I was in fifth grade and I voiced my fears to Mom, she told me how madly in love they still were, and Dad took me to the mall that weekend, buying me a book and outfit of my choice. On the way home, "Love Song" by The Cure came on the radio. Dad turned it up and told me, "This song is how I feel about you." When it was over, he said, "Little Nick would leave this family before I would."

But the yells from their bedroom and Mom's ungodly wails when she thought we weren't listening did not stop. One morning, Mom told me cryptically through heavy sniffles that Dad had some decisions to make.

The decision turned out to be a stranger one than anyone would have predicted. Dad didn't want to leave Mom. He wanted to bring his ex-girlfriend Kellie and her five-year-old son, Paris, to live in our house with us. He'd gone on a trip by himself to visit her in Ohio when she'd fallen on hard times, and had concluded this was the only way to help her get back on her feet. We were doing the Christlike thing, Mom said when she told us about it. My brothers and I were quite excited to have new people living in our house.

Kellie was not quite like my parents had told us she would be. Mom told me she expected her to be like Jenny, my cousin's ex-girlfriend who also always seemed down on her luck, so I imagined her just like Jenny: meek, grateful, polite, vulnerable, tragically angelic.

It was a shock when Kellie strutted off the airplane looking and sounding like the polar opposite of Jenny — namely, she was the spitting image, in looks and personality, of Dad's German mother. I hadn't worried in the first place that she could ever be the Other Woman, but now the very thought seemed laughable. Heavy-jawed and stocky with a loud, brash voice and a boisterous self-confidence, Kellie looked like no one's glamorous extramarital affair. My brothers and I were instantly taken with her son Paris, who at first was sweetly shy and solicitous of our approval.

Kellie took quickly to the role of alpha female in our house. She cooked lavishly presented (and disgusting) dinners like stuffed peppers, happily participated in board games with Dad and us kids, stayed up talking with Dad to the wee hours of the morning, and (much to Mom's silent annoyance) blasted country music and vacuumed the house in her shorts on Sundays while everyone else except Dad got ready for church. Meanwhile, Mom dieted quietly in the background, slimming down to a perfect 120 pounds, but Dad determinedly took no notice.

On the surface, Kellie and Mom seemed to get along quite well; my mom would die before intentionally making waves with anyone. I only heard them arguing once, and even then I don't think Mom said much. In fights with Dad, Mom was always the one being yelled at, rarely doing any yelling herself. She would often take me on walks while Dad and Kellie reminisced about their teenage days in Ohio and would cry to me, but she was not allowed to say anything critical of the situation to Dad. If she even dared frown in his presence, Dad would make fun of her in front of the rest of us, calling her "Stormcloud Patty," and scream at her later when they were alone.

Our unlikely savior came in the form of Dad's brother Craig, who moved in with us later that year. Craig was not a handsome or interesting man by a long shot, but all the sexual tension in the house

instantly transferred to him and Kellie rather than Dad and Kellie. Craig soon moved into the same bedroom with Kellie, and before long they were officially engaged and moving out.

Mom never did get much information out of Dad as to how much he did with Kellie under our roof (he told her that no traditional intercourse had taken place, so we suspect other forms), but she was content not knowing. Dad could make Mom miserable, to be sure, but he could never make her leave him.

The Kellie days, however, seem downright idyllic in comparison to everything that followed. Dad started another affair, this one with an also-married co-worker, and took out his guilt and fear of being caught on everyone around him. Less than a year after surprising us with the dog of our dreams, a sweet-natured golden retriever-chow mix we named Yeller, Dad hauled him off to the pound while the three of us were gone, bellowing at Mom to shut up when she begged him not to. Mom, my brothers, and I still consider this Dad's most unforgivable offense to date. You haven't known heartbreak until you've gone to the pound to visit your own dog and seen him lying with his head down on a concrete floor, rising hopefully when he sees you and staring after you in shocked betrayal when you leave.

To my family, abuse of animals is one of the most serious offenses imaginable, so my mom's sister Jill, who has always been the bravest and most confrontational member of our family, called Dad up to scream at him the way he was accustomed to doing the screaming. This led to Dad forbidding us contact with Jill, to whom I was far closer than I'd ever been to Dad. As Jill was Mom's transportation when Dad wasn't around, we had to meet with her in secret, paralyzed with fear at the thought of Dad finding out. Mom was only allowed to see her other sister, Candy, because Candy determinedly tried to keep her peace with Dad. In fact, Dad had so few problems with Candy that he told Mom he was seriously considering taking her as a second wife, saying the LDS church preached eternal polygamy anyway.

The aura in our house in those days was — there's no other way to say it — demonic. Before Dad took Yeller away, I'd been staying at Candy's house in Ogden to work on my homeschooling curriculum, but Dad had commanded I come up back after the blowout with Jill, in case Candy too was against him. I begged Mom every day to convince Dad to let me go back; my own house had turned into a prison. I stayed locked in my room as often as possible, dreading when Dad would talk to me. I was now begging Mom to get a divorce; the fear of what would happen to our family without Dad's support was nothing next to the fear of living with Dad. We still went on vacations and out to eat, perhaps more

so than ever, so Mom thought her children were happy and that she couldn't take that fun and security away from us. She was also confused because I pretended to be so relaxed in Dad's presence; when she saw us together she would second-guess everything I'd told her about being afraid of him. My brothers still cried when they heard a word against Dad, and James told me I was the most ungrateful person he'd ever met for encouraging Mom to stand up to Dad and divorce him.

In his children's presence, Dad limited his verbal abuse to calling Mom a dumb blonde and snapping at her for offenses as minor as repeating something she'd already said. When we weren't around, though, Mom paid dearly for saying anything, and sometimes for saying nothing at all. If she dared suggest he was doing anything wrong, he would taunt her for "being the man," for not being a "fascinating girl," which he knew was all-important to Mom. He invoked pseudo-biblical quotes like "woman, know thy place" and "be still and know that I am God" (in reference to himself as her God, by divine mandate of marriage). He once looked her coldly in the eye and, calling her by her maiden name, told her, "I have no respect for you." On one occasion, he lifted Mom by her hair and told her he wouldn't put her down until she admitted she was shit, just like he was. Mom still thinks she did the assertive thing by saying calmly that she knew she was shit, and whenever we bring this incident up, she clamors to say, "But it didn't hurt!"

Dad frequently said to Mom, "I'm still waiting for my divorce!" With Jill's insistence and my begging, she finally took him up on his offer. The day my parents divorced and Dad moved out, when I was fourteen, I felt like the worst of our problems were over. Mom was terrified and not remotely sure she'd done the right thing — she had no job training and no desire to work outside the home, nor could she see how she could possibly make enough money to support us — but I felt poverty was a fair trade for not living in fear.

