

A black and white photograph of a young Black man with short hair, looking directly at the camera. He is wearing a dark, textured hooded jacket. A cigarette is held in his mouth. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees. The entire image is framed by a thin black border.

# Tapestries

SFU's Literary & Visual Arts  
Magazine

Each year the School of Arts and Letters hosts the Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest, a creative writing and visual arts competition open to all Saint Francis undergraduates. Students may submit written entries of up to 3,000 words in the following categories: (1) fiction, (2) creative nonfiction, including personal narratives and memoirs, (3) essay writing, and (4) poetry, with a minimum of five poems per submission. Students may also submit works of visual art, such as photographs, sculptures, paintings (oil, water, and acrylic), sketches, and collages.

The contest begins in November and ends in early March, during which time students may submit as many entries as they wish. Entries must be either e-mailed to Dr. Brennan Thomas at [bthomas@francis.edu](mailto:bthomas@francis.edu) or personally delivered to Room 321 Scotus Hall before the announced contest deadline.

The 2011-2012 contest winners and honorable mentions were published in Saint Francis University's new literary art magazine. Titled *Tapestries*, the magazine reflects the creative talents of the university's burgeoning writers and artists. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not reflect those of the contest judges and magazine editor or those of the Saint Francis community.

**For more information regarding the Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest, please contact:**

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# Tapestries

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Weaving the Threads of Creativity & Innovation

***Editor***

Brennan Thomas

***Cover Artwork*** by Lloyd Foster

“Comeback Season” – Photograph (1<sup>st</sup> Place Winner in Visual Arts)

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## Editor's Note

Between November 2011 and March 2012, over 80 writing entries and 160 visual arts entries were submitted for the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest. Written submissions varied from short stories and one-act plays to essays on innovative health care practices and the ethical dimensions of collegiate athletics. Visual art entries were equally diverse, ranging from black-and-white photographs of outdoor scenes to explosive collages of colors and lights, from sculptures and sketches to oil and acrylic paintings. Needless to say, the judges had a difficult time selecting the winners from such an impressive array of literary and artistic talent.

First, therefore, I would like to thank all students who submitted such exemplary writing and artwork for the 2011-2012 Gunard Berry Carlson Writing Contest. Your writing was a pleasure to read, your artistic creations stirring to the imagination. I also wish to thank the writing judges—Deborah Budash, Bradley Coffield, Patrick Farabaugh, Balazs Hargittai, and Janice Rummell—who worked tirelessly to ensure that all written submissions were carefully read and scored, and the visual arts judge, Charles Olson, who personally reviewed every visual art entry.

Thanks to Amanda Williamson, who designed the contest's flyers; Dr. Wayne Powel, Dr. Timothy Whisler and Ms. Donna Menis for their support in organizing and promoting the contest; Laurie Madison; and the staff of the SFU Print Shop.

Finally, I would like to thank Mrs. Barbara C. Travaglini and her son, Frederick C. Travaglini, directors of the Gunard B. Carlson Memorial Foundation, for their long-standing interest in and encouragement of student writers and for their continued generosity in funding the writing contest.

And now, please enjoy the inaugural issue of *Tapestries*.

Best regards,  
Dr. Brennan Thomas

## WRITING JUDGES

**Ms. Deborah Budash**, Director of the Masters of Health Sciences and Masters of  
Medical Science Programs

**Mr. Bradley Coffield**, Assistant Information Services Librarian

**Dr. Balazs Hargittai**, Professor of Organic Chemistry

**Dr. Patrick Farabaugh**, Assistant Professor of Communication Arts

**Ms. Janice Rummell**, Assistant Professor of Accounting

## VISUAL ARTS JUDGE

**Mr. Charles Olson**, Associate Professor, Director of the Springtime in Italy Program

## CONTEST COORDINATOR & MAGAZINE EDITOR

**Dr. Brennan Thomas**, Assistant Professor of English, Writing Center Director

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# Random Shots (Fiction)

Eric Horell

Mona loved to take pictures of anything. Literally, anything. Everything. It seems that way as I look at the pictures sprawled out in front of me. Many are of me. I'm not smiling in many of them, but not because I'm not a friendly guy. You say "Cheese!" and I smile like Pavlov's dog. She rarely gave me a head's up is all.

She was big into natural, unscripted pictures. There are pictures of me driving, of me cooking, of me walking, of me sleeping. There's one of me in the shower. It's not sexual; she was playing with a new camera in the bathroom, experimenting with the mirrors and stuff, and I walked out of the shower. I didn't even attempt to cover myself. I'm immune to flashes now. Lightning and strobes have lost their magic. Anyway, I'm in the background, pale-assed and reaching for a towel. It's one of my favorites. The focus of the picture is her and this look she has on her face of concentration, trying to master this new camera, and I'm in the background, naked. Like where's Waldo. Where's the ass.

I don't think she ever threw out a single photograph. They litter the coffee table, they coat the floor. They fill up dozens of old printer paper boxes. For every hundred there's one shot that's decent, and she wouldn't have been this generous. "One in a thousand is good and the rest are garbage," she'd say. When I asked her why she kept them all, she'd shrug and say, "Maybe I'll make a collage out of them someday." She never did, but now I see what it would have looked like, sprawled across the living room. It only looks like chaos.

Mona was also lousy at keeping pictures organized. None of the boxes have dates or even general years. Some boxes have photos from our trip to the Outer Banks last year, but then in that same box I'll find pictures from our days back in college. I'll find pictures of her in her old high school uniform and then a picture taken a week before she was taken from me. Here's some from our wedding, here's some of an old boyfriend. I don't think there are any naked pictures of him.

I'm trying to put the pictures in order. I'm looking for something. I'm looking for someone. I'm looking for something. I don't know.

You ever look at pictures and wonder who the people are in the background? Go look. Look right now. Look at them. Just people, that's all you think they are. They're shrubs and trees, background. You don't ever look at them unless they're so ridiculous you can't help but stare at them, like you spotted dogs humping in the background or something.

Those are people, though. Not particularly interesting people, mind you, but that's what makes them so interesting, that that many uninteresting people are together. They all have stories. Some are probably going through messy divorces. Some are probably about to scream at their kids. Some are probably about to go make love somewhere. There's this one picture Mona took of me at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Pittsburgh Patriots Pub Crawl. Behind me there's a guy crying. The bar is very dark and something was up with the exposure, but I can tell he's crying. He's so upset I wonder if he killed anyone because of it. I think he did. I do. And then I wondered if he killed himself.

It's the kids who fascinate me even more. What have they done since then? Are they successful? Are they happy? Are they celebrities I see every day, staring at me from magazines? That little girl standing behind Mona while she and her mother wait in line for Space Mountain at Disney World years ago, is that Katy Perry? Can you prove it isn't? Could Ms. Perry disprove it? And then you have to wonder how many of those kids are unhappy and going to be for the rest of their lives. Probably most.

When Mona died, the funeral home asked us if we had any pictures we could use to make a few collages, for the good times. I laughed in spite of it all. Did we have pictures? Me and her parents, we filled the place. There were pictures of Mona in the sink at one month old, and then on her bike with training wheels, and then without training wheels. Here's the fish she caught, the picture she painted for Mother's Day, the ashtray she molded for Father's Day. She has a

diploma in many of them: kindergarten, elementary, high school, college. There's a whole board dedicated to family portraits and you watch her grow. You see her teeth vanish and reappear. You see her eyes covered by thick glasses only to vanish when she got contacts. Her hair gets shorter and shorter, like it's slowly being pulled back into her head, from her ass to her mid-back to her shoulders to somewhere around her ears.

There's another board dedicated just to me and her. I'm smiling in all of them. So is she. It's hard to catch someone by surprise when you have to ask someone else to take the picture. There aren't enough of these pictures, but I'm biased.

You take the time to look at these pictures and you notice things. You notice those people I was talking about. You begin to think about things, about other people. You wonder how small the world is. You wonder if it really is that small or if it's just the universe fucking with you.

In one picture of us, of me and Mona in front of Niagara Falls, I noticed this woman in the background. In the picture she's wearing a fuzzy white sweatshirt and her grey hair is carelessly tousled, like it hasn't been washed in days, and she's so damn pale. She looks like a toadstool with a slit for a mouth. She's looking at somebody off camera and that slit is open like she's saying something. She's not even looking our way. I saw her and I thought about her, but nothing too complex. I thought she was just a homely little woman, maybe arguing with her husband who dragged her out of the house so they could go on a vacation and perhaps rekindle the spark in their relationship. Maybe she was just a toadstool, lost and asking for directions so she could make her way back to the underbrush.

But then there's a picture of me and Mona at our college graduation from Penn State University. Right over Mona's left shoulder you can spot her, you can see the toadstool. You can barely see her because she really is a forgettable woman standing in a crowd, but there she is standing on a chair, looking toward the camera. She's shielding her eyes with her hand, like she's looking for someone. It's her, I know it because she's dressed the same way, that same sweatshirt on a ninety-degree day. Still, though, I could pretend it was coincidence. Niagara Falls is a popular tourist spot and Penn State is an enormous university, and the two aren't *that* far apart from each other, not really. These things happen. The universe occasionally gets sloppy and reuses past stock characters in your life. You don't care because you never notice.

I noticed this woman, though. I now saw her. As the viewing went on, as friends and family came up to shake my hand and tell me how sad it all was that Mona was taken from this world, I kept examining the collages. There the woman was behind Mona at the park, walking a dog, which was off camera, and again, a seat behind Mona and me in the picture we bought when we rode the Phantom's Revenge in Kennywood, only to reappear behind Mona and me at Captain Hokey's in Virginia Beach. In that one Mona and I are holding up plates heaped with crab legs and we have these stupid gigantic grins on our faces. We fought about something before dinner—I can't remember what—and she convinced me to ask the busboy to take our picture. He spoke a little English, but it was tainted with a heavy European accent, I think Norwegian. I tried explaining the controls to him, and he kept saying "Yah," only to frown when I was done and ask, "Vait, vaht?" Mona started dying which made me start laughing and ta-da, one shot where we both look constipated and happy about it. It's one of my favorite pictures of us.

Then that woman ruined it. Right behind Mona again. She's shoveling shrimp into her mouth and, judging from the pile of shells in front of her, she'd been going at it for some time. Now I look at that photo and all I can see is her gaping maw, forever opened wide so she can gulp down another shrimp. It's ruined.

There's a picture of Mona and me in Japan; we traveled the country for our honeymoon. Mona always wanted to shoot there and I managed to find a good enough deal so that we could make it happen. A whole collage is dedicated to just Mona's shots from this trip. Faces of Japanese men and women, boys and girls smile and frown from the pictures. Some wear heavy make-up and traditional dress and others are simpler but somehow warmer. There are shots of the coastline, of the mountains, of Tokyo's skyscrapers. In the center of the collage is another one of my favorite pictures, *the favorite one*, one which Mona blew up and gave to me as a



Christmas present. We're standing on a busy sidewalk, all these Japanese business men and women running around us, cell phones pressed to their ears and their faces pinched in conversation. Their skin is almond and their hair a shiny black, and I almost blend in with them what with my dark complexion.

Mona shines, though. I'm holding her in my arms, kissing her on the side of her mouth, and she's smiling and playfully trying to pull away because she wasn't expecting it; she had issues with public displays of affection, especially when we were in such a corporate setting. Her blonde hair shimmers because it's gently drizzling and there's red in her cheeks because she's blushing. She's the center point of the picture, perhaps the only I own where she is the soul of the shot.

That woman, though. She was there. Far behind us, before lost in the crowd, now front and center. Same damn sweatshirt, same damn slit mouth, same toadstool. In this one, though, she's waving and smiling, smiling and waving directly into the camera. She knew what was going on. She knew when to smile and wave. She knew what she was doing, what she was ruining. Now, when I look at that picture, when I want to remember Mona and how things used to be, all I see is that fucking toadstool. My eyes forget all about Mona's blonde hair and her blushing cheeks and so I forget about how she felt in my arms and how she did kiss me, long and tenderly, after the picture was taken. No, now it's just that old woman, ugly and pale and a plague on my wife's photography.

A man who came to the viewing owns a local art gallery. He told me how impressed he was with Mona's eye, specifically in reference to the Japan series. He wanted to know if there were more shots of similar material. I said there were, and he gave me his number, urging me to gather them and call him. "Perhaps a show can be organized in her benefit," he said, "to take care of lingering expenses." I told him I was definitely interested, but I needed some time. He gently patted my arm and said he understood.

That's where I am now, standing in my living room, staring at the explosion of glossies strewn about my feet, originally looking for artistic beauty, now searching for that old woman, that pale, ugly woman. To the unseeing eye it's just a bunch of random shots, random times haphazardly scattered about the room, but I see the pattern, I see the rotten thread that holds them together. The truth is in the photos; she's there, you can see her, and I nudged a few people at the funeral home and asked if they noticed that the same woman was in pic A and B. "Huh," they'd say. "No, I didn't notice that. Small world, huh?" So it's not like I'm the only one who sees her.

The truth is, the world isn't that small. There are millions of places, billions of people, and trillions upon trillions of moments, an infinite combination of instances that can occur in a single camera flash. The constants should be minimal, namely Mona or myself, not the recurring toadstool woman. I see trends. She's only in shots with Mona, for one, and only when we're in a public place. None of her artsy shots of flowers and sunsets. None of the ones with just me sleeping or eating a sandwich. Just the few with Mona. And I think she might be in every single one. Sometime she's hard to find, blending into the background like the fungus she is, and other times it's like she's silently screaming, holding up a sign that reads, "I am Toadstool Woman!"

I have a few ideas about who she is. In my crazier times I think she's death stalking Mona, and then I cry and beat myself up because I should have noticed if the Reaper, pudgy and pale, was haunting my wife. Then I think that maybe she's either the universe or God, constantly around not to protect or intervene on Mona's behalf, but to remind me that I don't see everything I could or should, that I'm not in near as much control as I pretend I am. And then this thinking leads toward the worst idea of all, the thought that doesn't bring reflection or terror or hatred or anything: the idea that it really is just a coincidence, a hiccup in the grand machine, spittle in the universe that statistically shouldn't happen but does and that's it. There's no meaning, there's no reason. There's just a toadstool plaguing my wife's photos. She serves no higher purpose. She's just there, a trivia bit, something to point out to your friends

and say, "Look at this. Isn't this funny? Isn't this hilarious how this same witch of a woman is here, here, and here? And here and here and here?"

