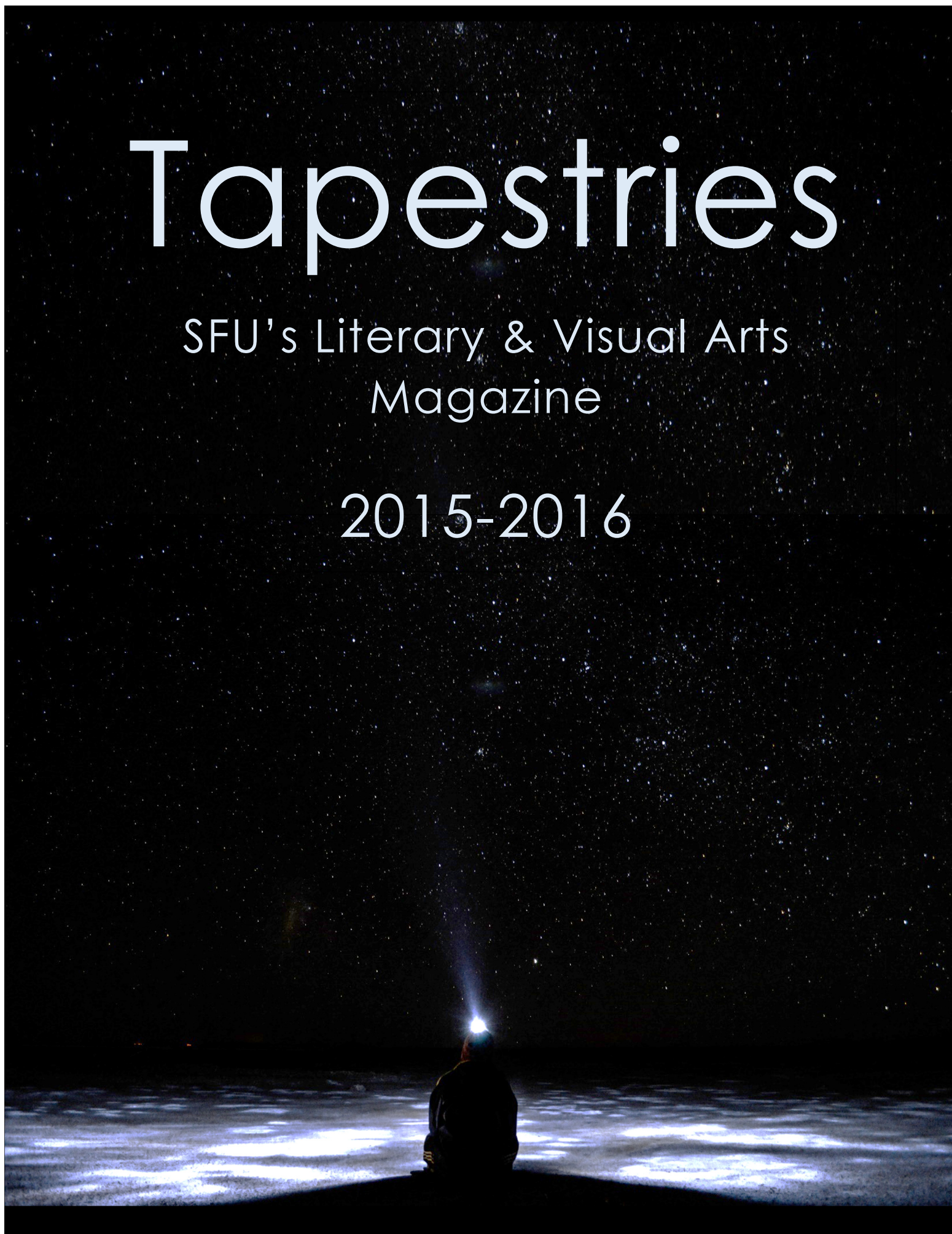


Tapestries

SFU's Literary & Visual Arts
Magazine

2015-2016



Each year the School of Arts & Letters hosts the Gunard Berry Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, a 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 late fall and ends in early spring, 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 or personally delivered to Room 307 Scotus Hall before the announced contest deadline.

The 2015-2016 contest winners and honorable mentions were published in the fifth volume of Saint Francis University's literary art magazine, *Tapestries*. 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 about the Gunard Berry Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, please contact:

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Tapestries

Weaving the Threads of Creativity & Innovation

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Cover Artwork by Christopher Evans

“Stargazing” (1st Place Winner in the Visual Arts Category)

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Acknowledgements

The Gunard Berry Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest and the publication of *Tapestries* would not be possible without the efforts of these individuals:

- Mrs. Barbara C. Travaglini and her son, Frederick C. Travaglini, directors of the Gunard B. Carlson Memorial Foundation, for their continued funding of the Gunard B. Carlson Contest;
- Ms. Angela Balog, Dr. Roxana Cazan, Dr. Lauri Chose, Mr. Bradley Coffield, Dr. Patrick Farabaugh, Ms. Heather Gides, Dr. Balazs Hargittai, and Dr. James Nathan Scott, who read, reviewed, and scored the 70 writing entries submitted for the 2015-16 contest;
- Ms. Carol Stoltz, who judged all 241 submitted visual art entries;
- Dr. Wayne Powel, Dr. Timothy Whisler, and Ms. Donna Menis, for their support and promotion of the contest;
- Ms. Jaqueline Mazeika, for preparing the certificates and prizes for all contest winners and honorable mention recipients;
- Ms. Beth Bellock, Mr. Michael Kutchman, and the SFU Print Shop staff, for publishing *Tapestries* in print form;
- Ms. Marie Young and the Department of Marketing and Communications, for publishing *Tapestries* online;
- student editors Tara Fritz and April Taylor, for proofreading the magazine's contents;
- and all students who participated in this year's contest, whose writing and artwork so impressed the judges with its displays of talent and creativity.