I don't think more than two months went by of Dad being limited to weekly visitation rights (whenever she saw him pulling up, to my outrage, Mom would rush into the bathroom to primp) before he moved back into the house. He moved into our guest room in the basement but made Mom sleep there with him. He and Mom both claimed this was the only way, that he had no money to live on his own. By this time, Shari, the co-worker he'd been having an affair with, had taken him to court so she could get a restraining order, so work was no longer a source of pride for Dad, and he left.

I lost hope of ever being free. The ultimate goal of divorce had been won, and it still hadn't made a difference. I began to feel there

was nothing any of us could do to be rid of Dad. These days were the worst of my life. My bedroom contained a vent that opened directly to Dad's basement room, so I could hear every word he screamed at Mom. At times he acted schizophrenic, appearing to be hearing echoes of his mother yelling at him in childhood, but we've never decided if he was actually insane or if this was all part of the manipulative act. I would spend the whole night frantically praying that he wasn't about to come up and start on me. I felt brief flashes of what I thought hell must be like. I was no longer comfortable in my own house, and I could see no hope of escape until I turned eighteen. The only comfort anyone in my family could give at that point was that the four years till I could leave for good would go by faster than I thought.

I was lucky enough never to suffer any direct physical abuse from Dad. The worse I ever received from him was a middle finger and a "fuck you" because he saw that I wasn't as close to him as I was to Jill, and of course some bouts of screaming at me that I pretended didn't scare me. My brother James wasn't so lucky. One night when Mom was helping Jill at the pizza factory where she worked, James came into my room with the phone. "Dad told me that Jill said we suck!" he told me. "Should I call her and ask if it's true?" I laughed that Jill couldn't come up with such a weak insult if she tried, and told him not to. But Dad caught James with the phone and punched him in the ear for not believing him. I didn't witness this, but I heard the punch and James's cries through my door. I was too petrified that I was next to leave my room.

On another occasion, when Mom and I were out for a walk, Dad went on the warpath, looking for Mom's stimulant pills. Neither Mom nor I had a cell phone. We came home to find James and Nick terrified; Dad had threatened them with bodily harm if they didn't find Mom's Dexedrine for him.

Jill called the police to our house on two occasions when she gleaned from phone conversations that Dad was in a frame of mind capable of murder, but the time the police asked me if Dad had ever hurt me, I had to say no. In complete honesty, he had never hit me. I almost wished that he had, so I'd have something to tell them. When they asked if he'd threatened to, I said no, but deliberately looked away from them, hoping they'd assume something and arrest him. I couldn't elaborate with Dad in the other room. He would surely call me out on it if I lied or exaggerated, and me being afraid of Dad wasn't technically a crime on his part. I had nothing to tell the police by way of him having actually committed a crime, but I wanted them to think something was wrong and take him away anyway. Disgustingly, when Dad came into my room later to thank me for defending him to the police, I was actually proud

that I hadn't taken advantage of the situation and betrayed him.

I don't know what got Dad to finally leave. Originally he'd planned for all of us to move into a trailer in Nevada with him. He wanted us to live where we had no contacts or family outside of him. He still planned, when he first moved, to send for us later. Maybe he finally left because Mom let slip that Jill's husband had a BACA connection, who'd already said that he'd set the gang loose on Dad if we asked.

When Dad was packing up to leave for good, Nick stood in the driveway crying. Dad did not comfort him; he didn't reassure him that they'd see each other soon. He said, "Remember, Nick, the reason you're crying right now is Jill. This is all because of Jill." Dad never could accept that Mom was thinking for herself. The most he could fathom was that Mom was now someone else's robot instead of his. For the next couple years, whenever he talked to us on the phone or through email, he reminded us not to listen to "those who cannot forgive." He remained convinced the divorce was due to his adultery, an offense I think he was quite proud of once it was out in the open, and had nothing to do with abuse, so there was no reason his children should bear him any ill will.

My family lives with a final insult to impress upon us that we'll never be truly free of him. My grandparents paid off our childhood home, so that, if nothing else, Mom would always have a home. Dad took even that from her. He made her sign over the house to him, and Mom believed she was spiritually bound to trust her husband. Legally owning the house, Dad took out another mortgage on it so he could give money to Shari. After Dad left, there was no way Mom could make our ever-rising house payments, on a house she thought she'd never have to pay for. We lost the house I lived in since I was one, that had been my mom's since she was twenty. My mom and brothers have lived in an apartment and barely scraped by ever since. Dad, despite having a master's degree and an excellent resume, has worked as a taxi driver since moving so that he'd never have enough money for the government to take for child support.

Now that I know what Dad was, acts I formerly saw as innocent father-daughter bonding resurfaced in my mind, and I wondered if they were worth mentioning to anyone. As a little girl, I just thought it was fatherly affection that Dad asked me to 'aim him' when he used the bathroom. As a young teen, I knew that him showing me pictures of different sexual positions was uncomfortable for me, but I took it as parental sex education. I still don't know for sure that this is what he meant when he screamed at me that I'd better "submit body and soul" to him or he'd make my life a living hell. It's hard to take this vague threat too seriously now, and when I hear how many girls were actually

raped or beaten up by their fathers, I honestly feel I don't have much to complain about.

Sometimes I feel guilty for even referring to my father as abusive, because I know how much more abusive other fathers are — as if abuse is relative. I am trying to banish all my subconscious impulses to victim-blame my mother for being so determinedly submissive and for her warped ideas about women's place, and to be ashamed of myself for writing the letter.

I did see Dad twice more after he moved to Nevada: He visited for spring break of my senior year (he threatened me soundly on that occasion because James decided he was too sleepy to meet him) and for my graduation. He kept emailing me after that, reminding me not to be brainwashed by "those who would love to see me dead." This is when I snapped and wrote him a letter. I laid out in detail why we wanted no contact with him — out of fear, not out of anger. I don't know that he'd ever even considered the possibility before that he was guilty of abuse and not just adultery.

I was fully prepared for him to twist my words or patronize me, but for the first time, he didn't do that. He emailed me back with a simple "I respect your wish to have no contact with me" and signed it with his name instead of "your father," as he'd always done before. That was five years ago. I haven't spoken to him since then.

I should thank Dad, though. Because of him, I knew exactly what I was looking for in a husband, and I found a man who is the stark opposite of him. Because of him, I know I will teach my future children to call out the concept of patriarchal dominion for the evil that it is and female submission and inequality for the Satan-inspired bullshit that it is. If I sound angry, I am — but I am also grateful that I know this in no uncertain terms, and my children will as well.

Scent-imental

Kyle Poppitz

Obituaries say that the deceased are survived by the family of the departed, yet surviving was a stretch of the word at best. It had been over a year since the sudden passing of my father and it seemed like a day could not go by that one thing did not remind me of him. People tell me I look like him, so I saw him everywhere. I was haunted by his memory.