And then they'll look and they won't laugh, but they'll frown and nod their heads. "Yeah," they'll agree, "yeah, that really is funny. Huh."



Erika Deissler  
"Blue Depression" (Photograph)

# To Be Happy (Essay Writing)

Jocelyn Hughes

You know that moment when you're at the top of a roller coaster, about to make the plunge, and all life freezes for just a second so you can take it all in? You're filled with ecstasy and you're on top of the world. Literally, so it would seem. If you could capture that moment in a picture and save it for later, what would it say to you? Would it induce a rush of memory and nostalgia, or would you appreciate it as something that came and went? Neither answer is right or wrong, in a snapshot. It's how you live your life that measures your happiness in the end.

So if happiness is more than just a passing mood, more than what Ian Cunningham of Sussex University calls a "subjective response to an interaction between a person and their environment," where does it come from? Much as some people like to think so, economic standing does not necessarily correspond to one's happiness. One study conducted in 2007 by business lecturer Hélène Cherrier and marketing professor Caroline Legu Munoz suggested financial detachment as an important decision on the path to long-term contentment. Cherrier and Munoz seemed to believe that, according to some other recent empirical studies, happiness represented "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his/her life as a whole" (Cherrier and Munoz). That is the basic definition that I have been working off of myself. I define happiness as a state of being, something that makes life worth living. This part may surprise some people, but if it's a state of being, it can be under their personal control. They may just have to change how they think.

Simply look at the world around you. So many things to stimulate the senses...the smell of fresh air, the warmth of the sun, the softness of the grass (or the crunch of the snow, depending on the season). Everything available to your touch. And it all has a purpose; it exists for a reason. The same applies to you. Everything you see, everything you experience, has meaning. The loss of all that greenery in fall leads to rebirth in spring; good things fall apart so that better things can fall together. I know it sounds cliché, but that's how life is sometimes. Things become cliché because they fit so well. When people see the meaning in things, they don't take them for granted so much. Meanings fulfill them; if they find meaning in less, they won't feel the need for more. Plus, when people start valuing the smaller things in life, they become those things. They appreciate the person who helped them pick up their books, so they become that person. They become the person who says hello to strangers for no reason at all, because they know how much that would mean to them. What's happening to these people? They're beginning to put humanity first. They're becoming part of a whole (Bacon).

When a person is no longer his number one priority, being positive becomes easier. My father constantly tried to share this lesson with me when he was teaching me how to pitch: "You'll never accomplish anything if you don't stay positive." I've certainly made some progress since those days, but I could still do better. When someone is always dwelling on the mistakes he made in the past, how is he ever going to fix them or make up for them? If he is constantly reminiscing about how great times used to be, there is no present for him. He is missing out on life, and the people in it are missing him. One's life is what one makes it, so if a person doesn't make it anything, happiness isn't just going to fall on him. If a person is unhappy with the present but does nothing to change things for the future, he shouldn't be surprised if he is still unhappy. A safe bet to make at any given point in one's life is that it could always be worse. It always remains that one still has something to lose, does it not? At any given moment, anyone still has what could be only one thing, no matter how small it is. People can always choose to focus on what they have, instead of what they think they're missing.

Don't get me wrong; I know how easy it is to take life for granted when it becomes barely more than a routine. In my own experience, anything that becomes a pattern becomes less meaningful. So what I'm saying is this: don't make patterns. I tried to tell my parents when I was younger that the grace we said before dinner every night was just an array of memorized

words, but they had nothing better to replace it with. Even scheduled, regular outings can lose their excitement. The movie *Date Night*, with Tina Fey and Steve Carell, provides a fictional example of what happens when those things become mere habit; as a married couple they vowed to go out on a date every week, but as time goes on the outings fade into not much more than an inconvenience. Even in the workplace, where some people can barely get through the day, there's no better solution than change. In an interview I conducted for an Honors class, I asked the woman I was interviewing what her proudest moment was. As it happened, she had just made a career change to what had been her dream job for quite some time. She admitted it was terrifying, putting herself out there. She wasn't a very assertive person, and she knew making the change would require her to step outside her comfort zone. Her determination paid off; she got the job, which put her on the same timetable as her children so that she could be home when she was needed while continuing to help others in her career. She'll remember that moment forever, the moment she earned her happiness by not merely doing what was easy. I can just imagine how satisfying that must have been...and no one can ever take that away from her.

Those things play a big part in being happy, the thoughts and actions related to taking one's life into one's own hands. When people are in control of their own well-being, there's really nothing between them and happiness. That's why I think it's so important for people to know who they are as individuals. If a person knows who he is, no one can tell him how to act or how to feel. No one can take away his identity. When one is familiar with oneself, everything becomes clearer, or at least that's how it was for me. In the past, I never knew what I wanted—in a man, in a career, in myself. I don't know if it's a matter of maturity or development or what, but towards the spring of my senior year of high school I went from wanting to be a molecular biologist to wanting to be a social worker. The fall of that same year I started dating the same person I'm dating now; it had finally become clear to me that he was what I wanted after knowing him for five years. After figuring out who I was, my whole life fell into place, and nothing could feel more right.

These things aren't easy. Believe me, if anyone knows that, I do. Taking risks? I still haven't mastered that one. But I also know that if happiness were easily attained, everyone would be happy and we would all live in harmony. If it were easy, it wouldn't be a matter of strength or personal growth. It's not thriving at what's easy that sustains most people—it's the satisfaction of conquering life's difficulties, the gratification of cause and effect when a person tries and succeeds. The harder things are, the more significant they are. Making sacrifices and reaping the benefits—nothing could be more rewarding. Happiness is a state of being, not a fleeting emotion.

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Laura Harmon  
"Paris with its Playful Charm" (Photograph)

# The Ethical Dilemma of Paying College Athletes: An Argument of Fairness and a Kantian Perspective (Essay Writing)

Ethan Hullihen

Armchair athletes and ESPN pundits have long debated whether college athletes should be paid. What may give surprise is that philosophers could also enter the debate, as the issue can be explored from an ethical standpoint as well. That student-athletes aren't compensated enough seems reasonable, as they generate vast amounts of money with the games they play; some contend that a free education is more than enough compensation for merely playing a sport. Others see the label of student-athlete as a cover for an exploitative system. The following paper presents two philosophical arguments concerning the issue—one of fairness and the second applying Kant's Categorical Imperative—in an attempt to draw a conclusion based on the evidence they provide.

## Major College Athletics as Big Business

The evidence is substantial and unarguable: college athletics has morphed into big business, no different from any major corporation. In major college sports, television is where the money lies. In recent years, the two major revenue-generating sports—football and basketball—have helped reel in large television contracts that allow networks to air their respective championships. For example, in 2010, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) entered into a 14-year, \$10.8 billion agreement with CBS Sports and Turner Broadcasting System Inc. to broadcast the Division I Men's Basketball Championship ("CBS Sports"). As for football, the NCAA forged a four-year agreement with ESPN in 2008, which allowed the network to broadcast four of the five major bowl games in the Bowl Championship Series (BCS)—including the title game—beginning in 2011, netting the NCAA \$500 million ("ESPN, BCS Agree"; Wilbon). The BCS has always been extremely lucrative, as large sums of money are available to both teams and conferences just for appearing in one of the games. Six conferences in college football automatically qualify for a BCS bowl, meaning that the conference winner plays in one of the bowl games. According to *The New York Times*, in 2009 an appearance by one team in a BCS game netted their respective conference \$18 million to be shared amongst its members, along with an additional \$4.5 million for any subsequent team that made an appearance (Bakalar). The money is not only in postseason broadcasting, however. According to *The New York Times*, "four conferences—the Big 12, the A.C.C., the Pac-12 and the Southeastern Conference—have signed football TV deals worth more than a billion dollars" (Thamel).

Coaches have been able to cash in on this prosperity. Nearly half of the 68 teams that made the 2011 NCAA Men's Basketball tournament were led by coaches who eclipsed salaries of \$1 million, and "58 of 120 FBS football coaches" could say the same (O'Neil). Examples abound, but two paint a particularly disheartening picture: Alabama football coach Nick Saban will earn \$5.9 million this season, a sum that "[t]he most distinguished professor at the University of Alabama won't make...in his entire tenure in Tuscaloosa," and former Ohio State football coach Jim Tressel was making enough money before his 2011 resignation "to cover in-state tuition, fees, room, board and books for 166 students for an entire year" (Wilbon; Lubinger).

Money talks, and it is obvious universities are listening. When considering the money that could be lost if a school were left behind, former Oregon president David Frohnmayr states, "It's a little bit like musical chairs...You don't want to be the person left standing" (qtd. in Thamel). In the eyes of many, it is the athletes who are left standing when the music stops. Whether this is morally defensible deserves to be examined.

## Is Not Paying College Athletes Fair?

Before any insight can be gained concerning the idea of fairness to and compensation of college athletes, one of the main ideals that the NCAA bases its entire institution on—the student-athlete—must be examined. Skeptics contend the NCAA hides behind and profits off ideals such as the “student-athlete,” while the organization claims this principle is only for the betterment of their athletes. When examining the origins behind the term, one may find the ethical ground to be rather shaky.

In “The Shame of College Sports,” written for *The Atlantic* in October 2011, Taylor Branch attempts to expose the NCAA as a hypocritical organization and prove that student-athletes should be paid. In his article, Branch insults the ideals of the student-athlete, dedicating an entire section—“The Myth of the ‘Student-Athlete’”—to expose the ills associated with the term. First, Branch deconstructs the somewhat convoluted definition of the phrase:

The term...was deliberately ambiguous. College players were not students at play (which might understate their athletic obligations), nor were they just athletes in college (which might imply they were professionals). That they were high-performance athletes meant they could be forgiven for not meeting the academic standards of their peers; that they were students meant they did not have to be compensated, ever, for anything more than the cost of their studies. (4)

While this vagueness is upsetting to many, it’s the NCAA’s use of the term as a weapon that often inspires the most contempt. Branch describes the ideal as “a shield” that the NCAA “continues to invoke...as both a legalistic defense and a noble ideal” (4). Branch explains the first instance in which the NCAA was able to exploit the term:

The term came into play in the 1950s, when the widow of Ray Dennison, who had died from a head injury received while playing football in Colorado...filed for workmen’s-compensation death benefits. Did his football scholarship make the fatal collision a “work-related” accident? Was he a school employee, like his peers who worked part-time as teaching assistants and bookstore cashiers? Or was he a fluke victim of extracurricular pursuits? The Colorado Supreme Court ultimately agreed with the school’s contention that he was not eligible for benefits, since the college was “not in the football business.” (4)

Such ambiguity makes it easy to see why many express disdain for the NCAA’s seemingly hypocritical standards; however, there are other prevalent and captivating issues of fairness that need be considered.

## Tax Exempt Status of the NCAA

Despite its major money-making abilities, large television deals, and coaches who are compensated like CEOs, the NCAA is actually a nonprofit, tax-exempt institution. This status is granted to the NCAA via “section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code,” which states that “[t]o be tax-exempt...an organization must be organized and operated exclusively for exempt purposes set forth in section 501(c)(3)” (“Tax-Exempt Status”; “Exempt Requirements”). Exemptions are granted to organizations that are charitable or educational in nature—in which the meaning of “charitable” includes the “advancement of education”—as well as those that foster national or international amateur sports competition (“Exempt Purposes”). Under these guidelines, the NCAA clearly qualifies as a 501(c)(3). However, is there a connection between the education provided by colleges under the NCAA’s umbrella and the big business that has become college sports? Eyeing the sums exchanged, Congress has pondered whether the tax-exempt status afforded the NCAA is in fact fair. In 2006, Rep. Bill Thomas, R-Calif., sent a letter to then NCAA President Myles Brand stating, “Most of the activities undertaken by educational organizations clearly further their [tax] exempt purpose...The exempt purpose of intercollegiate athletics, however, is less apparent, particularly in the context of major college football and men’s basketball programs” (qtd. in Wieberg). Thomas questioned the role of “lucrative television contract[s], coaches’ escalating salaries and schools’ ‘state-of-the-art’ facilities” in the education process (Wieberg). However, the NCAA disagrees, stating that their “mission is to

ensure that intercollegiate athletics remain an integral part of higher education while also making certain that student-athletes remain an integral part of the student body” and that they are “no different than other highly visible nonprofit organizations that raise significant revenue but spend it in beneficial ways that are consistent with federal law,” in their case being “the education of student-athletes within the collegiate model of athletics” (“Tax-Exempt Status”).

### **How to Share Funds Equally**

Finally, perhaps the most compelling argument concerning fairness first operates under the assumption that student-athletes would actually be being paid. What is problematic about this assumption is that if the NCAA ever decided to split up its billions of dollars, how would it do so fairly? In business, it is commonplace to pay those who contribute to the success of the business the most, as they are seen as the main generators of the profit. In college sports, it has already been established that football and basketball generate the most revenue. Following the aforementioned business model would not only create problems from sport to sport, such as athletes in nonrevenue sports not being paid, but also a problem of what’s fair within a single sport. Gary Ritter of *Holy Turf* ponders such implications:

If we simply gave each player a \$20K stipend...this would remain “unfair” to those who contribute the most to the enjoyment of the fans. Indeed, a system which pays the same stipend to the Heisman winning running back as to the 3rd string punter also raises questions with respect to fairness. Or, if we chose to award stipends to all football players, what do we do with volleyball players, or soccer players, whom (according to federal regulations) must be treated the same despite the fact that they are not generating the same total amount of fan-fun as are the best football players? (“Monopoly on Athletic Kids?”)

If fair distribution of earnings were not troublesome enough, further problems are presented by Title IX, “a law passed in 1972 that requires gender equity for boys and girls in every educational program that receives federal funding” (“History of Title IX”). This ruling is partly the reason why universities field women’s sports teams, afford them scholarships, and provide other services that promote equality. It would be nearly impossible to institute a system that only provides for the main money makers and not break Title IX obligations.

These issues of fairness come into play in the NCAA’s decision to not pay student-athletes; however, as Michael Wilbon of ESPN points out, this may be more of a cop-out than a conscious decision of fairness:

Using the inability to distribute the funds equally as an impediment is an excuse, a rather intellectually lazy one at that. Nothing about the way hundreds of millions of dollars is distributed is equitable or even fair....Of the \$174 million distributed from five bowl games, 83.4 percent went to six conferences in 2011....So, the equitable-application excuse for not paying athletes doesn’t hold water; at the very least there’s a level of hypocrisy here that ought to make the opponents of paying athletes uncomfortable. (“College Athletes Deserve”)

Whether or not the NCAA currently distributes funds equally is a fair point; however, when considering this argument from a deontological aspect, what is moral is ultimately what follows the rules. Laws are in place, and the NCAA must follow them. Due to this fact, any kind of compensation student-athletes would ever receive would have to be allocated equally between males and females, which ultimately may not be the fairest practice.

It is evident that arguments abound concerning fairness and a clear answer may not be attainable. Approaching the issue from a Kantian point of view provides an even more interesting view on the debate.

### **Paying College Athletes: A Kantian Perspective**

An argument for paying student-athletes from the perspective of Kant’s Categorical Imperative—which states that humans are autonomous and thus should be treated as ends and never as means—brings about some cogent points. First, autonomy must be considered, as



it is the basis for the Categorical Imperative. Student-athletes are free to sign over their rights in order to play college sports if they so choose; however, do they truly possess such autonomy? Consider that many of the most successful and promising high school athletes are young black men—usually from impoverished backgrounds—who see sports as a way to keep out of trouble or as the “only way out.” As they gain their athletic skill, they see it as their only avenue to college, as they could not afford it otherwise. Furthermore, today’s society stresses the value of a college education, and many high school students feel pressured to go to college, whether they are college material or not. Aside from this fact, college athletics is seen as a road to an eventual pro-career, where athletes will gain the funds to finally provide for their families. As they are preparing to enter into college, they hear voices from all angles—parents, coaches, boosters, maybe even agents—telling them how wonderful they are and how much they are needed at “School X.” Considering these many strong cultural and social factors, do these aspiring athletes truly have autonomy? A strong case could be made that these athletes indeed lack autonomy, and if they truly do not possess it, is it ethical for universities to benefit so much financially off of young people who are just trying to overcome these social and economic hardships? This is another aspect of the Categorical Imperative that needs to be analyzed to judge the ethical arguments in play.

Are athletes truly used as just a means to an end rather than being the end themselves? The NCAA swears this is not the case, arguing that they value education above anything else and that teaching values such as sportsmanship, hard work, dedication, and teamwork through athletics is their main goal. Despite their stance, many argue that the NCAA is only looking out for themselves and how much money they can make off of their “student-athletes.” For example, Branch interviewed former North Carolina president William Friday, who discussed the stranglehold that money seems to have on universities. Branch says that Friday “longed for a campus identity more centered in an academic mission,” and quoted a troubling admission: “If television wants to broadcast football from here on a Thursday night...we shut down the university at 3 o’clock to accommodate the crowds” (1). Further evidence exists that athletic events often interfere with education, as Kellia Ramares of *Global Research* states: “Despite the argument that a longer season would interfere with the players’ studies, conferences have added post-season basketball tournaments. More games mean more revenue” (“Big-Time College Sports”). These examples do not match the sort of moral integrity that the NCAA upholds. One final example may be the best indicator of the NCAA’s true intentions. In December 2010, the NCAA suspended five prominent Ohio State football players—including starting quarterback Terrelle Pryor—for the first five games of the 2011 season after they received free and discounted tattoos from a local tattoo parlor in exchange for autographs and their personal Ohio State memorabilia. The verdict was questioned, however, as the players were still allowed to play in the Sugar Bowl that was to be played in January, a BCS bowl game that the school had earned a spot in. This decision aroused much debate, as it appeared the NCAA cared more about ratings and profit for one of their major BCS bowls than upholding their ideals on amateurism. The NCAA claims that the Ohio State players were not suspended for the Sugar Bowl because “the student-athletes did not receive adequate rules education during the time period the violations occurred” (“NCAA Requires Loss”). Many had trouble buying into such assertions, as Bob Hunter of *The Columbus Dispatch* writes:

The general feeling...seems to be that the Buckeyes got away with something....No columnist or commentator I’ve found can see the logic in the NCAA ruling permitting the Ohio State players to play in New Orleans and then sit out five games next season; the message that both instances send is that the rules are interpreted differently when it means protecting TV and bowl partners that have become so lucrative for its member schools. (“Delaying Players’ Suspensions”)

This appears to be the perfect example of the NCAA using their athletes as a means to an end—which are very lucrative endeavors such as championship games and television deals. To Kant, this would be immoral; however, the NCAA’s true stance in this instance cannot be determined.

What is evident is that the question of whether the NCAA is doing what is best for their student-athletes could probably be asked.

### Conclusion

*The college player cannot sell his own feet (the coach does that) nor can he sell his own name (the college will do that). This is the plantation mentality resurrected and blessed by today's campus executives. (qtd. in Branch 7)*

*The idea of indentured servitude was born of a need for cheap labor.... Indentured servants became vital to the colonial economy....Servants typically worked four to seven years in exchange for passage, room, board, lodging and freedom dues. While the life of an indentured servant was harsh and restrictive, it wasn't slavery. There were laws that protected some of their rights. But their life was not an easy one. ("Indentured Servants")*

The former are not the words of any commonplace newspaper columnist or sports blogger; rather, they are penned in the memoir of Walter Byers, who in 1951 became the NCAA's first executive director and one of the overseers who helped mold the NCAA into the organization it is today. Many in society cringe or scoff when the privileged lives we lead are compared to the atrocity that was slavery, especially when the comparison is in the realm of sport. While the plight of student-athletes is not nearly as horrendous as that of the slaves so many years before them, it does not take much research to see that their current situation parallels closely to a life of indentured servitude.

While a clear-cut answer to the problem of compensation for student-athletes may not be obvious, what is evident is that on an ethical level, most athletes are not fairly compensated for all they do for their respective universities. As an organization laced with hypocrisy, the NCAA must determine an equitable solution to this problem in order to level the playing field and improve its image. Some would even say it's imperative.

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# The Saint (Fiction) – 1<sup>st</sup> Place Contest Winner

Eric Horell

The saint sat across from Ted, a sheet of glass separating the two. The papers were the first to call the man a saint, shortly after the trial. Ted agreed wholeheartedly and said as much.

"Honest to God, you are. You saved my life," mumbled Ted, unable to look the man in the eyes. "Thank you. You shouldn't have, but that's why you're out there and I'm in here, sir; you're the saint, like they say." He kneaded the orange jumpsuit between his fingers, mindlessly.

The saint smiled and lit himself a cigarette. He then took it from out of his mouth and slid it through a hole in the glass. "Here. Have a smoke."

"No thank you, sir. I'm fine."

"I know you smoke, Ted. You smoked a lot before you got in there. You want this. Take it."

Ted hung his head and slowly moved his fingers toward the cigarette. "Thank you," he whispered, taking a drag.

"You know there are a lot of people out there, on the other side of that door? Reporters and cameras and such?"

"I heard them. Yes."

"They wanted to be in here while you and I talked, but I managed to keep them out. Only you and me, Ted. Only us. How are things, by the way? In there?"

Ted exhaled smoke, careful to make sure none of it went into his guest's face despite the glass pane between them. "All right, considering the alternative. It's got to be."

"Sure, one would think so." He let an uncomfortable pause form, allowing Ted to squirm under his gaze, before he asked, "Do you know why I'm here, Ted?"

Ted sheepishly nodded his head. "I do. That I do." He took a long, final drag on his cigarette and killed it. The saint lit him another one and slid it through the opening.

"For courage," said the saint.

Ted took it with a nod as he placed it in his own mouth. He closed his eyes and allowed the nicotine to calm him, then began the speech he'd been rehearsing in his head all day. He tried to keep eye contact, but it was a struggle.

"I'm sorry, sir . . . It sounds stupid when I say it out loud because it seems so insignificant, but I wanted to tell you anyway . . . I didn't get a chance to tell you during the trial. Not after what you did for me. Then the reporters started flashing their cameras and hollering . . . Even if they hadn't, I'd have been too stunned to do anything . . . I thought I was going to die, sir. I didn't want to and . . ."

Ted started to cry because the saint didn't stop smiling. He kept staring at Ted with these blue eyes that glimmered behind his wireless glasses, examining Ted like he was an exhibit in a museum, stuck behind glass for everyone to see the murderer, the wife-killer, child-killer, family-killer. That's how Ted saw himself now, a living exhibit, and he deserved nothing better as the saint looked deep into him with that knowing, understanding smile on his face.

"I'm sorry, sir! I am! I was nervous already and the kid made this sudden movement for the woman and it was reaction, I swear, I instantly felt sick with the whole thing and then she came at me and it was reaction again because I knew I was in trouble and that's an awful excuse but I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm a damned fool and you shouldn't have spoke on my behalf, but you did and I'm sorry, sorry, *SORRY!*"

Ted threw his head into his lap and shuddered as he sobbed into his hands. The saint retained his good-natured grin and waited for Ted to finish. Ted thought he was a good man for letting him finish, but most of all he was a great man because he didn't try to tell Ted that it made sense to him and that everything was all right. He understood that what happened was senseless, and yet he somehow allowed Ted to live. He was a special man.

"How," asked Ted, "can you be so forgiving?"

The saint raised his eyebrows, and for the first time his teeth appeared as his smile widened. "Excuse me?"

"How can you forgive somebody like me? Who took everything from you? Is it God? Is it something in your genetics? Whatever it is, sir, it's incredible."

"You misunderstand me, Ted. I don't forgive you."

"... But—"

"I argued for your life, but I never forgave you. I can't. I never will, Ted. Never."

Ted turned his eyes down. Of course the saint couldn't forgive him. He could spare him, but how could Ted have expected him to forgive him? That was understandable. Ted couldn't have done it, nor could anyone else. No, Ted didn't deserve forgiveness.

"I understand, sir. I do. That was wrong of me, to assume. I apologize again. But still, thank you for saving me." Fresh tears appeared in Ted's eyes. "I appreciate you giving me life. Your mercy, it's ... thank you ..."

The saint leaned in until his nose was almost touching the glass. "You know why I saved you? Why you're here and not on death row? Why I fought for your right to live?"

"Because you're a saint, sir. A true life saint."

The saint laughed and tapped the glass with his index finger.

"I hate you. I fucking hate you, Theodore Kedeis. I look at you right now and I want to break through this glass and gouge your eyes out. I want to punch in your face again and again until my fists are numb. I want to make you scream long and loud and for all eternity. But I don't want to kill you, Ted. I want you to live."

Ted stared dumbly at the saint, his mouth slightly open and gently trembling. He didn't expect this. He didn't understand this.

"I don't know if I believe in an eternal life, Ted, which is a hell of a thing to think about now that my wife and daughter are dead. You know what that's like, to think they may be completely gone? Because I don't feel them anymore. I don't. I don't feel those ghosts people talk about and I'm pissed about that, and there's no one to blame except the chaos of this world. You happened to rob that store while my wife and kid were there, and you lost, Ted, chaos fucked both you and my family over. It's not entirely your fault, Ted; mostly, but not really. But I can't hate chaos. I can't hate this fucking absurd world because it doesn't care what I do to it. I need something tangible that will feel my hate, that will hate me back. So I have you.

"And because I hate you, Ted, I don't want you to die. What would that do me? Nothing. I want you to rot in a jail cell. Every day I want you to think about everything you did to me. This prison? It's shit. There's no library, or comfy lounges, or that fucking hotel shit that most jails have nowadays. No, this place is concrete and steel and there's not a whole hell of a lot to do except exist. And that's what you're going to, Ted, you simple, pathetic bastard. Your punishment is to exist and nothing else."

The saint was now standing, practically growling, but still smiling and beaming his teeth, excited to take off his mask and reveal that he was just as ugly as Ted. Ted leaned away from the window. His eyes could look nowhere else but into the saint's.

"When I leave this room, calm and collect, I'll tell the guards you were telling me about suicide. You haven't told *me*, of course, I wouldn't expect you to, but now you must be at least thinking about it. It must have flitted through your mind. But you'll be watched, bud. They'll keep an eye on you to make sure that you don't cheat me. That there is no escape. And because you're so suicidal, you'll be kept away from the other sons-of-bitches. You won't even have the luxury of hope that somebody shanks you. Forget about anything like that.

"You're going to be well fed and receive the best medical care. On my bill, don't worry about that, Ted. Now that I don't have a wife and child to support, I have some funds freed up. I don't need to drop some cash on a convertible or a dog to get through this. Just you breathing. You're going to grow old and fat and you're going to be miserable, Ted, you're going to be so fucking miserable you'll wish for death and you'll be denied that every single day for years and years to come. I'm going to take care of you.

"And them?" The saint pointed toward the door. "The reporters? The cameras? The public? Oh, they'll be with me. They'll keep calling me a saint and what not. They'll think I'm a tremendous human being because I've granted you life. But you and I know: Death is simple. Living is hard. And Teddy, if I have anything to say about it, you're going to live forever. You're not allowed to die until I say so."

The saint slipped on his coat and slid the pack of cigarettes through the opening. "Here. I don't actually smoke. Thought I might give you a jump on lung cancer, let you suffer for a while, and then invest my dead child's college fund into the best drugs to save your wretched life all over again. See you soon, Ted. I'll be back to visit. I'll be back to remind you that you're mine, that I'm your God, and you'll hate me as much as I hate you and we'll be the perfect couple."

And with that the saint opened the door to the flash of camera bulbs and the shouts of reporters. For a minute, his body outlined in an intense white light, he looked very much like an angel. Then the door closed and two hands grabbed Ted's shoulders and pulled him back into the cold concrete corridors of Hell.