I was driving home, about to pass the spot where he died, when a strong and sudden gust of air washed over my car, and the smells of spring washed over me. Instead of the happy smells of fresh cut grass, or other more pleasant aromas like flowers in bloom, I was overwhelmed by the smell of cow shit. I could not help but smile. Dad, as I remember him, will always have that unusual connection.

When I was very young, my father lost his sense of smell for a period of time, and years later discovered on one of his motorcycle trips that it had returned. Of course, he discovered this while he was driving through some dairy farms, and the overpowering stench of the cows made his olfactory senses flare. He was so proud; every time one of his children was traveling with him, he made sure to stop and take in that repugnant odor.

We hated it.

As I drove, I thought about those motorcycle trips, and all the journeys I had gone on with him. I continued to smile in a mixture of loss and fondness, and went home with the archive footage playing in my mind. I began to think about my father and all the other stories he had involving the wonderful substance of cow shit. I began to muse about the stories he told me when I was young: the ones that I cherish, even 'til this day.

See, my father was a wild card in his own way. Wry scamps of boys from Minnesota logically need firecrackers. And firecrackers logically need something to explode. He told me of a tale where he exploded a cow pie, and got covered by the spray while he was running from it. He even confessed to loving to stick his feet in the freshest of cow pies and letting

the warm, gooey manure wriggle between his toes. I always figured people from the 50's were a little . . . simpler. . . Dad would just laugh as my brother and I would squirm. I don't know if he was just saying it for the shock value.

But the story that resonates most with me, I save for last. My father was a smart man. He was always capable of solving complex computer problems, and was a programmer most of his life. He called himself a "code pig," and was proud of it. But, if there was one thing he was not, it was a writer. My father, in getting a degree in computer programming, was forced to take the required English classes to graduate. To make matters worse, in one of these classes the assigned reading was a publication from a friend of the instructor. I do not know the name of the title, nor the author. I do, however, remember the line he would recall every time he spoke of college writing classes: ". . . and the cow shitted on the fence."

"They call this writing!" he would protest. I often wonder if he saw the humor in knowing that one of his own ended up being a declared English Major, and worse yet, an aspiring author. I want to say he warned me about the dangers of writing about cows, bowel movements, and fences, but I can't say for certain. I do know, however, that he was proud I found my own way in life, and that I was doing it on my own. He never directly said it, but if there was one thing about him that I have learned, and adopted in my own life, it's that he was quick to critique and slow to praise. I didn't need to receive his praise because he never judged me.

There have been many sleepless nights where my brain was running on all cylinders, and the fuel feeding that engine was fear. Mostly of the unknown, but most commonly, knowing that one day, I was going to be dead. That kind of thinking was terrible, especially when I was six. It hasn't stopped, but now I'm no longer afraid of it. I would ask myself "what do I think will be the last song I listen to?" or "what will be the last thing I will eat?" My finality. Obviously, I would hate to have a bad meal before I passed, or have watched a movie that didn't entertain me. But the truth is that no one will care what moment marks my last. The moments that will matter most will be how I am remembered. Will people drive by a dairy farm and think "that's him, all right!?" I don't know. I do know that it's good to be remembered. As long as there is a pasture, I will always have one memory of my departed father.

I love him, and I miss him.

We're All Dying

Joshua Nelson

It's 5:30 AM. The alarm buzzes and I reach groggily over and silence it. The day begins. After a quick shower, cold cereal, and waking my wife, I leave for work. The coffee shop greets me with its warm, uncompromising aromas. I finish brewing the coffee and setting out the pastries for the day. In the back of my mind, I know I need to finish my upcoming paper. I work out the initial draft in my mind to save paper and time. When my shift ends, the real work begins—my university classes. Reading, writing, revising, rewriting—the cycle is endless.

The cycle of life is endless. The university and coffee shop are not the only life I have, but all of it seems to blur into repetition. Each semester mirrors the one previous. Life's cycle— one week, seven days, one hundred sixty-eight hours, ten thousand and eighty minutes—fades into countless minutiae. People are creatures of habit, no one argues that. But the habits they form determine their life cycle, week by week.

A man gets up in the morning, leaves his family for his truck, leaves them to further the economy—or so he is told. His wife rolls over to an empty bed, feeling only the warmth in the sheets. The same feeling for fifteen years; the same feeling that she will feel for another fifteen years; the feeling that she terms, warm emptiness. She reminds her half-awoken self, this is the life I chose, this is water. This life is a good life for me. Month after month we struggle to pay the bills, but that makes us stronger. Year after year we work for the man so that our children have it better. Child after child we sacrifice, but ascetics are blessed. Struggle, work, and sacrifice are our life's cycle, our mantra.

A teenage girl graduates high school and treks across Nepal with other teens to find herself—a typical generation Y move—on the road less traveled. In a land of Hindus and Buddhists, she chooses to make good on Jesus' promise: He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. She finds her mantra, repeats it over and over again, and the cycle

begins. Day in and out she loses herself for the Nepalese. Month after month she teaches the orphans. Year after year the Nepalese find out what it means to be a Christian. Losing, teaching, and finding are her life's cycle and that has made all the difference.

An old woman sits in the casino, pulls the arm and watches the cherries, sevens, and lemons spin across her view—she's earned this reprieve, or so she tells herself. Little does she remember that her reprieve should have ended weeks ago, but what is time anyway, when one is retired. She once served in Vietnam, but those days are long gone. Disillusionment is the word she used to describe her feelings after the war. Disillusion transformed itself into this illusion; the life she now lives. Her story is akin to another veteran.

He flew against the Red Baron, stormed beaches of Normandy, fought the Viet Cong in the jungle, and neutralized the Taliban in the desert. He relives these wars again and again. If he dies, he only has to try again. Linked with his comrades through the internet, he battles his illusioned foes. "If only I were there", he muses, "then we would've beat the communists out of the jungle." This illusion transformed itself into disillusion with the past. Disillusion and this illusion are their lives' cycle. They amuse themselves between illusion and disillusion. Amusing themselves before, during, and after their deaths; respawning their illusions and disillusion. Amusing their muses to death.

Habitual cycles repeating over and over. Lives are formed and found, torn and shorn by the cycles that men and women entrench themselves in. Struggling, working, and sacrificing give meaning not to our lives, but to our children's. The rising generation hopefully exceeds our expectations, but more often, they take the road traveled all too well. They are trapped in the cycle of illusion. They trade meaningful human interaction for momentary virtual fun. Do we blame them for succumbing to the numbing amusements of their day? Did we numb ourselves with work and sacrifice instead of leisure? "Pick your poison," I say. Struggle, work sacrifice, losing, illusion, finding, disillusion, and teaching. They are all life cycles, or perhaps death cycles. No matter the poison, we are all dying. All have followed different life cycles and all have died. Whether we amuse ourselves with illusion or lose ourselves by finding others, we will all die and in the end will it have mattered what path we chose? Or will it make all the difference?