Back in his cell, Ted sat on his cot and looked through the grey wall facing him. He thought of everything going on beyond that wall, and this caused him to feel old, very old, ancient. What if he lived another hundred years?

"A hundred years," Ted thought as he leaned back and closed his eyes.

"Maybe I'll find religion. Maybe I'll escape. Maybe. We'll see. I'm not suicidal yet. Yet. Tomorrow. I'm so tired. Tomorrow we'll see what happens." His thoughts seemed distant from him, like they were coming from someone else.

He found the cigarettes the saint had given him and placed one between his lips.

"It's not as bad as he said. I can smoke this cigarette and give myself cancer, or I can throw it in the toilet and save my lungs. I still have some control. But right now, I really want this."

Ted patted his chest and pockets, and froze. Everything hit him: his sentence, his torturer, his guardian angel, his hell, his heaven, his inability to escape any of it. Damned to live a long life of solitude. Condemned to exist and nothing else. In many ways he was already dead, eating and sleeping and shitting but never living while he was alive, alive and dead for years to come. He was a corpse that would wake up every morning only to look forward to that evening's sleep. He had nothing that he could call his own, not even life. Nothing save for the cigarettes the saint had given him.

"And he didn't even give me a lighter . . ."



Amanda Williamson  
"The Web" (Photograph)

# Listening with Compassion: The Benefits of Storytelling in the Health Care Setting (Essay Writing) – 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Contest Winner

Lisa Moser

"I have experienced some bumps in the road, but man, this was a pot hole!" exclaimed a hospital patient I visited while volunteering with a club called M.A.P.S (Make a Patient Smile). Through this service, I have heard patients' stories and reflected on how the many different dimensions of disease influence every aspect of life. I have also come to recognize the needs of patients and where medical care can, at times, fail to meet these needs. Stories can provide the link needed to give care to patients beyond medical treatment. Philosopher Hilde Lindemann Nelson recognizes this moral aspect of stories in *Damaged Identities: Narrative Repair*. Nelson explains how disease disrupts a person's life and sense of self. However, by expressing their stories, patients can repair this damage and begin to recover. According to Nelson, encouraging the patient to share his or her story allows the patient to fully heal.

This paper will discuss the importance of the framework of a story and the four main benefits that can be achieved through storytelling: maintaining a sense of identity, establishing good communication, developing empathy, and finding meaning. Also, benefits for health care providers as well as challenges that can hinder the sharing of stories will be addressed. Before proceeding, it is important to define significant terms. Storytelling is the act of using words and images to convey a series of events (Brendel, 2009). An illness narrative is a story told about how one incorporates disease into every aspect of life. According to Arthur Kleinman (1988), "Illness refers to how the sick person and the members of the family or wider social network perceive, live with, and respond to symptoms and disability" (p. 3). Illness is what a patient experiences on a day-to-day basis and how disease affects every aspect of that person's life. Illness is different from disease. Kleinman defines disease as "what practitioners have been trained to see through the theoretical lenses of their particular form of practice" (p. 5). Disease is the actual biological process occurring in the patient's body and the medical treatment of that process. The focus of this paper is on what occurs after the diagnosis of a disease and how that disease becomes an illness.

In present day, advances in medicine are rapidly occurring and the focus in health care tends to be diagnosing, treating, and curing disease. This focus on the disease process is called the biomedical model and it has been deemed inadequate by physicians such as Kleinman and Rita Charon (Kleinman, 1988; Charon, 2004). To investigate this further, I interviewed current health care providers and previous hospital patients. All eight health care providers interviewed answered "yes" when asked if there is a problem with a solely biomedical approach to disease. Karen Williams, a family care physician, responded, "They are all connected, mind, body, and spirit, so you are not doing a good job if you only focus on the body" (Interview, September 29, 2010). In order to put the focus back on patient stories, Charon proposed a narrative-based approach to medicine. This approach calls care providers to listen to stories for symbols and meaning in order to help patients completely heal (Charon, 2004).

Understanding patients' narratives begins with the framework of stories. Health care providers need to listen for this structure so they can better comprehend the patient's story. The framework for a narrative should contain a plot or action, a set of characters, and the storyteller's point of view (Brendel, 2009). By forming a plot, the patient is able to give structure to his or her life story and develop plans of action for the future. Plots give patients a way to organize their experiences and a sense of control, which helps them find meaning. The characters of an illness narrative are also important because they reflect the people in the patient's life. This can help to describe how relationships are affected and make the disease unique to the patient, thus preserving identity. The teller's point of view is also important to acknowledge because it helps the patient convey the self-image of his or her choosing. This



causes the teller to become more than just a patient; he or she becomes a family member, a spouse, an athlete, or a professional in his or her career.

In order for the sharing of stories to occur, two roles must be filled. One is that of the teller, who must take an active role and communicate his or her story to the health care provider. In turn, the role of the listener, the health care provider, is to create a setting and atmosphere in which the patient can tell his or her story freely. Overall, the interviews indicated that in order to provide the best care, a care provider must establish a good rapport with patients. John Kadosky, PA, distinguishes his role as a health care provider: "It is important to treat the individual patient. They are all different and equal. Everyone is a son or daughter, sister or brother, or loved one" (Interview, September 14, 2010). This respect is essential between the teller and listener. When a solid relationship between the patient and health care provider is established, the patient can begin to construct his or her story.

Once the sharing of the story takes place, there are four main benefits that can arise. The first benefit of expressing illness narratives is the ability to let patients reconstruct and maintain identities of their choosing. According to William Brendel (2009), illness narratives allow for the preservation of self because the teller can convey the self-image he or she chooses. Disease intrudes upon normal life events and creates chaos, causing a need to re-establish a sense of self. When disease takes over people's lives, they can become labeled by their disease or by their new roles as patients. The negative labels disease creates can also generate stigma, which, according to Frank, is to mark as unclean or unworthy. If this stigma occurs, it can cause many negative feelings for the patient; therefore, it is important for patients to express their views to regain a sense of control.

The former patients interviewed realize that who they are now is related to their illness experience. Dr. John Woznak, a professor of English at Saint Francis University, who experienced a Transient Ischemic Attack, or mini-stroke, and resulting complications of loss of motor control, admitted, "You lose part of your identity in these things. Who you are is different after than who you were" (Interview, October 18, 2010). Andrea Brown, cancer survivor, also explained, "I feel like how I am now is still based off of [the diagnosis] and I don't realize it" (Interview, September 9, 2010). These descriptions clearly illustrate that disease affects one's identity.

Because stories are universal, they also allow one to communicate different cultural perspectives that are part of one's identity. Culture can greatly influence perceptions of illness, and understanding a person's unique view of illness is an important part of understanding his or her story. For example, the Hmong people living near China have a view of epilepsy different from that of Americans. In *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, author Anne Fadiman explains how the Hmong believe during a seizure a spirit takes the person away temporarily. This is seen as a gift and a portal between the spirits and the humans, not a debilitating disease. In the novel, a small child, Lia, has epilepsy and her American doctors attempt to treat her with medication to prevent the seizures. But, because epileptics are revered in Hmong society, Lia's family does not comply with the doctors, so she continues to have seizures. It becomes important for Lia's family to communicate their beliefs to the doctors and show their identity with the Hmong culture in order to establish a method of treating Lia that is effective and with which the family will comply. When the doctors began to understand the cultural differences, they were able to create a more successful treatment plan.

To recognize the unique identity of the patient, including these cultural differences, open communication is necessary. The second benefit of storytelling is that it allows for this open communication in which the teller conveys his or her illness so the listener can then understand the "big picture" and develop a successful treatment plan. This need for communication is exemplified by Dr. Fredricks, an English professor at Saint Francis University: "Stories are the essence of conveying information. If the health care [provider] is not interested in what the person has to say or cannot ask the right questions to elicit what the person has experienced, then that person might as well be an inanimate object. Then you are just treating the collection of symptoms and not the human being...we don't know who we are

until we tell our story. The doctors cannot know who we are until we tell them our story" (Interview, October 13, 2010).

The health care providers' interviews also illustrated the importance of communication. Kadosky realizes, "The hardest part of my job is talking to people...you have to understand you can learn all the medicine in the world, and that part is rather simple; the harder part is learning your patient" (Interview, September 14, 2010). Williams also spoke on communication: "As far as a diagnosis, it is crucial because stories will tell you what is going on. [The patients] know themselves a lot better than you do" (Interview September 29, 2010). Listening to stories plays a vital role in correct diagnosis and successful treatment because it allows for successful communication.

The development of an empathetic relationship is the third benefit of expressing illness narratives. This is important because when caregivers demonstrate empathy, the patient feels listened to and acknowledged. John Scott emphasizes the importance of empathy in the health care setting when he describes Martine Buber's classification of I/It and I/Thou relationships. According to Buber, I/It relationships occur when the patient is viewed as his or her disease. Scott suggests that care providers and patients strive for what Buber defines as I/Thou relationships, in which both parties are equal (Scott, 2009). Establishing this type of relationship demonstrates empathy on behalf of the health care provider. Empathy occurs when one recognizes he or she has not experienced the same event as someone else but should still listen and try to comprehend the situation. This can help patients feel cared about and appreciated, which can help them heal.

The health care providers' interviews came to the overall consensus that they have to "put themselves in the patient's shoes" when providing care and treatment. Elizabeth Claar, PA, and Penne Edgell, MD, recognized that even if they have already seen the same diagnosis four times, it is the first time the patient has experienced it, so they have to remember compassion. They also mentioned that they try to treat every patient like they would want their family members to be treated (E. Claar, interview, September 12, 2010; P. Edgell, interview, September 14, 2010). When asked about the importance of empathy, Alan Hessler, DPT, responded, "It is important if you want to be a good health care provider and really make a difference" (Interview, September 16, 2010). This demonstrates the importance of communicating effectively with patients and maintaining respect during treatment.

Once the patient constructs his or her story, maintains his or her identity, communicates effectively and receives empathy, the patient can discover the fourth benefit of illness narratives: finding meaning. When people can connect events in the form of a story and express the emotions, values and feelings that go with them, they can make sense of their illness. According to Frank, to value something means to "mark it with significance" (Frank, 2002). An illness narrative can allow the patient to recognize the impact of disease and help him or her find meaning despite the disease. When this occurs, patients can come to value their illness despite what the final outcome may be.

Once patients are able to value their illness, they can also prepare for death if that is a possibility. Accepting the potential losses and coming to value life itself can help patients come to terms with their own mortality. This can cause the ill person to change the direction of his or her life so it can be more fulfilling. An example of this can be seen in Randy Pausch's work *The Last Lecture*. His illness narrative reflected on the last lecture he gave as a professor at Carnegie Mellon University. Pausch was a young professor and a new father when he was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Pausch recognized that he didn't want to give the lecture, but he needed to in order to express "things that desperately needed to come out" (Pausch, 2008). His last lecture enabled him to find meaning in life and leave a legacy of remembrance for his young children. Overall, this helped him cope with his own death and still value his life.

As well as having many benefits for patients, illness narratives offer two main benefits for health care providers. First, as mentioned previously, a patient's story can help both the patient and health care provider communicate effectively. This can lead to accurate diagnosis and successful treatment, which can prevent burn out. When stories allow the patient to heal,

the caregiver can receive a very rewarding feeling, even if physical treatment is not effective. This sense of fulfillment is the second benefit stories can provide to health care providers.

A physician who has written on storytelling in the health care setting is Rachel Naomi Remen (2006). She emphasizes that stories have enabled her to realize that “even when there was nothing left to do medically, there were still other things I could say or do that might matter” (p.45). When health care providers do not have any medical treatment to turn to, they can still help the patient through storytelling and receive a very rewarding feeling, thus preventing burn out.

While storytelling may seem to be an easy activity, it does take effort on behalf of the health care provider and patient. Most of the health care providers’ interviews indicated time and insurance as hurdles to providing the care they desired. Patients may also face challenges such as trusting the listener, communicating cultural differences, overcoming I/It relationships, and expressing negative emotions. It is important that the listener establishes a rapport with patients and encourages them to tell their stories to reap the benefits of a narrative approach to medicine.

Some suggestions to overcome the challenges were made by the health care providers and patients during the interviews. Some of the care providers suggested having more interaction with patients during medical school and practicing real-life scenarios. Another suggestion from the health care providers is to make the students aware of the role of empathy. As Kadosky explained, “They cannot teach you how to have empathy or respect for yourself and the patient, but they can make you aware of it” (Interview, September 14, 2010). The last suggestion made by both health care providers and patients was to have a third party come into hospitals to talk with the patients. Whether trained individuals or volunteers, the interviews indicated the need for someone who could talk to patients without a time limit.

After I visited the gentleman mentioned in this paper’s introduction and listened to his story, he was very grateful. He thanked us many times and said we were “doing a good thing.” This demonstrates how listening to illness narratives is a moral action that helps the patient heal. Overall, illness narratives have the potential to fortify patient and health care provider relationships. Illness narratives can bridge the gap between health care providers and patients and facilitate the formation of an alliance, which can play a vital role in the healing process. Illness narratives are the key to creating relationships that promote healing and they have a vital role in the future of the health care field.

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Stacey Edmiston  
"Sweet Collector" (Photograph)



Hillarie Brace  
"Sisters" (Photograph)

# The Dialogue in the Mine: A Discussion on the Existence of Time (Creative Nonfiction)

Alexander Reading

(The scene opens with five men working in a mine. They cannot remember what it is like outside of the mine, as they have been underground for many years. The only physical things with them are their equipment for digging, the buckets they are given food in, and each other. There is a shaft at each end of the main tunnel, from which light is constantly sent down, being the main source of light. Items and people that walk by the light atop the tunnel cast a shadow down to the miners.)

Drew: Adam, you are not working once again. This laziness will set us all behind schedule.

Adam: (Leaning against his pick) What is the use, Drew? Our bosses forgot about us long ago. None of us even remembers what we are mining for anymore. Why do we not try to abandon the mine finally?

(Groans can be heard from the other four miners.)