The Try-Works

Charles Aaron

Peradventure this chimerical vision reveal some axiomatic truths that may save myself the agony of bearing a similar cross that these aberrant, Tartarean fellows bear. Yet why be so fastidious, Aaron? Are we not all made of the same stuff? Or are we hyperborean savages the same bestial men who burn with the leonine spirit of the demiurge? Aye, and what then of our bovine strength and tawny muscles, stretching and straining like bands of steel? These austere elements thunder the doom of Jove, can we not hear? And these sanguinary steeps seem to scream with the wicked wailings of anathematized angels, fallen from apotheosis into the blackest abyss. How then can we be expected to rest? For are we not the same as that man Ulysses, fearful of confinement to an insipid repose after his cavalier adventurings as a cosmopolitan? We have every sense of this same trepidation. Wonder ye then at our fiery hearts?

We were a band of swarthy young bucks, famished for the lost taste of life. We were soldiers of fortune, hoping for the wind to change. A pack of us trudged under the swoop of the stony summit. Our tongues lolled from our slime coated throats; begrimed with sweat, our stench reeked like wet dogs and the aroma around us tasted like the bitter spruce tree as the thin air hissed through the barbaric brilliancy of our teeth. There were a half a dozen of us and we were as wild as the wilderness from whence we came; lost were the world's conceited ambitions to tame us as we made our capricious climb into the mountains; heartily we lapped the raw life that auspicated us for our impetuous zeal.

We didn't speak one another's name. It was only the Mountain that spoke. Nor did we point at her savage breasts, for the Shoshone had whispered that they were too sacred. Yet we were concupiscent, and could not fathom our ardor ever becoming etiolated.

I looked down the line of my brothers. Our visage was uniform, naked and raw from the lash of wind and the tyranny of the sun. Red sores, nut-browed hides, nostrils steaming like the great bison's. Our

hair was long and dripped from the rain, dancing to and fro over our eyes that flashed with fire. I saw them climb. I heard their rattling breaths. I smelt their earthy bodies. I tasted their hushed strength.

I looked over at my brother. He was a solid youth. Lean and lithe, his muscles rippled in waves under a sheet of leathery skin across his bare back and chest. Hardest were the stony abs and the gnarled shoulders, ribboned together by tawny pectorals. His hands and feet were one great torn callus. The candor of his countenance was elf-like; young and full of blood, with deep blue eyes framed in freckles, and a matted mane of blond dread-locks that showered down his taut back.

This work was agony and yet there comes with it a severe thirst for more. It is the ravenous hunger of a hyperborean youth to make manifest his herculean zeal, to feast upon arduous feats. Amongst my two robust companions who shared my sufferings, there could be no pyrrhic victory. We gloried in our strength.



MUSIC

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Introduction

Historically speaking our understanding of music today derives from poetry. Music is designed of metered beats that designed to make us move. Some of us dance, others of us tap our feet, and some like me write.

Music can be more powerful with words, because it can fuse different disciplines together to make something greater than either could have been alone. Whether you jam to the tunes of Will Smith or enjoy the rock of Royal Bliss there is one thing certain: the music you listen to will serenade you with a personal message.

This year for Metaphor we found the music that moved us. On behalf of the music staff I would like to thank those who submitted to the journal, because we couldn't have this section without you. And I thank my staff who had to make difficult decisions this year. We hope that you enjoy our selections.

The artists have submitted recordings of the proceeding pieces and have allowed us to put their music online; we ask that you please follow up reading these summaries by visiting www.weber.edu/metaphor for free downloads of the songs.

Broken, But Still Breathing

Alex Gerrish

This song speaks to everyone who feels defeated. I wrote this at a time when I thought that things couldn't get any worse. It's at these crossroads in life that we find out who we truly are. In the book *The Old Man and the Sea*, Ernest Hemingway wrote that "man cannot be defeated without his permission. He can be destroyed, but not defeated." That idea is the inspiration behind this song.

Alex Gerrish has been singing and composing since the age of 7. He has always felt a strong connection to American music, leading him to study jazz, blues and folk independently. Alex is also a trained classical singer. He will graduate this April with a Bachelor of Arts in Music.

Let Things Be

Terry Wade

The inspiration for this song was a girl I was in love with. We both had feelings for each other. She however refused to commit because of past relationships. I wrote this song for her in hopes of changing her mind. I chose the title “Let Things Be” because I was willing to let things be the way they were and wait for her.

I was born and raised in Oxnard, California and it will always be home to me. I have been living here in Utah for the past ten years. I am currently a student at Weber State and I am an English major with a minor in philosophy. I started playing guitar when I was sixteen. My dad bought me my first guitar out of the blue. I didn't really ask for it but I figured since he bought me it with what little money he had I will give it a shot. Eleven years later the guitar has become the greatest thing I could ever ask for. I have added other instruments to my repertoire but I will always love the guitar more than anything.

Alchemy

Matt Froling

The collision of love, hate, instruments, family, and friends in a specific space. We are the art we create all products and producers of the inspiration and fate. But when the moment of truth comes will you divide or intertwine.

Witch Hunt Fever!

Theta

Dan Larsen — Guitar

Anna Lily Hodshire — Saxophone, Flute

Jesse Dubois Hodshire — Drums

— 70s Deutschrock in the mountain deserts of Utah.

Moon and Sun

Theta, featuring Rytuaal

Dan Larsen — Guitar

Anna Lily Hodshire — Saxophone, Flute

Jesse Dubois Hodshire — Drums

— Kaleidoscopic hip hop for your mind and hips.



NU|LC

Coordinators
Clint Kingsley
Preston Carter

Introduction

The National Undergraduate Literature Conference is an annual conference held at Weber State University. This year marks the 29th year of the conference, which continues to gain attention in universities across the nation. Every year, selections from the conference are included in *Metaphor*, Weber State's literary journal. We proudly present this year's selections with the hope that the spark of inspiration that exists within these pages will burn in the hearts of others. It is an honor to be a part of NULC and witness the brilliant creativity of our undergraduate peers.

—*Clint Kingsley*

Choking, Age 4

Michael Mayberry
Ohio University

I awake choking in my bed.
The noise of my whimpering diffuses in the house
like a puff of smoke in a hurricane.

I stumble through the hall
which caves in on me as
I asphyxiate.
Jesus, hanging from the wall,
stares pensively with forearms and feet
nailed to the cross.

Halfway to their room I fall.
Gripping at the wall for support,
I crawl the remaining distance to the door,
knock knock knock,
loud to wake but shy to startle.

Dad opens,
hears the quiet wheezing less desperate
than the panic in my eyes
begging to "make it go away."

He does—
as much with the inhaler
as with the stories he reads me.
in that high, heavenly voice.

Tectonics

Zach Fiore

Hiram College

There's a town outside of Denver
that feels like America.