Austin: The Bosses have not forgotten us. Food continues to come down the shaft, showing their pleasure in the rocks we mine. They also keep the light bright for us to see.

George: You have just grown lazy, Adam. This does not mean you will be returning above ground, either. We have been given strict instructions on how to deal with the lazy.

Mark: Those who do not work must be hurt. Work will lead to salvation and we will be rewarded while you stay trapped in the mine, Adam.

Adam: You all say that, but have you not wondered why we stay down here? I do not believe The Bosses control the light, either. You believe they come visit us every time we see the black shapes on the walls, but how could these normal, material men suddenly become immaterial-like shadows?

George: The Bosses are all-powerful, and they shall present themselves to us as they see fit. Begin shoveling, Adam, or we will make you.

Adam: If these Bosses are all-powerful, why do they need us to mine for them? I think we all have been down here far too long. Not only do you believe that your ceaseless toil has an end, but you believe that the normal, cruel men that enslaved us can move as shadows. All this time in the dark is ruining your sense of reason.

George: Adam, this is your last warning. Begin digging now.

Austin: We have not been down here long. I kept track of time.

Adam: How can you have any concept of time? We are without sunlight to tell when a day begins and ends. I see no calendars on the stone walls; none of us are wearing watches, nor is there a clock anywhere in sight.

Austin: At the end of each day of work, I make a mark on the wall near where I sleep.

Adam: Have you ever considered that time does not truly exist in the sense that we normally mean? Maybe time is but a measurement created by man to organize his life even further?

Drew: Time does pass, though. Can you not feel yourself getting older? Do you not feel the hair growing on your face getting longer?

Adam: I do feel the change and I do have memories. Change is very real. Nothing natural is inert. My body is changing. However, do you have proof of that past?

Austin: I remember it.

Adam: But you have no physical proof of the past? That is because even the present dies with every fleeting moment. And just as is the case with humankind, when the present dies, it simply goes into non-existence and is remembered.

Drew: So you are saying time does not exist after all?

Mark: That is what it sounds like to me.

Adam: Not in the sense that you mean. You think of time as one linear event, similar to a river. There is a clear origin of the river, and it flows for a long time very clearly, then finally it

comes to end. Time is the same way for you, I am sure. There is a very clear origin for your concept of time, say your earliest memory. Then it has just been going along, until finally you die. Time is just one constant line, correct?

Drew: I see no other way it could exist.

George: I am growing tired of doing all of this work alone.

Adam: I see time, assuming it exists, as several parts. One cannot argue that the present exists, correct?

Austin: We cannot.

Adam: Nor can you prove that there is any sort of evidence of the past or future and that they are directly connected to the present?

Drew: We cannot.

Adam: Therefore, time in the sense of linear events does not exist. Rather, time is divided into parts. The present is very real, as we are experiencing right now, even. Our memories tell us that the past is real, too, though we have no true physical proof of the past. As for the future, we have neither physical proof nor mental experience. We cannot experience it or predict it.

Austin: That is all true.

Adam: Could we not say, then, that time is entirely real, as two-thirds of what constitutes the general definition does not exist at a given moment?

Drew: I suppose that is so. I do not quite follow you, though.

Adam: Let us suppose that we are standing at one point of a great, raging river. Obviously, there is a point where the river began and a point where the river ends.

Austin: Yes.

Adam: Let us further suppose that we are standing on the bank near the middle of this great river. Moreover, when we turn our head to the left, we cannot see the origin or the end of the river. This goes the same if you turn your head to the right. You know that in one direction, there is an origin point, and you know that in the other direction there is an end. However, empirically you have no proof of either one. You are just really assuming that, based on the current point of the river that you can see, a previous point of the river exists and a point further up the river exists.

Drew: I suppose so.

Adam: Is this then not how time works? Currently we can see the present instance we are in. We are surrounded by this exact moment of time. Yet it passes precariously and it no longer exists. While we can remember the past, there is no empirical evidence of its existing. The same goes for the future, as we know that it is out there somewhere, ready to swoop in and replace the passing present, though there is not physical representation of this action.

Austin: I see what you are saying now.

Adam: Ergo, if the present and change are the only true things that exist, does that not mean that time is an arbitrary measurement?

Austin: It would seem so.

Adam: How would you define time, then?

Drew: It seems that time would be no more than the measure of change

Adam: Precisely. Time is no more than the speed at which change occurs. Science has backed this up, of course, though they would not deny the existence of time.

Mark: How has science proven the non-existence of time?

Adam: Chemists have proven that certain atoms decompose over a certain amount of time. Specifically, atomic clocks are set to the decomposition of Caesium atoms, which takes around 65 million years to decrease their accuracy by 2 seconds<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, time is really just the measurement of how rapidly atoms change.

George: I have heard enough of this rabble-rousing. All of you, get back to work!

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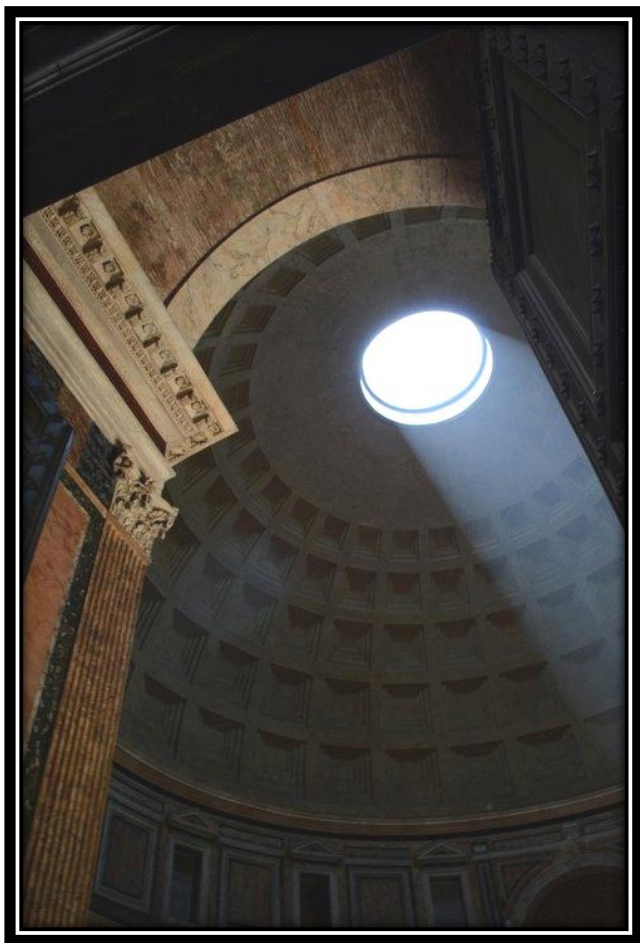
<sup>1</sup> United State Navy - Time Service Department

(George swings his pick into the ceiling by mistake out of anger. There is a sudden rumbling that can be heard from above. The five miners all look at each other and run toward the two mine shafts, hoping that only that one tunnel is collapsing and they will be able to survive. Just as they reach the shafts, the tunnel collapses and there is total darkness because of the dirt and dust. It appears there will be no more change occurring in the mines for some time.)

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Brittany Aaron  
"Shaft of Light" (Photograph)

# The Angel Among Us (Essay Writing)

Hannah Brooks

Has your life ever been altered in the course of a single moment?

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010. One year ago today. It was a gorgeous fall morning, brilliant golden leaves and all. The day began as any other Monday; I walked to class and sat myself down in my usual seat.

I soon received a text message saying that three seventeen-year-old boys from my high school had been involved in a serious car accident on the way to school; they were Joey, Jon, and Henry. All three boys were en route to the trauma center in Altoona, but Joey was by far in the worst condition. My heart sank into my stomach and I began a fervent, repetitive prayer of hope. Physically, I sat through my class, but mentally I was far, far away.

When class finished, I began walking toward the dining hall; I wasn't even hungry due to the worry and nausea that consumed me. It was then that my life was changed forever.

My phone rang, vibrating insistently inside my coat pocket. The screen read "Mom." I quickly answered. "Hello? What's going on?!" The next two words sent my mind reeling.

"He's gone."

I could no longer see. I could no longer hear, feel, think, breathe. Luckily, one of my girlfriends was at my side, for I surely would have fallen on collapsed knees to the sidewalk. Unbearable pain consumed my whole being; I sobbed into the phone as my mother tried to comfort me.

I will never forget that moment of complete despair.

The day sped by in a blur of emotion. Frustration, incomprehensible sorrow, anger, pain. Why did this happen? Why was such a vivacious, beautiful spirit taken from us so unjustly? Why so young? Why?

The questions ran through my mind like racehorses; they ran through all of our minds. A mother and father, robbed of their son. Brothers, robbed of their own blood. An entire community, robbed of a shining example of a person unafraid to live fully and joyously, with purpose. Why?

Joey was an unsinkable spirit, a golden beam of light to all of his friends, an amazingly strong personality. He showed us all what it means to live life out loud, to waste not a single moment of the glorious gift that is being alive. It is beyond my comprehension as to why such a person would be stolen from the world; I know I speak for many when I say that he will never be forgotten.

There are those who knew Joey better than I did. There are many people who knew him better, actually. The beautiful thing is that we all saw a different facet of Joey, and by putting them all together we paint a beautiful masterpiece of his life. I knew Joey first and foremost as a teammate on our high school cross country team. The entire team, including Coach Niebauer, suffered as one during this time. We stood solemnly at the viewing as a unit, knowing full well that a key part of us was gone. There is something about pouring all your blood, sweat, and tears together into one combined effort that creates a special and strong bond, and when one of us was taken, it deeply cut us all. I will never forget that evening of mourning.

We will all remember Joey's pranks and jokes, his contagious smile and his famous hugs. I pray that someday I will be able to live up to the glorious example Joey set for all of us. I believe that he is watching us every day, with one of those famous smiles on his face, seeing the beautiful legacy he has left behind among those who loved him.

In his seventeen years on this planet, Joey imparted on all of us what some people never discover in an entire lifetime: he taught us that a life lived in joy every day and delightfully shared with others is the greatest gift of all. Because of Joey's life, the world was made a little brighter. He changed my life, even though I knew him in such a small way compared to others.

The past year has been perhaps the most difficult of my entire life, but at the same time, it has been quite possibly the most significant thus far. I learned to grieve, to love, to pick myself up after being cast in a ditch, to feel genuine happiness and true sorrow.

I owe so much to Joey for showing me the life I hope to live and the life I hope to one day look back on with satisfaction.

I know you hear me when I say thank you, Joey. Thank you so much.



Lloyd Foster  
"Blessed Mary" (Photograph)

I'm sitting here in the same position I've been in for hours. Stuck in the land of neither here nor there. I can feel myself succumbing to the pull of the past. I've spent half an hour looking up suicide survivor information. I know what's out there by heart. I look it up all the time, thinking something will change, that somehow magically the world will show me a new window and I can stop the memory explosions that occur so often inside my head. I smell blood and feel blood and know every inch of the movement I took to turn on the light. I see death and blood and am drawn speechless for a second until finally it really sinks in. Then I scream. I scream and scream and scream and finally what felt like forever turns into a roommate standing in the doorway. She dials 911 and I just scream. My roommate is worried about the drugs in the house and she keeps talking about nonsense stuff that I could care less about. In this moment all I know and all I loved is gone. Beauty and hope and dreams for the future and all of the intelligent conversations and sassy retorts have all been wiped away. In their place is a pool of blood pouring from her head and mixing with her hair. Blood is on the bed and on the nightstand and on my arm. I will never forget the blood. It seemed like sand measuring the time until the ambulance and police arrived. I didn't even remember grabbing her and holding her, but somehow in that time I must have because now the paramedics are here and they're trying to take her from my arms. I don't want to let go. I struggle against them as they unclench my arms but eventually I lose and now they have her on the stretcher and that's no way to say goodbye. I never got to say goodbye. The police are here now and they are asking me questions. Can't they see I'm destroyed by this? Can't they tell I don't give a shit about whose gun it was or why she did it or anything or anybody? The result is the same. She's dead and there's nothing left but pools of blood and sprays of blood. I don't even want to clean her blood off of me. It feels like she's still there, although I know she's gone. The police are done with their stupid questions that I can't even remember answering and someone wants to call my counselor, but it's the middle of a Friday night, and who is going to be there? I'm alone. I just want everyone to leave so I can be alone. Her note, which I had read but forgotten about, is now etched into my mind. She just couldn't do it anymore, she said. Being gay was just too hard. And then she said she was sorry. That she loved me. That she hoped I'd understand. I don't understand at all. I feel hollow inside, like someone had pulled everything out and I feel nauseous and tired and angry and lost. I just want it to be yesterday so none of this is real. But the day never goes away. The sun is starting to come up and I'm sitting in a pool of blood that has congealed and is slowly drying. I'm congealing, too. I think I'm slowly dying but I keep drawing breaths and life just seems to go on. Laurie keeps coming in to check on me. She's crying, too. We're all so close in this house. Even as I sit half-numb and crying, I know the worst is yet to come. I can sense that I'm barely alive right now and I think of that girl in school who got hit by a car and was dragged halfway up the bridge. I wonder if she knew death was coming like Bean did. Did it hurt? I wonder how long Bean held the gun to her head before she pulled the trigger. I'll never know. I'm just in pain. And today, all these years later, I'm still in pain. Even as the spiral is slowly letting go and I'm sliding into the present, I'm in pain. I don't even cry anymore. I just sit numb. I think of all of the people who lose someone to suicide and how much hurt there is in the world because of it. I'm angry now. Angry that the world pushes people over the edge. Angry that no one seems to notice. I'm jealous of all the people who can look back on their high school years and feel happy. I just want her back. Not even with me, if that's to be, but on this planet, enjoying life, not sitting in some coffin buried beneath the earth.

# A Still Life (Poetry) – 3rd Place Contest Winner

Susan Gerber

*Here is my invitation –  
my small, palm of light extended to you.  
On these pages I have painted my still life.*

## My Mother Lives Inside Her Paintings

First,  
I should be clear –  
My mother was not an artist  
she loved art –  
she studied it, I mean.  
As a girl  
my small eyes  
watched as  
my mother's usually  
sad  
and deadened  
eyes  
would brighten  
and awake to life  
with talk of  
the silver, blue buttons  
Manet placed perfectly  
down the charcoal coat  
of the woman  
waiting at his train station  
or of the slight slant in the door  
to the church  
that Van Gogh painted  
crooked.