In the foothills,
the suburbs of the mountains,
where people knew what
organic meant and why that was important,
where there were parks and swings, forests
and trails, scenic overlooks, and elementary
school playgrounds with
interracial murals, because
Mexican immigrants flock to
the Mile High City.

Grocery stores buddied up to banks who
backed into fences that interconnected
the developments like any of the games
with the coupons for family-sized pizzas.

It was this town that felt like America
where anti-depressants and video games
and "goth-culture" were blamed, where I
graduated from Kindergarten with a redhead
named Kimberly that I was sure I'd love
forever because she wasn't afraid of the
Dog Murderer story neighbor-boy Johnny
used to tell everyone.

Littleton, Colorado:
whose Welcome To sign says
"Home of the Columbine Rebels!
The Five-Time, Class 5A State Football
Champions."

Who won their first season the
same year two boys waged
war on unarmed peers.
I guess five football championships
was the least anyone could do.

It was this town where my father hit my mother,
and where my mother left my father.
Where my old family dog is still buried.

This is the town that feels like America,
wedged into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains.

Crossing the Border

Fernando R Izaguirre, Jr
Lee College

I was a baby,
crying in my mother's arms,
hearing a man say...

"Are you an American citizen?"

"Yes, Señor," said my father.

Tall men with golden badges that read: U.S Border Patrol
surrounded our vehicle with dogs,
the size of El Chupacabra.

*Sniff *sniff
the perros searched,
sweat was dripping from my father's eyebrow,
breathing heavily,
exhaling panic once given permission to proceed.

A green light appeared,
crossing gates to a new world,
our new home.

We drove away,
hearing the Rio Grande's soft echo...
Adios.

Divine Infinitude

Shamus Jarvis
Principia College

T. S. Eliot explores the vast continuum of "time not our time" (I.1.36) in the first movement of "The Dry Salvages," the third of the Four Quartets. Mankind, trapped within the confines of its own notion of time as a linear phenomenon, has forgotten the boundless ocean of time that exists outside of the sphere of human consciousness. Entranced by technological advancements and other material distractions, humanity has resisted the propitious river's flow, symbolizing ignorance of the only link between human time and eternity. The sea exemplifies this timeless eternity: it is a tremendous force of creation and destruction that follows no definite rhythm. The fact that the sea is devoid of form suggests the unconfined nature of eternity (Bodelsen 85). Using the two primary symbols of the river and the sea, Eliot illustrates the clash of the illusory or human sense of time with that of infinity. Within the opening lines of "The Dry Salvages," the poet exposes human bondage to time and asserts that only through divine faith can one escape the fetters of seconds, minutes, and hours.

In a world populated by people who have sacrificed their religious beliefs for the sake of pursuing lives marked by material comfort, the river is a permanent, yet forgotten, reminder of that which lies beyond the realm of past, present, and future. Eliot acknowledges that "the river is within us" (I.2.15), but humankind has preoccupied itself with war (Eliot was living in London when he composed "The Dry Salvages" in 1941) and other worldly complications that have impeded humanity's spiritual progress. As Europe erupted into chaos in the 1940s, numerous associations of people unable to cope with the horrors of war suddenly rejected established religious beliefs in favor of existentialist philosophy (Mosse 333). This ambivalence toward God is analogous to Eliot's contradictory description of the river as "sullen, untamed...useful, untrustworthy" (I.1.2, 4). As a devout Anglican, Eliot was convinced that only through faith in God could humanity be saved, and man's inability to comprehend the river as the bridge between the finite and the infinite only added to his demise. Yet despite its "unhonored" and "unpropitiated" (I.1.9) status, the river's role as the link between linear time and infinity remains uncorrupted by people's

temporal attitudes. Regardless of the extent to which humanity may abandon the river in favor of materiality, the river will forever be intimately intertwined with the human experience, for Eliot entrusts the river with an additional meaning.

Like many of Eliot's symbols in *Four Quartets*, the river holds a dual meaning. While it does represent the physical and metaphysical link to the ocean (timelessness), it also represents the linear flow of time. It is this second meaning that is prominent throughout the first movement of "The Dry Salvages" and creates a sharp contrast with the amorphous nature of time represented by the sea. As the river flows toward the sea, so does the future stream into the present, and the present trickles into the past (Bodelsen 83). And though it may seem that human beings are inherently trapped within the ebb and flow of such time, it is through one's appreciation of the river as an enduring symbol of the potency of nature that one becomes cognizant of the sea and its many voices (Eliot I.2.24). Additionally, in later movements of the poem, Eliot urges the reader to learn from past experiences rather than try to manipulate the future, echoing Krishna's call to progress through life and "fare forward" rather than "faring well" by blissfully and ignorantly floating along through time. Once an individual is able to demonstrate a high sense of awareness and self-control, he or she can finally liberate him- or herself from the confines of time, for time will no longer appear to be a linear progression of fleeting moments, but each moment—each drop of water in the ocean—will encompass an eternity (De Masirevich 39).

Because the literal and figurative region between the river (time) and the ocean (eternity) is considerably nebulous, Eliot establishes the coastline as a clear barrier between the two entities. Whereas the river is an extension of the ocean, the land between the two is the battlefield upon which the sea's many voices (Eliot I.2.24) struggle against human notions of time. The ocean's waves constantly crash down upon the rocks, menacingly tossing their victims onto the shore (Bodelsen 85). This immense destructive force exists outside the realm of human consciousness, and humanity's failure to discern the intricacies of the ocean mirrors its misconstrued notions of God. Viewed both within and without the context of "The Dry Salvages," the coast represents the final point of familiarity before one voyages into the unknown domain of the sea. Once an individual has reached the coast, he or she is able to perceive the habitual conflict between time and eternity. Having gained this apprehension, the seashore emphasizes the sacrifice one must make in transitioning from well-understood human time to the unfathomable eternity of the sea.

To an onshore observer, the ocean appears fundamentally strange,

even hostile to human existence (Bodelsen 85). The human mind cannot comprehend the vastness of the sea, for it is as boundless and indefinite as eternity. Lacking rhythm and form, the sea exemplifies an anomalous model of time that conflicts with the rigid linearity of conventional time as recognized by mankind. Instead, the ocean's time revolves in intermittent cycles of creation and destruction that are always in constant competition with human time. Indicative of God's universal dominion, the ocean is not bound by any temporal restrictions, but is in fact an omnipotent entity exercising control over all that exists beyond the reach of human consciousness. Additionally, the sea further illustrates the immateriality of the procession of future, present, and past through the clear presence of its "many voices" (Eliot I.2.24), or different representations of time. Eliot encourages the reader to realize that mankind need not entangle itself within its own fallacious conception of time, for less constraining manifestations of time do exist, but only for those who accept the need to live in harmony with, rather than attempt to conquer eternity.