I used to hear  
her say  
she could lie down inside  
one of Van Gogh's brush strokes  
and allow herself  
to drown  
in his use of color.

But see now that  
she has died,  
it seems  
she has chosen  
to continue living  
on his canvas  
among the  
rolling hills,  
night cafés,  
and starry nights  
held still  
inside the frames

she left  
hanging here  
on my walls.

Late at night  
her voice calls for me  
to join her at  
the *Café Terrace*  
where she sits  
alone with her drink  
or she asks  
for a walk along  
the *Rhone River*  
where she tells me  
she at least  
has the stars now  
to keep her company.

She whispers,  
"Leave life  
and all its  
lack-of-color worlds behind  
to lay with me under  
the *Almond Trees*."

"But life,  
mother,"  
I'm forced to say--  
"life won't be held  
still inside  
your frames.

Don't you know  
life  
hasn't even noticed  
that you  
died.  
Life and  
all its now life-less-ness,  
mother,  
are so much insisting  
that my life  
somehow  
go on."

### Her in the Ring

Depression had stolen the smile  
from my mother's face for many years;  
but, one of the few times I can  
remember seeing her happy was when  
my father gave her that diamond ring  
simply because she asked for it.

To my mother, the ring was  
petite and delicate,  
unique and rare –a smile  
spread across her face and she kissed him.  
She wore the ring always  
on her smallest finger regardless  
of the occasion as a subtle thank you  
passed from his heart to hers.  
My father later gave the ring to me,  
long after my mother passed away,  
when we sat alone.  
He slid it onto my smallest finger  
and whispered that I had her hands.

The ring was, of course, like any other ring,  
that might have once passed  
between the hearts of any two lovers –  
a gold band, a marquise cut diamond,  
yet there was my mother,  
engraved and set in its stone.  
In her ring was the clink  
of her spoon against her coffee cup,  
the stale smell of smoke  
from her Salem Light cigarettes,  
her tired tone and wary eyes,  
the dark coal flakes of her eyelashes,  
and braided in the band, each thin strand  
of hair that fell from her head that fall.  
Her love for Van Gogh and Monet  
and Manet and my father and  
her smile and that kiss were all in her ring.  
and the ring became as heavy  
as her headstone on my finger.

My mother's pained expression  
and her laugh  
and her life–  
so mournfully etched in that ring just as  
each letter of her name  
was etched in that granite.  
She was so deeply set in her ring,  
my finger simply couldn't bear  
the burden to wear it.

## A Still Life

For once I won't write  
about my mother–  
I will write about my father  
and his work boots which  
greeted me each morning  
when I walked into our kitchen.

His boots were there tossed  
in a corner after a fifteen-  
hour shift-  
their hard, tough skin  
covered with dirt and dust,  
oil stained and beaten by  
hot days and long nights  
without rest.  
Their shoe laces always torn  
and unraveled;  
soles flattened and scuffed  
from miles walked  
down rocky back roads  
and uneven soiled paths.

I'd open my mouth  
to speak and she'd press  
her finger to my lips to hush me.  
She'd nod her head toward those  
tired and over-worked work boots  
to remind me that my father was home,  
upstairs in their bed  
sleeping.

### Lost-Love Letters

You should know that  
I threw you and your letters away -  
those letters you wrote to me when  
you were away at war.

Do you remember writing those?

You once wrote that  
Marines were made to send  
letters home,  
and only I was home to you  
so you sent all your letters  
to me.

Well I threw them away.

When you went home  
to someone else, I took  
you and all your little words and  
tossed you both out with  
my stale bread and spoiled milk.

I never liked reading the  
silly sentiments you wrote  
in those letters anyway.

I even laugh now,



to myself sometimes when  
a phrase or word or syllable  
suddenly stops me  
right in the middle  
of some page I'm reading,  
reminding me  
of one of those  
ludicrous, love-filled lines  
from your letters—  
one of your lines about dreams of me and  
my eyes and stars and missing and kissing,  
and coming home to me.

And then without wanting to  
I start wondering about you.  
Wondering how you so easily  
moved on from me and  
all your little words—  
wondering how it was so  
easy for you to forget  
that it was  
me  
you wrote them to.

### Trying to Explain It

I didn't think of the other  
heartbeat inside of me,  
I only thought of my own,  
and how it was being strained by  
the unwanted presence of this new life.

I don't even know how to say the  
truth anymore or how to  
explain that heartbeat away.  
I guess you can say, I thought of the child  
as a gift.

A gift I might have been asking for,  
but a gift I didn't anticipate—  
a gift that, at that time, I didn't need.

There was so much life already  
happening outside of me—  
my mother was dead, my sister was  
in jail, her daughter moved into my home  
and now this new life  
was growing inside of me and  
I felt life suffocating me.

This gift presented itself  
relying only on me to open it and  
give it its first breath—

but with so much life already depending  
on me, I just simply felt all out of air–  
all out of options.

I allowed my fingers to briefly graze  
the surface of motherhood.  
I toyed with the thoughts of first  
movements inside my belly, and  
tiny cries, and whines, and small footsteps.

I mourned over missing  
first smiles and giggles  
and kisses on cheeks and birthdays  
and macaroni cards and quieting nightmares  
and witnessing graduations and weddings  
and raising dreams and hopes and life.  
But fear shadowed all of life's chances,  
and doubt forced my fingers to fall away.  
Gifts come with the choice to accept them  
or to say "thanks, but no thanks."  
I thought being a mother was  
a choice I could make.

I didn't realize I would still hear  
that heart beating even in my sleep–  
that no matter how hard I tried  
to explain it away  
that unlived, unnamed  
life still existed  
and refused to be buried  
by all of my  
faulty excuses.

## The First Lie

Her small hand hovers over the sea  
of cards scattered on the living-room floor  
then carefully chooses the three of hearts.  
My eyes cautiously observe her,  
moved and amazed by each  
of her movements as if they're seeing her  
here in my living-room for the first time;  
as if they just witnessed a star fall straight from  
the sky to this beige carpet, manifest itself  
into a ten-year old girl who then requested  
a game of Go-Fish.  
She takes a quick swig from the curly straw  
resting in her Sponge-Bob mug and uses  
her fingers, with nails painted Paparazzi Pink,  
to swish a stray curl out of her dark, wide-eyes.  
Her girlish, sinless voice asks for my kings,  
and I freely hand them over.  
It's still early in our game, and for now,

she plays by the rules that I've taught her.  
For now, she still holds on to her innocence.

She hasn't yet learned to lie or  
to roll her eyes or shave her legs,  
to paint over her beauty with make-up,  
or to worry about the boys in her grade.  
She doesn't yet know to hate her hair,  
her bony knees, her thighs or her weight—or me.

That smile that she gives me is still partially  
toothless and honest until what feels like  
only minutes pass by in our game,  
and I ask if she has any threes.

"Nope, no threes, go fish," her mouth fibs  
with all the seriousness her eyes can muster.  
But our game won't be lost to lies yet.  
For now, finding the truth of that heart  
is as easy as tickling it from her hand.



Kayla Reed  
"A New Generation" (Photograph)

# I'm a Runner (Creative Nonfiction)

Zachary Burns

On the morning of October 29, 2011, I stared nearly 400 meters down a lonely brown New Jersey field. Around me, the other nine competing members of the Saint Francis University cross country team stood silent, rubbing their gloved hands over their arms and legs to create some hint of warmth amidst the near-freezing air. Only moments earlier, the now-empty grey expanse of uneven grass in front of us resembled a battlefield, with over a hundred runners in vibrant uniforms formed into tight circles, strategizing and yelling war cries. Now, all was still except for the fog created from one hundred breaths rising like a mist above the starting line. Freezing rain fell steadily, each razor-like drop stinging my pale white skin, exposed by my short running shorts and racing singlet. I crouched down in a catcher's stance, touched the frosted ground with my soggy blue Nike glove, and whispered one final prayer. Focusing my gaze through the driving rain towards a single orange traffic cone at the far end of the field, I took a deep breath and waited for the starter to raise the gun.

Since I was in sixth grade, I've been a runner. While other kids were lifting weights and trying out for the middle school football team, I was spending my summers with my dad running around the trails of the Pocono Mountains and the Delaware Water Gap of northeastern Pennsylvania. I didn't know much about running back then. I wore baggy sweat pants, a heavy blue sweatshirt, and a pair of basketball shoes. Although my clothing changed over the years, my love for running never really wavered. By the time I was in high school, I was logging more miles than some cars ever had. Even years before I graduated, I knew I wanted to run in college.

That morning in New Jersey would be my first and last Northeast Conference cross country championship meet. The finish line, standing at the end of five miles of mud-soaked grass hills and root-covered trails, was the last I would ever pass through as a cross country runner. It was a strange feeling, that after thousands of training miles and over one hundred races, I was less than thirty minutes away from rounding the last corner of the course and facing my final finish line.

The starter, wearing a bright orange water-proof jacket, stood a few hundred feet away from the starting line with a small orange flag in one hand and his gun in the other. Like a conductor to his orchestra, he faced us, raised both arms into the air and paused. The smoke from the gun, because of the starter's distance from the line, was visible just a brief second before the crack of the gunshot. In one simultaneous wave, the twelve teams charged forward. I looked to my left and to my right, already engulfed in a sea of runners. For all four years I had run cross country for Saint Francis, I had dreamed of running a conference championship meet. As I settled into my pace, I came to the realization that I had finally achieved my goal and that it was time to make the most of it. I looked down at my spikes, kicking up water and debris from the already torn-up course, and began to increase my pace.

After a mile of racing, I came upon my teammates, Adam Mengel and Chris Delaney. We exchanged a few words between breaths and decided that we had waited long enough to start a move towards the front end of the pack. As most cross country races go, this one was a blur from that moment until my final pained stagger towards the finish line. I can remember the Monmouth University band, filling the woods with carnival-like music. I can remember the shirtless, painted bodies of fans running along the paved road adjacent to the muddy trail, cheering on their friends and family. I can remember my muscles, cold and aching, but my hands too numb under my saturated gloves to massage them. I can remember the final mile through a narrow woodland trail, and how much it reminded me of the trails I had run on my whole life—the trails that sparked my love for running. I can remember my coach, excitedly screaming as I surged past one final pack of competitors towards the finish line. And most of all, I can remember my teammates who waited for me at the end of the finish chute as I stumbled away from the course, exhausted.

I was the last SFU runner to walk away from the course on that day, and my time for the five-mile race was far from a personal best. It didn't bother me. I left everything on the course, as did my teammates. We finished a close second to Central Connecticut State, a team that was, on paper, far better than us. Before heading back to the team bus to grab some dry clothes, I took a final glance back towards the finish line, now representative of a closed chapter of my life. I looked at the other nine runners walking with me, covered in mud, blood, and sweat, uniforms sagging under the weight of the cold rain. In that moment, I was proud of the sport I had made into a lifestyle over the previous decade. I was proud to be on a team of people who loved to train, to sacrifice, and to compete. I was proud to be a runner.



Andrea Giachetti  
"Pieces" (Photograph)

# Door 1, 2, or 3? The Monty Hall Problem (Essay Writing)

Ethan Hullihen

Perspiration is forming on your brow from the heat of the studio lights. A crowded studio audience sits with bated breath, waiting to hear your decision. After choosing Door Number 3, you learn that what waits behind Door Number 1 is nothing more than a goat, chomping on grass. Then the host poses his question, “Would you like to switch to Door Number 2, or test your luck with Number 3?” The difference between a four-wheeled, brand new car and a second four-legged vegetarian rests on your decision. What do you do?

The preceding scenario is one familiar to many game show enthusiasts, with similar variations appearing on shows such as *Deal or No Deal*; however, the situation is most commonly associated with a 1991 question-and-answer column by Marilyn vos Savant in *Parade*, a Sunday magazine distributed by more than 530 newspapers with a circulation of 32.2 million, “the most widely read magazine in America” (“A History of Parade”). In this column—entitled “Ask Marilyn”—writers were encouraged to pose questions to vos Savant, who was credited in the *Guinness Book of World Records* for five years with “Highest IQ” (“About Marilyn”). The following is the original submission by reader Craig F. Whitaker of Columbia, Maryland, as it appeared in *Parade*, titled the “Game Show Problem”:

Suppose you're on a game show, and you're given the choice of three doors. Behind one door is a car, behind the others, goats. You pick a door, say #1, and the host, who knows what's behind the doors, opens another door, say #3, which has a goat. He says to you, “Do you want to pick door #2?” Is it to your advantage to switch your choice of doors? (qtd. in “Game Show Problem”)

In her response, vos Savant insisted it was in the contestant's best interest to switch and explained why this was the case with reference to probability. At the time, the reader's question and vos Savant's answer inspired thought and fueled plenty of debate around the country.

The response that vos Savant received from readers was astounding, and subsequent debate took the nation by storm. Such a controversy over a single math problem with no practical applications is astonishing when one takes the time to consider the circumstances. One of the many intriguing subplots of the problem was the general disbelief and even indignation about the problem's somewhat simple solution—especially from those with advanced degrees in the field of mathematics. While the question of why the answer is misunderstood and mistrusted remains intriguing, it is an entirely different topic from how the answer works. The following paper seeks to explain the reasoning behind the correct answer of the Monty Hall Problem<sup>2</sup> and why it works mathematically and then suggest the cultural importance that the problem holds.