A final symbol is introduced in the form of a buoy's bell that clangs in response to the ground swell of the ocean. Serving as the lone suggestion of eternity that can be perceived within human time, the clanging of the bell represents a determined appeal to humanity to strive to break free from its oppressive state of time. Not unlike church bells that summon worshippers to prayer, the bell of "The Dry Salvages" serves as an annunciation of the extraordinary degree of freedom associated with eternity (Bodelsen 86). Though human beings are for the most part unable to perceive the significance of the ocean, the bell serves as the only palpable suggestion of a sphere of existence wholly independent from the sovereignty of human time. As human time is measured through the chronometer, so does the buoy's bell mark the time of eternity, forever tolling with the goal of attracting mankind to the liberty of eternity.

To escape from the confines of human time is certainly a formidable task that requires immense faith in the little understood realm of divinity. The key to gaining consciousness of eternity and freeing oneself from the oppression of time chiefly resides in one's understanding of the river. Eliot describes the river as a "reminder/ of what men choose to forget" (I.1.8-9), but he never explicitly states what exactly it is that men have chosen to forget. Taking into account Eliot's own background as an adherent of Anglicanism, it is entirely likely that the subject that has been forgotten is divine faith. As humanity grows indifferent toward God and religion, so will people become increasingly trapped within the endless rhythm of human time. In order to journey to the infinitude of

the ocean, one must gain an acute sense of awareness concerning the pattern of human time. The river, though representative of a strictly rhythmic model of time seemingly opposed to the ocean's eternity, is in harmony with the sea, for it harbors similar qualities of creation and destruction characteristic of the sea. Man cannot bypass the river (neither physically nor metaphysically) on the journey to the sea, for only through appreciation of the river as "a strong brown god" (Eliot I.1.2) will one be able to perceive the great power of the ocean.

Within the larger context of "The Dry Salvages," Movement I introduces the three primary symbols that are prevalent throughout the remainder of the poem and illustrate the various conceptions of time that exist in world thought. The bells' role as a symbol of annunciation is especially significant because Eliot stresses humans' need to understand and accept the Annunciation and Incarnation as the basis for all human life. With the river and the sea, Eliot introduces two conflicting notions of time that he will explore in the proceeding movements and that will help to promote the theme of water throughout the poem. The prominence of the element of water throughout "The Dry Salvages" also integrates the poem with the other three individual quartets, since each quartet represents a specific element (air, earth, water, and fire). In addition to the common elemental themes, "The Dry Salvages" continues the detailed discussion on human beings' relationship with time, ultimately asserting that the traditional linear notion of time restricts mankind, and the transition into eternity is the ultimate goal. Furthermore, there is a preponderance of Christian symbolism within the poem that is characteristic of all of the Four Quartets and is instrumental in contributing to all of the poems' overall meanings. Within "The Dry Salvages" and the Four Quartets as a whole, T. S. Eliot provides his readers with a remarkably personal exploration of the complex nature of time, frequently asserting the importance of self-awareness in combating the restrictions of time as a linear phenomenon, and ultimately concluding that only through divine reverence can one transcend life's seemingly endless rhythm of future, present, and past, and journey into the ocean of infinity.

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Between the Pages

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Normally, on Black Friday, the only place you'll find me is sitting comfortably in my overstuffed cushy green chair, a hot drink in my hand and a smug smile on my face, laughing at anyone stupid enough to go out. Only lunatics and bargain fanatics brave that crazy day when all bets are off and the victor is the one who claims the last Furby. I'd always promised myself I'd never be one of those Black Friday shoppers. But in spite of my better instinct, on that very day two years ago, I found myself shivering in the achingly-cold winter morning, 6:30 a.m., waiting for the doors of San Marcos Half-Price Books to open. I was one in a massive crowd of others, all of us waiting with bated breath and cash, checkbook, and plastic at the ready. The prize that lured us there at that ungodly hour? The promise of a maroon book bag, free to the first hundred through the door. One lucky shopper, the most fortunate of the aforementioned hundred, received a bag that contained a hundred dollar gift card. Which goes a long way at a store where novels cost a dollar.

I was equal parts angry, jealous, and disappointed when I wasn't one of the first hundred lucky bastards through the doors. But as soon as I walked in, the wonder of Half-Price Books made me forget all about it. When I stepped inside, I was hit with the smell of old paper and cheap coffee. Ranks upon ranks of faded paperbacks lined the shelves, their cracked spines standing sentinel. That day, in honor of the pagan festival of Black Friday, shoppers were treated to free hot chocolate and cookies. The cookies were more like some kind of god-awful cracker and the hot chocolate was too sweet, but it didn't matter. I wasn't there for food. I was there for books. And lots of them.

Half-Price Books is the kind of bookstore where you might not find a single volume you come looking for, but in the process of searching, find everything you didn't know you were seeking. The real magic about Half-Price Books is how it always offers something fresh while being comfortingly familiar. While the store itself remains the same, a constant influx of used books ensures that you never encounter the same inventory twice. Hunting for an especially esoteric religious text or the greatest fantasy epic I've never heard of gives me an unparalleled thrill and the constant balanced flow of trading in old books and walking away

with something completely new satisfies a deep, primal part of me.

The first stop is usually the counter where I barter off my old books. The faux-wood surface is always covered in a chaotic jumble of literature waiting to be sorted. Behind it, towers of books wobble dangerously. One day, the stick-thin man with the glasses and the possibly-fake British accent might be working there. The next, you might encounter the pretty girl with the blatantly-dyed red hair who I never quite worked up the nerve to talk to. I've always felt a sense of fellowship with these people; we share the kind of camaraderie alcoholics and junkies seem to feel towards each other. We might come from drastically different backgrounds, places, and families but we are united by one thing: an overwhelming, consuming love of books.

Eventually, the person behind the counter gives me money and I drift towards the fantasy and sci-fi section. It is easily the second largest section in the store, surpassed only by the sheer quantity of romance novels. Every shelf is packed to bursting. Every cover is bent and scuffed and well-loved. If a book is a doorway to a new world, then Half-Price Books is a city of doors. George R.R. Martin puts you smack in the middle of the war torn continent of Westeros. Jim Butcher takes you to the gritty streets of Chicago. Simon R. Greene transports you to the Nightside, a city the light of dawn never touches. You never want to leave. These books are here for you when you're in bed, or bored, or need something to numb the pain of existence, even for just a moment.

Once you've gotten your fill of futuristic chrome and dragons, you make your way to the metaphysics section. This is the place where you can find everything you aren't supposed to want to know about, but still do. The section promises the secrets of the universe—at fifty percent off. One shelf is stuffed full of books on the Zodiac, I-Ching, psychic powers, and other equally dubious but tempting methods of divining the future. Glossy packs of tarot cards fill a locked glass case, just begging to be opened. Another shelf contains a seemingly endless assortment of books about Masonic, Templar, Illuminati—or some combination of the above—conspiracies. The back of the section is well stocked with the forbidden fruits of voodoo, shamanism, witchcraft, and kabala. This was where I found my copies of the aptly-named *Alchemy for Idiots and Liber Kaos*, the obscure religious text of a German anarchist cult. You know everything here is mostly smoke, mirrors, and regurgitated self-help psychobabble, but that doesn't make it any less fascinating.