Many disgruntled and unbelieving *Parade* readers criticized vos Savant for her misunderstanding of probability; therefore, it is crucial that the idea of probability be understood before the problem's answer can be examined, as probability is the crux of the argument. *The Oxford English Dictionary* describes *probability* in math as being “the extent to which a particular event is likely to occur” (“Probability”). For example, every time a coin is flipped, there are only two possible outcomes: heads or tails. The probability of one of the two possible outcomes occurring—fifty percent—can be expressed several ways:  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 50%, or 1 out of 2. Also, logic permits that, in theory, in a trial of 100 flips of a coin, it should land heads up 50 times and tails up 50 times. The following section explains the Monty Hall Problem in

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<sup>2</sup>Monty Hall was a host of the television game show *Let's Make a Deal*, one of the most popular television game shows of the 1960s and 70s. Contestants were able to buy, sell, or trade anything and everything for the chance of money, merchandise, and eventually the Big Deal of the Day (“Show Info”). However, the actual scenario posed in the Monty Hall Problem never faced the contestants on the show. The problem is named after the legendary deal maker based on the similarities between the problem and his game show.

terms of percentages and why it is in the contestant's best interest to switch, as vos Savant suggests.

When first faced with the choice of three doors, the contestant has a 1 out of 3, or 33.3%, chance of winning with his original choice, while there is a 2 out of 3, or 66.7%, chance that the winning door is one that is not chosen. After the host reveals one of the goats<sup>3</sup>, the contestant is now asked whether he would like to switch doors or stay with his original choice. This is where most of the misconceptions about the answer come from. Many assume that the contestant is now left with a fifty-fifty shot of choosing the correct door because he is now choosing between two doors—his original choice and the remaining unopened door. However, if he stays with his original choice, his odds of winning do not increase to fifty percent just because one of the goats has been revealed. In other words, his chance of winning if he chooses not to switch still stands at 33.3%, not 50% as many tend to believe. If the contestant changes his choice, his chances of winning increase to 2 out of 3, or 66.7%, because the original chance that the winning door was not chosen has become concentrated on the remaining unopened door. Thus, the chances of the contestant winning the car immediately double if he switches from his original choice.

	DOOR 1	DOOR 2	DOOR 3	RESULT
GAME 1	AUTO	GOAT	GOAT	Switch and you lose.
GAME 2	GOAT	AUTO	GOAT	Switch and you win.
GAME 3	GOAT	GOAT	AUTO	Switch and you win.
GAME 4	AUTO	GOAT	GOAT	Stay and you win.
GAME 5	GOAT	AUTO	GOAT	Stay and you lose.
GAME 6	GOAT	GOAT	AUTO	Stay and you lose.

Fig. 1- The six-game breakdown suggested by vos Savant from "Game Show Problem," Marilynvosavant.com, 2006, Web, 20 Oct. 2011.

In an example that illustrated the six possible solutions of the problem for her skeptics (see Figure 1), vos Savant depicted the contestant picking Door Number 1 in six different games and broke them into two separate groups: one in which the contestant switches all three games (which will be referred to as Group Number 1) and another in which the contestant stays with Door Number 1 all three games (or Group Number 2). In Group Number 1, the contestant wins twice, while only losing once—the game in which Door Number 1 reveals the car. By contrast, in Group Number 2, where the contestant stays with his choice, he wins only once—the game in which Door Number 1 reveals the car. In Group Number 1, the contestant wins 2 out of the 3 games by switching, but only 1 out of 3 times when staying with his initial choice in Group Number 2. This result verifies vos Savant's hypothesis of the contestant having

<sup>3</sup>In order for the problem to work, certain conditions must be assumed or remain unchanged. In her column, vos Savant states that "the most significant of [conditions] is that the host always opens a losing door on purpose.... [a]nything else is a different question" ("Game Show Problem"). This means that the host always knows which door wins, and will never reveal the winning door.

a 2 out of 3 chance of winning when switching doors, but only a 1 out of 3 chance when staying with his original choice ("Show Problem").

While there may not be much practical use for the Monty Hall Problem—aside from being a helpful lesson on probability in a math class—the reaction received to the answer of the problem may be reason enough why it deserves to be remembered. The debate in *Parade* caused such a stir that it resulted in a story on the topic featured in the *New York Times*, which included a very telling observation:

[vos Savant's] answer... has been debated in the halls of the C.I.A. and the barracks of fighter pilots in the Persian Gulf. It has been analyzed by mathematicians at M.I.T. and computer programmers at Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. It has been tested in classes ranging from second grade to graduate level at more than 1,000 schools across the country. ("The Monty Hall Problem")

Along with the discussion, controversy, and experimentation that stemmed from vos Savant's answer, the fact that it was disputed by so many different people is another aspect of the problem's allure. The response of vos Savant led to an uproar from the general public and PhDs alike (Krauss and Wang 3). Even such important figures as "the Deputy Director of the Center for Defense Information and a Research Mathematical Statistician from the National Institute of Health" mailed in to let her know they were in disagreement with her assertions ("Game Show Problem"). In one of the originally published articles, vos Savant sampled the kind of responses her answer generated: "[o]f the letters from the general public, 92% are against my answer, and of the letters from universities, 65% are against my answer" ("Game Show Problem"). In her 1997 book, *The Power of Logical Thinking*—dedicated solely to the Monty Hall Problem—vos Savant credits Piatelli-Palmarini<sup>4</sup> with an admiring comment that sums up the problem's appeal: "no other statistical puzzle comes so close to fooling all the people all the time....[t]he phenomenon is particularly interesting precisely because of its...immunity to higher education" (qtd. in Krauss and Wang 4). A single math problem that had such a cultural impact deserves to be remembered, and it appears that it has.

The Monty Hall Problem has remained visible to the public eye after making its 1991 debut in *Parade*, being featured in the final episode of the 2004-05 season of *NUMB3RS*—a CBS drama—along with a cameo in the 2008 movie *21* ("The Monty Hall Problem"). Enduring for more than two decades, the Monty Hall Problem has proved to have a lasting legacy, and it is easy to see why. A seemingly simple problem deserves such recognition—and even possibly a spot in American lore—as it caused national uproar, perplexing the simplest of minds and the greatest. The problem and its importance in the field of mathematics cannot be overstated, and this legacy deserves to live on, as it promises to continue to puzzle inquisitive minds for a long time to come.

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<sup>4</sup>A respected name in the field of cognitive science, Massimo Piatelli-Palmarini was the founder and director of the Department of Cognitive Science at the scientific institute San Raffaele in Milan, Italy. Piatelli-Palmarini is currently the Professor of Cognitive Science at the University of Arizona (Piatelli-Palmarini).



## You Just Go (Creative Nonfiction)

Eric Horell

I am a nervous pisser. I chalk it up to natural instinct. When our ancestors had to pop a squat, they left not only themselves open for attack, but their vital parts out in the open, free for mutilation from all sorts of predators like jackals, leopards, and really big lizards. I think it's in my genes to lock everything down when I'm at a urinal. Self-preservation. No jackal's running off with my most important organ when I'm exposed. Or perhaps I can trace my inability to publically urinate back to a traumatic childhood experience. I lived in a house on the fringe of a small wood where the neighborhood boys and I would go exploring. As the hours passed and our tiny bladders reached full capacity, we would do our part to water the forest. One day, while I was aiding what I thought looked like an especially thirsty patch of wild flowers, a friend came up and shoved me because we were kids and we thought stuff like shoving a buddy while he was pissing was hilarious. That is, except for the guy who was actually doing the pissing. I trudged home, both my eyes and my pants dripping.

Regardless of the reasoning, I now have a bladder so shy I have to confine myself to a stall in order to get anything flowing, and even then I have to close my eyes and center myself. Urinating has become a spiritual experience for me. "Oooooom... oooooom... oooooom... Release... Aaaahhh... oooooom... oooooom..." Every now and then I can go at a urinal like any other confident young male (usually alcohol and desperation are involved), but mostly I seek the solitude of a coffin-like stall. Thankfully, my claustrophobia is minimal.

One summer I worked at a warehouse stuffing notebooks into boxes, taping them shut, placing them on a wooden skid, and then repeating. Every day, the same thing. Bathroom breaks became a necessity so that I wouldn't snap and realize that the whole place was full of kindling and susceptible to a tiny match. There were two bathrooms: the one for myself and the other degenerates in my section (druggies, ex-cons, and alcoholics, oh my!), and the other one for the Skills workers. Skills is an organization that finds work for those who are mentally handicapped. I often found reasons to go over to the Skills section of the warehouse where they performed the same monotonous work. The workers were always pleasant with me and were far better company than my other coworkers. I never had to worry about getting knifed from any of the Skills workers, or if I did, no one warned me.

The bathroom I usually used would not have passed quality standards in any gas station. Everything was brown from age or from...well, it was putrid. I quickly grew tired of going in such a shithole. But I knew for a fact that the Skills bathroom was nice...r. Nicer. It still had mold and discoloration and questionable stains, but it also had a white linoleum floor, a trait that I associate with cleanliness. To avoid catching airborne herpes I saw no option but to try my luck with the Skills bathroom. There was no one in the bathroom when I entered, so I took my chance at the urinal. Just as I was about to start, just when I was sure there was no jungle cat waiting to snatch my johnson, just when my psyche had reached bathroom nirvana, I heard a voice in my ear ask, "Are you new here?"

I slowly turned my head about a quarter of an inch and I was already eyeball-to-eyeball with one of the Skills workers. Somehow he had managed to enter the bathroom without my highly-trained piss sensors going off. Not only had he entered the bathroom, he had completely invaded my personal bubble. He had not only crossed my personal border, but was at the gates of the capital. He was so close that if he would have stuck out his tongue, he would have swabbed my ear canal. I smiled and did my best to be courteous considering the situation. "Oh, I've been here for a few weeks."

"Well, I haven't seen you before."

"I work on the other side of the warehouse."

"Other side of the warehouse?"

"Yes," I said, still smiling. "That big wall of boxes next to you? I'm on the other side of that."

"Other side of the warehouse...hmm...well, I'm Pete!"

I said it was good to meet him and I would have offered my hand in a friendly handshake if it was not busy with a more important task. I turned my head forward to concentrate on the task on hand and in hand, doing my best to pretend there was not a man breathing on the side of my neck. A few seconds went by when in my peripheral vision I saw Pete's head slowly go down, slowly come up, slowly go down, and then slowly come up. A few more agonizing seconds and then Pete asked, "Why don't you go?"

"Well, Pete, I'm trying."

"What do you mean you're trying? You just go. You just walk up and go."

Just as I was about to calmly try and explain to Pete how some men couldn't "just go," the door opened. "Hey, Pete!" I heard a voice say. *Oh sweet Jesus.*

"What's going on, Pete?"

"Hey, fellas! This guy can't go!" *Oh sweet, sweet Jesus and the Greek god of all things bladder related.*

"What do you mean he can't go?"

"He's just standing here! Here, come see!"

A few minutes later I had three more Skills workers with the same disregard for personal space as Pete standing next to me, all of them examining my manhood that was suffering from extreme stage fright during its premiere appearance in the Skills bathroom.

"You're right, Pete! He's not going. What's wrong with him?"

"He says he's trying."

"How can you try to go? You just go."

"I know! That's what I said."

Soon their fascination with The Man Who Could Not Go became encouragement. Still not quite touching me, they cheered my member on. "Come on, you can do it! You just go! You just go!" I quietly found myself joining them, internally screaming at my penis. *You just go, damn it! You just go!* Nothing. It was unconscious, out cold from the stress brought on by its sudden celebrity status. I called it quits and brought everything back in. First of all, I realized I was never going to go. Not in that situation. Not a drop. Second, I was afraid one of the Skills workers was going to run to the door and yell, "Hey, everyone! Come in here! There's a guy who can't go!" Then I would have had over forty Skills workers in a tiny bathroom cheering me and my teammate on for glory.

As I washed my hands, Pete and his posse became quiet. Dejected, even. Pete spoke for the group: "He tried and he tried, but he couldn't go. He just couldn't go." I avoided their eyes as I turned to leave.

"I'll see you later, Pete."

"Yeah, see you." The way Pete talked and the way they looked, you would have thought they had bets riding on whether I went or not. "Twenty to one that he goes! I'm putting everything on that horse!"

I can only think of one positive outcome from my disappointing performance. For the rest of those gentlemen's lives, whenever things are going bad for them, Pete will speak up and say, "Guys! Hey, guys, come on! Things could always be worst. At least we can all go. That other guy, he couldn't even go."

As I look back, I realize the golden opportunity I missed. If I had been thinking, I would have utilized the man power available to me. I would have turned to Pete & Co. and asked them if they could help me go, to which I'm sure they would have heartily agreed. "Yeah, bud! Just tell us what to do!"

"Here's what I need you to do: each of you, turn around and keep a look out. If you see anything like a stray dog or a hungry jackal or perhaps a really big squirrel, give a shout. I can't go unless I'm sure the perimeter is secure. Got it, Pete? Thanks, guys. I appreciate it a lot. Oooom... oooom... oooom... aaaaahhh..."

I first must stress that I only did it once. It's not like my wife caught me in an ongoing identity crisis. The one time I tried it and the one time I didn't hear her when she walked through our front door. Bad luck, that's all. Remember that now. Only once.

It started when I was at the gym, running on a treadmill. Trying to run. I've gained a lot of weight over time, see? And my wife, Anna, she's a workout fiend. That ass, goddamn, she busts her ass to get that ass. I thought it was unfair she was that hot and I wasn't. When we got married I had a pretty good body, but not anymore. She didn't agree to that when she married me, when she married a fit guy and not a fat guy. So this whole thing started in love, see? I was doing it all for Anna.

I started jogging on the treadmill and it was then I realized just how fat I'd really become. I mean, I noticed I had breasts, this rack that kept flapping around while I ran. You could hear it with every step, this wet slapping sound, like a seal clapping its flippers. Thwack thwack thwack! I remember back in high school, when a guy had breasts, man boobs, we went nuts. Moobs, we called them. There was nothing funnier than a guy with moobs, especially when he ran. I now had moobs. I got off that treadmill as fast as I could.

So you're starting to see my dilemma: I wanted to lose weight through running, but I couldn't run because of the moobs brought on by my weight. What a rack. There are women who pay mega bucks to get a rack like mine. And then I thought about Anna's breasts. She's my wife, so I wanna be tasteful here, but she's gifted, we'll say that. Now when she works out, there's no flapping. When I work out, I flap. So there's a missing piece here, somewhere. Boobs need bras, so why wouldn't moobs need mras? Unfortunately, they don't make mras—that's where I'm going to make my money, making and selling mras—but they do make sport bras, and Anna had a drawer with a dozen of those colorful things.