When you're in the mood for more legitimate spiritual beliefs, head to the religion section. Here you'll find ideas that are arbitrarily deemed slightly more credible than those in the metaphysics aisle. Cracked leather bibles take up a solid quarter of the space. There is one for every

age and interest. The Teen Bible, with faded cartoon surfers smiling enthusiastically out of the cover. The glossy pink Little Princess Bible, its sparkles finally waning. The calm greens and blues of the bibles intended for women traveling reluctantly towards their middle years. All of them seem cheap, almost commercial. Especially when they stand next to the ancient, leather-bound family bibles.

And then, tucked away into a poorly-lit corner in the back of the store, you'll find the bargain book section. They sag sadly on their shelves, forlorn, unloved, forgotten. They are the pound dogs that were never adopted, the kid picked last for the team. The books are put in some semblance of order and then promptly forgotten, left in a last-ditch effort to be sold. I always look here before I leave, if for no other reason than deepest sympathy. I have a sense of understanding with those books because I've been where they are.

I suppose the most interesting part of Half-Price Books is the way every volume you purchase contains two stories for the price of one: the one the author tells and the one its previous owner left behind. You'll find torn bookmarks, dog-eared pages, underlines. For just a moment you can step into another reader's shoes and see the book like they did.

I worry with the advent of eBooks. There's a nagging fear in the back of my mind that Half-Price Books will go the way of Borders, the once-proud franchise that was brought to its knees because it didn't jump on the electronic literature bandwagon quite fast enough. With an eBook, you trade the smell of the pages and the reassuring weight of bound paper for the cheap, fast-food convenience of a plastic e-reader. What if Half-Price Books does go the way of Borders? Where would we go to find those one-of-a-kind books that let us divine someone else's story in the stains and dogears? The answer is simple. There is nowhere else for us to go. Without Half-Price Books, without its stacks and piles and rows of real, solid books we would all be a little lost.

That morning, Black Friday two years ago, I was a little bit disappointed that I didn't walk away with that gift card or even a book bag. But as the cashier rang up my armful of books, I was perfectly content. I had the promise of a visit to the donut shop next door and countless hours spent lost in a story.

Migration Patterns

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l.

I rubbed the dirt between my fingers, letting it fill the lines of my fingerprints, being careful not to let it get close to the blister I rubbed into my thumb milking the goats that morning. I listened to the distinct sound of Joanna's bare feet walking towards me. She walked everywhere barefoot, her feet hard and calloused, her legs hairy and covered in scratches from picking blackberries. Her short brown hair was gathered into its usual ponytail at the nape of her neck. She was twenty-two and around six feet tall, a foot shorter than her older brother, Zachary. She did not particularly resemble Zachary, though they both had angular cheek bones and big lips. "You may come in for lunch now," she said. Both she and Zachary spoke in a way that sounded oddly formal, a product of time spent reading and farming, uninfluenced by spending time with people their own age or watching television. I shook my hands off and breathed a hot sigh of relief. I still wasn't quite sure if I was glad to be there.

I had found St. Francis Farm the summer after my sophomore year of college in an attempt to put a few things behind me... a traffic violation, a few less friends, a case of mono, and a criminal trespassing citation will do that to you. After googling "how to work on a farm for only two weeks," I had joined an organization called WWOOF, where I could connect, via their website, with different farms and work out an agreement for room and board in exchange for labor. So I browsed the New York section of the website, emailing several different farms. I had gotten my heart set on one that was closer to New York City (the whole state is not one big NYC, in case you had forgotten). I finally found one that I felt like really fit me. It was called Sylvester Manor. Its webpage displayed Mumford & Sons-type characters in the middle of a field holding chickens. Obviously this was where I was supposed to be. But, bad news—it was already booked solid for the summer. Mumford had too many sons. I continued to email various farms, until I stumbled upon St. Francis Farm. What got my attention was that it was associated with the Catholic Worker movement. Started by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in the 1930's, Catholic Worker communities

exist all over the world, each focusing on social justice through voluntary poverty, nonviolence, manual labor, and the works of mercy. Dorothy Day described the purpose as trying to "live in accordance with the justice and charity of Jesus Christ." Peter Maurin said they were trying to create a society in which "it was easier to be good." It sounded even better than Sylvester Manor. After all, what's cooler than Mumford & Sons? I'll tell you—philanthropy.

And so here I was, trying to figure out exactly what I was trying to accomplish by weeding the asparagus. I thought we were supposed to be changing the world here, not just trying to make a salad.

As the days came and went, I became used to the routine life of the farm. In the mornings we would wake up at 5:45 in the morning to milk the goats. This was my favorite chore. Despite the fact it was July, the morning air was chilly. I would walk from my room across the dewy grass to the house where I would meet Joanna, standing in the dimly lit living room, feet bare. She patiently waited for me to milk one goat and then she would milk the other, her familiar hand pumping the milk out twice as quickly as I could. I loved the syncopated rhythm of the milk hitting the metal bowl. As the sun would begin to seep through the trees, we would go inside where I would strain the milk, put it in the fridge, and then drink a cup of coffee (with goats' milk from the previous day). We would meet upstairs in the room with windows in the shape of a cross, where we would sit with the light shining in on us and I could hear the clip clop of the Amish carriages driving by. There we would have our thirty minutes of prayer time. Even though this was a Catholic Worker farm, the Hoyt family was Quaker. We spent that time in silence, reading, praying, and meditating. I had never taken this kind of time to pray before. I was always going, always doing, always working. I started using my Book of Common Prayer that my father had gotten me for Christmas. My favorite prayer quickly became For Every Man in his Work, which goes—

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who declares thy glory and showest forth thy handiwork in the heavens and in the earth; Deliver us, we beseech thee, in our several callings, from the service of mammon, that we may do the work which thou givest us to do, in truth, in beauty, and in righteousness, with singleness of heart as thy servants, and to the benefit of our fellow men; for the sake of him who came among us as one that serveth, thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I began to understand Dorothy Day when she quoted Gustav Landauer, saying "The real transformation of society will come only in love, in work, and in stillness." I realized the world was here, under our fingertips, and we had only to reach down and touch it.

II.

I feel the pen in my hand, roll it between my fingers and touch the tip to paper. It has a soft grip and a smooth roll when it writes—all the things a pen should be. I am writing a poem. Sometimes the words take shape in my mouth; I wrap my lips around them and trap them before they spill out. I keep them on paper until they are ready to be spoken. Other times I cannot make the words come. They hide in my head until they want to be found. I show them how to join their brothers on paper.