So I went to our bedroom and found an Under Amour one that was hot pink. It was lying out on the bed; it's not like I sought that color out. So I popped my shirt off and dove into it. My reasoning was this: my frontal chest is smaller than Anna's, but I have a bigger chest in general. Therefore, I would fit. I didn't fit. I got into it after struggling and sweating and wheezing, but that doesn't mean it fit. I imagined it's a lot like what a corset feels like. But it was on. And you know what? Besides being too tight, it felt pretty good. Snug. I looked at myself in the mirror. I now had cleavage.

I gently began to bounce up and down. Not a sound, so I started to move a little bit more, a little shimmy and shake. Moobs still didn't move. It was then that I started to feel pretty proud of myself, like I was a trendsetter or something, even though I was a fat man wearing a hot pink Under Amour sports bra; self-respect was long forgotten, just like how I forgot to lock the bedroom door, only realizing my mistake when I heard the gasp.

Now my wife thinks I'm sexually repressed. She acts like she walked in and I had on French lingerie with lipstick. It was just a sports bra. She keeps insisting that we go see a psychiatrist to get in touch with my inner homo, but I refuse. I ask her, why can't I wear the bra? You wear my T-shirts, so why can't I borrow your bra? Then she kisses me sympathetically like I don't realize how sick I am, and she says something like, "I don't know, baby, but it's not fair, I know." Like I'm a child or something. Like I'm a rollie-pollie porker of a kid, self-conscious about my moobs, asking Mommy why this had to happen to me.

# Feed Mill Babe (Fiction)

John Dunning

Some people thought that the house was haunted. They were right, though it's not a house no more. That ol' porch that wrapped round the front has been torn off. The ancient oaks my grandfather said used to shade the yard, chopped down, and the rose bushes that climbed the lattice on the south side, dead and gone. My grandfather said something terrible happened in that house on Maple Street belongin' to Jacob Winehauser and his wife, Mary, a quiet couple with no children. Friday nights he used to go to their house to play cards with the men. Mary would sit in the parlor readin', stopping in the kitchen to refill the men's glasses as they lost their week's paychecks tryin' to out bluff each other. Three years ago Jacob passed away, followed shortly by Mary. Their house was put up for auction and only two parties showed up to bid on it. I thought this to be odd and I said so to my wife, Ellen.

The house stood empty for a time. I was told the gentleman who bought the place began some work on it, but quit soon after. An out-of-towner bought it last year. He turned it into what it is today: Smith's Feed Mill.

I happen to be in the business of construction. Got my own little outfit. Do a bit of everything but mostly plumbing. Landrin's Contracting out of Shellstown hired us to replace the sewer lines in the house 'bout two months ago. I told my grandfather about the job and a peculiar look came across his face.

"Don't take it," he told me.

He never said why not, so I just thought nothin' more on it and began the work. When I arrived, the house had been gutted and I asked the man in charge to show me to the cellar. Funny, lookin' back now, he gave a peculiar look just like the one my grandfather gave me. When I stepped down there, I remember a shiver runnin' down my spine. Shakin' it off, I started to work. Those pipes were so far gone if the fellow upstairs had flushed the toilet, me and Jimmy would have worn what he released. We took the pipes that run down from the first floor off, 'fore we started workin' on the ones runnin' west to the street. The whole time, though, I had this funny feelin' in the pit of my stomach. You know, when somethin' just ain't right but you don't know what. Replacing the pipe nearest us, Jimmy found an old burlap sack inside.

"Well, I reckon someone flushed that down," he tried to chuckle at his joke, but his voiced seemed to quiver instead.

I took the sack from him. It was light, but there was somethin' inside. I always been a curious man. Mother says it's my father in me. I dropped the sack when I saw what was inside.

We left that job unfinished. I told my grandfather what I seen some time after. "One night, we ran out of drink. I told Mary I'd grab a bottle from the cellar. Heard crying down there. Seemed to come from the pipes. Felt like my heart was trapped in a snow bank, so very cold, but it was the middle of June. They said in '30 Mary was pregnant. No child ever came out of that house."

Some nights I can't sleep. I sit at the kitchen table sipping from a bottle I hide from Ellen. Sometimes I think I hear a child cryin'. I thought I left that behind on Maple Street.



Aaron Vizzini  
"La Vallée du Tarn" (Photograph)

# Life (Poetry)

Gregory Gurtizen

## The Illusion

Looking down the railroad track you can never tell  
The rails are supposed to be parallel  
It's funny how your eyes deceit  
The rails always seem to meet  
It doesn't matter how long you travel them or how far  
Sometimes things seem different from what they really are

## Road Kill

I can't make it  
I'll never make it  
I don't like risks  
But I know I must take it  
The dreams I've always had  
Now my life is on the line  
Pull your body together now  
The body that I know is mine

This is my destiny  
My future lives or dies  
This separates the others  
From who stands or lies  
It's closing in  
Judgment day is near  
The moment of truth  
The starting point is here

I have to make up my mind  
I sit here and hesitate  
The path is right in front of me  
No longer can I wait  
My hoofs clomp onto the road  
I must reach my goal  
I must fulfill my dreams  
Or climb back into my hole  
I start my journey  
Tunnel vision to the place I want to be  
I can see my destination  
It's lying just ahead of me

This is my destiny  
My future lives or dies  
This separates the others  
From who stands or lies  
It's closing in  
Judgment day is near  
The moment of truth

The starting point is here

I'm running now  
It's not too far away  
Nothing is gonna stop me now  
I am here to stay  
I hear a roar in the distance  
Bright lights blind my vision  
I stop dead in my tracks  
And I'm greeted by a huge collision  
Flying weightless through the air  
My face crushes into the floor  
Staring at my destiny sideways  
My life is nevermore

That was my destiny  
This is where my future dies  
Separated from the others  
I am the one who lies  
Lying on the pavement  
It's no use I realize  
No use in fighting now  
So I just close my eyes

*Written 2003, age 13*

### **A Piece of the Puzzle**

Unwrapping during Christmas, snipping tape  
Excitement as one saw another's shape  
On the table we gathered, one plus one  
Then two plus two and so on until done

For some it came easy, they had many friends  
For some, not so much, but they fit in the end  
They grouped together and groups became obese  
But I was small and an oddly tessellating shaped piece  
No attachment, I feel so out of place  
Is it my characteristics? The look of my face?  
The size of my shape? The color of my skin?  
Might as well give up, I'll never win  
No interlocking in the corner or anywhere in the middle  
Still off to the side, feeling the person inside me grow little  
Trying to be seen, I feel so spent  
Like a Catholic who is giving up hope for Lent  
Would I still be seen under a magnifying glass  
Like an ant climbing on a blade of grass?  
But if I were, what would happen I inquire  
One day would the glass shift and I be set on fire?  
The more I pushed in the more I was pushed away  
The sun in me now tucked under the skies of grey  
The Sole that has just squashed an ant is now on my chest  
But even wounded and dead ants are carried back to the nest  
A part of a whole, but not at all. Apart!

I can feel my chest caving in on my heart!  
Stronger than ever the group is on the prowl  
Hissing at me, some even growl  
I am nothing to them. I am nothing to them  
Could have grown into a flower, but am just a stem  
Like a broken puzzle, so is my heart and mind  
I take a step forward but am told to stay behind

I watch them walk. Racing fear, daunting on  
Can't hear them talk. Disappear; they are gone  
Left with nothing but thoughts in my head  
Lonely, beaten, wounded; left for dead.

## Cancer

"No. No. No. We are not like the other cells  
We are sophisticated and superior, living in houses and hotels  
No drinking via osmosis, but pull water from wells  
And we are called to worship God by the church bells"

Why is it we're here?  
Why do we live in this way?  
There is no real truth

It's clear no one truly knows  
I suppose  
Someone proposed  
We are the ones God chose

So I do not ask the elders why  
I already know the lecture to come  
God, the creator, is where I'm from  
And we basically live to die

It will start provoking  
Me into choking  
With all of their stories and quotes  
I'll make the universal sign I can't breathe  
Ask them to leave  
And take with them all they've shoved down my throat

One too many tries  
To open the elders' eyes  
I find myself in a game I always lose  
But I have also found  
As I look around the town  
Other cancer cells have other views  
In history there's battles and fights  
About which God to worship is right  
Not all believe in a God; they refuse  
So I will go on my own adventure and observe  
Every vessel, tissue, cavity, and nerve  
And have my own deductions to choose



Disinterested in the lecture  
Which is no more than a conjecture  
I set out to explore the host  
Out the front door  
Pass the DNA store  
Down past the trading post  
Past the malls  
To the blood vessel walls  
Functioning as the bloodstream's coast  
I decided once there  
To take my own dare  
And become completely engrossed

Immediately I began flaring  
To stop myself and catch my bearing  
If I don't, I surely will be toast  
So much for a slowly rolling stream  
More of a racing river it seemed  
Whirling and swirling until I was as white as a ghost  
Am I experiencing cellular division?  
Or is this just double vision?  
There's only the vessel wall to slow me at most  
For me this is a place of taboo  
And if the elders knew  
They'd put me in the oven to roast

"Don't worry, you're in a loop"  
Said the red blood cell group  
As we circled around the host  
"Around and around and then  
You'll be back again  
To the place you call the coast  
First we must funnel  
Down through this tunnel"  
"More of a mineshaft," one red blood cell riposte  
"It's a lot less narrow  
Now that there's less bone marrow  
Your kind is turning it into compost  
If you can't already tell  
They've fought off the white blood cells  
That were trying to protect the host  
Now that they're overgrown  
They've taken over the host's bone  
And see who can mine it the most"

Next thing I knew  
I was being pumped through  
Two chambers at the heart of the host  
It seemed to this little cellular mutation  
I'm now passing into the great respiratory organization  
But there was polluted air smelling so gross  
From behind I felt a sudden jerk

As the red blood cells passed me to go to work  
Gathering oxygen for the other cells in the host  
I noticed several of the lung's trees rootless  
Many red blood cells came back fruitless  
50% came back with oxygen at most  
"They've chopped down the bronchial trees  
It's getting harder to breathe  
And the lungs are becoming sclerosed  
I guess who needs the woods  
When you can sell them for goods  
At the expense of us who give back to the host  
Because your kind didn't think twice  
The rest of us cells pay the price  
And now we're tied to the cancer's whipping post"

I felt so much remorse  
As we suddenly changed course  
Shooting back into two chambers at the heart of the host  
"I'm sorry to inform  
We're about to enter an electrical storm  
Make sure you stay with us and stick close  
You are going to hear an articulation  
The brain's vocalization  
Don't be fooled. It's no ghost"  
I opened up my ear  
And sure enough I did hear  
"I have cancer. I've been diagnosed  
Will you be there for me?  
Soon I'll be starting chemotherapy  
And I'll be receiving a large dose"  
For the rest of the time spent  
I kept wondering what that meant  
As we made our way back toward my society's coast  
Traveling in this big loop  
With this circle shaped red blood cell group  
Trying like every other cell to give back to the host  
I thanked them for the ride  
And for sticking by my side  
I bid them farewell. "Adios"

Before they let me go  
They told me to let my kind know  
"Stop robbing the host; committing unnecessary theft.  
How will all kind survive  
When our host is no longer alive  
And there is nothing else left?"

I sat by the coast for a while  
Watching this flowing blood stream  
It kind of made me smile  
Thinking of the other cells working as a team  
They live such a simple lifestyle

Why does my type of cell live to the extreme?  
Mamma said we were no virus; non-hostile  
But we've destroyed everything to reign supreme  
I want to tell the elders we can be more versatile  
But nothing will change. It will just be my dream.

Before my adventure I never interacted with the host. I spent my time in stores and trading posts  
These other cells must feel so inundated by my kind being so overpopulated  
I keep thinking as I sit here in reflection, and I start to make a connection  
And see the importance of this host being in a loop as I traveled with the red blood cell group  
I begin pulling away more tape as I see the importance of the circular shape  
Life's a cycle. My brain's light bulb has light! Life and death! Cycling Seasons! Day and night!  
Is giving back to the host important and right? I feel my kind is blinded and living with no sight  
Is the only thing a cancer cell can see are other cancer cells like you and me?  
Or are there no cares watching the boob tubes living comfortably in our boxed in cubes?  
No, Mama, we're certainly no virus or curse. God chose us. It's in the Bible verse  
No, Mama, we're certainly no virus or curse. We're cancer and we're a lot worse

## The Father

"Life sucks. Then you die."  
Said a father to his son  
The father was bored at the son's baseball game  
The father never came to another one  
Only one vacation to the shore  
Because it rained and the father had no fun  
There was no money for boy scouts or college  
The son would have to pay his own way in the long run

Every son has goals, desires, wants, and needs  
The son's childhood is the farmer planting seeds  
But without good soil, one can only produce weeds  
Leaving empty pockets and no proceeds  
The son dug deep and started to see  
That's not the father he wanted to be  
He laid down better soil for his own family  
And planted the seed to grow into the giving tree

The son, now a father, faces a problem  
As he lay under his truck  
There is no pain at first  
Until he realized he had been struck  
He could not move at all

He was pinned down and stuck  
He worried about his own son at home  
His little young buck

Years later the accident left his body grinding bone on bone  
It doesn't matter to him. The seed he planted in himself had grown  
He was different from his father, the one he had always known  
Inside his body screams with pain, yet love is all he's shown

The father lies in bed, but can't find a comfortable position  
No sleep; doesn't matter to him. He is on a mission  
He keeps going through love, despite his condition  
It doesn't matter to him as he feels his own body's decomposition

The father says to his son  
"Son, this is what I want you to do  
Make a move on life before it makes a move on you  
My father never gave me an opportunity  
Your goal is to dig a hole  
Plant the seed to exceed  
And be a better father than what I could be"



Lindsey Farrell  
"Find the Beauty in the Little Things in Life" (Photograph)

# Tapestries

2011-2012

Weaving the Threads of Creativity &  
Innovation