I am trying to remember what had happened a few days prior.

My friend Savannah, drunk in her studio, is sitting on the floor. We are drinking wine out of a plastic water bottle that she had cut in half to make cups for us. I could feel the carpet under my fingers, stiff from dried paint.

“I remember packing up all of my little treasures when I moved to college and crying because I missed them,” she said, “and when I came home I cried because I didn’t miss them anymore.” She ran her finger down the spine of a book she had checked out from the library, waiting to be returned. All around her are things she would not take with her, gelato spoons, tabs from milk bottles. All of them mean something to her. I thought of T. S. Eliot—we have measured out our lives with gelato spoons. The street she lives on sounds like the shape of her mouth. She would leave it, too.

I couldn’t blame her. I too was always leaving, always collecting little pieces of my life in gelato spoons, always missing them. Sometimes I feel like there’s more of myself out there than what I can find at home. I cannot build my life around gelato spoons. Sometimes the ripples of change that carry us home again must start from somewhere far away. My friend Cory told me once that “light is the same everywhere, you know.” But I didn’t believe him.

III.

The Migratory Habits of Wild Birds

In late October the water trembles as

I brushed the dust from the porcelain tea set
that sits next to my bed, a present from my 5th Christmas.
It would not go in the boxes that laid like closed mouths on
the flight patterns of North American wild birds
the floor next to me, confident in the finality of their destination.
I wondered if the person who would come back to this room,
if the me who would return at Christmas time would
shift southward to cover 2,500 miles of open sky.
miss these things like I missed them now.

I cried because I knew that she wouldn’t.
As the days grow shorter
I take refuge on the floor of her studio.
I watch her look up at the ceiling
these majestic birds rise higher and higher
as the wine sloshes around the chipped V’s in her cup
looking at the walls that make her cage.
preparing for the journey that will take them
I can see her waiting, leaving, knowing, thinking—
her brain moving the thoughts around
far away from the land in which they were born.
that she doesn’t think matter,
that echo around the room
and the wine stains the porcelain red
When they go they leave only the scar of a dark V
as they wash over my face and into my mouth.
across the setting sun.
I chase them down with water.

IV.

Baby grabbed my hand tightly. Her soft, brown skin was warm against mine. She took me and pulled me to her chest, enveloping me in the folds of her sari and rolls of her skin. She was a big woman, and when she smiled, her cheeks pushed her eyes into the shape of almonds, revealing her crooked teeth. We had never met before, but she loved me, I could feel it in her hands as they held mine. The other women she was with hugged us too, one by one.

Our team, all seven of us, sat on the floor in the small, bright blue room, surrounded by Indian women. The room was the bottom floor of Grace Home. Covered by the sweat of many bodies and the dust from many feet, it was a gathering place for eunuchs, for prostitutes, a place to dance for orphans, for worship, a graduation hall, a dining room.

I had come to India as a missionary. I wanted to see India, to travel, and to change the world. Every twenty one year old is an activist, after all. I wasn’t just here to hang out. But here I was, surrounded by twenty women who didn’t speak English, who loved me, who used to be part of Mumbai’s sex industry, and all I could do was sit and listen. They were part of an organization called the Tamar Ministry. As we sat there, our Punjabi suits sticking to our backs, they told us their stories. A woman named Asha translated for them. Asha means “hope” in Hindi.

Some of them had gone into the industry because they had mouths to feed and no way to make money. Some of them had been sold by

family members. Baby was one of the first ones who had been rescued, along with Ronnie. They told us about how they would go rescue others, fighting off several men as they would grab a girl and take her to safety. I held my breath each time one of the women began to tell her stories, praying that they would not ask me for mine. What could I say of my life that would mean anything to them?

When they left we went upstairs with the children. Johnson sat next to me on the floor of their room. He lived on the third floor of Grace Home, along with nine other children—Titus, Paul, Peterson, Daniel, Sharisa, Theresa, Sarah, and Solomon. All of their parents had died of AIDS. We were surrounded by the other children, occupied with the Justin Bieber music blasting from Kate’s iPod next to us. I was looking over at them when Johnson grabbed my arm and said, “Talk to me, sister.” His English was pretty good. All the kids called us “sister,” but it sounded more like “see-ster.” Johnson was 12 years old, though I would not have known it. All the children, as well as most people in India, were very small. He was charming, smiling at me with his teeth white in contrast with his dark skin and eyes. I loved them all, but Johnson was special to me.

“What do you want to do when you grow up?” I asked.

“I want to be an engineer,” he said, “what are you going to do?”

“I’m studying poetry.”

“Ah! Write me a poem, sister.”

I was embarrassed. I thought of my previous poems...nothing he would like. If I was going to write a poem for a twelve-year-old-English-as-a-second-language Indian boy, I’d have to write it to him. Nothing based on imagery or pretty words, nothing about falling in love for the first time, or light pollution, or how hard it was to be twenty-one years old. It wasn’t that he couldn’t understand those things, they just weren’t important to him. But love was important to him. He knew about love and he knew about losing the people he loved. I wanted him to know that I was coming back, one day. I wrote him a poem that rhymed—something simple, something I would never turn in to one of my English classes. I watched him read it.

“Ah, sister, very good!”

Later that night, as we started to leave Grace Home for the last time, Johnson grabbed my arm and tucked it under his, holding it close to his body.

“I won’t let you leave, sister.”

I cried on the rickshaw all the way back to our hotel. I had come to India trying to change the world. I asked myself, But why had I come? To write a poem? To listen? I did not know.

V.

To My New Friends In India

Though my new friends
and I are far apart
there is love in
all of our hearts
and memories
that make the
time and space
between us seem
to be erased, so when
we all meet again
we will still be
the closest friends.

VI.

I find myself with my pen in my hand again, rolling it around, trying to familiarize myself with this old friend of mine. Of course, grasping at words is easy. Actually grasping them and putting them down on paper is hard. My eyes wander across my desk, resting on postcards and dirty coffee cups. I run across a quote I had written down when I was at St. Francis Farm from Dorothy Day’s autobiography, *The Long Loneliness*, “We cannot love God unless we love each other, and to love we must know each other. We know Him in the breaking of bread, and we know each other in the breaking of bread, and we are not alone anymore. Heaven is a banquet and life is a banquet, too, even with a crust, where there is companionship.” Gelato spoons catch my eye. What’s worth writing about? Why do we even write at all? I have a feeling they might be variations of the same question, but I begin by looking at what I’ve held on to. What is it that I have held on to, and why? I find myself going back to the people who have loved me and to the people I have loved. We leave and we stay, we farm and we rescue. We write. We save the world in all kinds of ways. Cory was right—light is the same everywhere and we can see that everything is changing. But these are the people we love and the people who love us, and the earth under our fingertips.