Writing Judges

Ms. Angela Balog, Instructor of Business Management

Dr. Roxana Cazan, Assistant Professor of English

Dr. Lauri Chose, Associate Professor of English

Mr. Bradley Coffield, Assistant Information Services Librarian

Dr. Patrick Farabaugh, Associate Professor of Communication Arts

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“Undisturbed” by Nicholas Pyo

Jack (Fiction)

Holly Baker

Jack lies in the grass, letting the warm embrace of the sun titillate each and every hair on his body. The warm feel of the sun makes Jack relax, and it's almost as if his mind is completely blank now. There are no thoughts of that woman—in fact, Jack doesn't even have the motivation to think of her name as he lays there carefree. The sun never felt so good. He can't even remember the last time he stretched his body out so far. His hands are laying straight up; as he stretches from finger to toe, he can feel each muscle in his body tense up and loosen.

The wind is rustling through the thick shroud of green leaves newly planted onto the trees. The trees themselves are far from being newly planted, and have grown so high Jack cannot see the tops. The trees are surrounding him from all sides. Jack looks up for a moment, scanning the area around him. He realizes he's not quite sure where he is, or how he got there in the first place. Well, he knows how he got there—he ran. He got out of that house as quickly as he could, and just kept running, and running, until he found a nice quiet spot where he could feel the sun feeling him.

Raven is her name. Jack hates birds; they're so disgusting. He thought to himself, *How did I get stuck with a Raven?* Raven was relentless. She was far too clingy for Jack's liking; all she ever wanted to do was hold him and take pictures with him to show off to her friends and family, and Jack had no patience for things like that. That was why he *had* to get out of that house. Jack needed some alone time. Oftentimes, Raven would begin to speak and Jack would just ignore her. Her unrelenting babbling made no sense to Jack; it was as if she were speaking a different language to him all together. He just didn't care about her anymore. Jack was trying to think if there had ever been a time when he did.

Jack lived a very rough life. When he was born, his parents didn't want him. For his entire youth, he stayed in homes, bouncing between families. The people who tried to foster him would suffocate him with unwanted attention—even in his young age he was not really one for social contact; he hated to play and in general was very lethargic. Unfortunately for Jack, no family wanted to keep him. Each family would bring him back after a few weeks of fostering him and say that they couldn't take care of him anymore because Jack did not get along with their *real* kids, or that he spent the whole day hiding in his room. *Whatever*, Jack thought. *I'd rather be alone anyway.*

In the last home that tried to foster him, Jack had no patience for them. He was almost an adult, and he was tired of trying to fit in places that didn't understand him. At first, living on the streets was an adventure. Jack could do what he wanted whenever he wanted; he could eat whatever he found that looked good; and, best of all, he could be alone all day every day. After all, nobody really wanted to associate with the homeless.

When Jack entered into adulthood, he had been living on the streets for a few years. Jack found that he was undernourished. He had no skill sets to get a job, and now, much to his dismay, people still didn't want to associate with the homeless. Jack had to resort to sneaking into dumpsters and digging out scraps of food just to get by. Life on the street was harder than he had thought, and he felt like a hypocrite because all he wanted was to go

back into a warm home. He was lost, he was alone, and he was scared—but then he met Raven.

Raven found him one day and brought him some tuna salad. Raven was appalled by how he had been living. She continued to bring him food, and eventually she offered to take him in; this way he could begin living a healthy life again. Jack wanted nothing more than to stay at the house with her. She was very pretty, and very kind, and he needed someone to take care of him.

They both had black hair and green eyes. They made a perfect couple. At first Jack was sweet and thankful towards Raven, but after five years of being together, something changed. Jack was tired of being tied down. He would spend most of his days sitting on the window seat and staring out at all of the filthy birds living freely; beautiful flowers; and, most of all, the warm sun. He needed to get out and explore. It didn't help either that Raven always had another man at the house. She was using both of them, and Jack didn't deserve that. It was in this moment that Jack first noticed the door.

It was just a door. He walked through doors all the time. So why had he never noticed that he had the liberty to walk through this door? This door was different—this door didn't represent the way to the bathroom or the kitchen. This door represented freedom. Jack was finally going to leave Raven and her squawking and her other men; she didn't even care about him anymore. Raven just didn't want to be alone. Impulsively, Jack moved to the door, took a deep breath, and began running.

Jack was now basking in the sun's warm glow as it descended over the mountain. His stomach began to rumble. He knew he needed to eat. He was thinking about how he had food waiting for him at Raven's house, but he couldn't go back. He left without telling her. She was probably worried sick, and if he were to come back, the screeching and the squawking would just continue. Did he give up on too much? Did he run away from something that he needed? Did Raven still care? Why was he so hungry? In the distance a voice echoed throughout the trees. It was Raven. "Jack! Jack, are you out there? Jack, come home! It's supposed to rain soon, you can't be out here!" Raven pleaded with him.

Jack's eyes widened. *She does care*, he thought. *She's out here looking for me!* Jack got up and ran toward her voice as she was calling for him. When he saw her, Raven smiled from ear to ear. She was so happy to see him! He ran into her arms, and she gave him a big kiss. Jack purred with excitement as Raven lifted him up and laid him on her shoulder. As she walked toward the house, she said, "What a big day of exploring for you! Kent must have left the door open on his way out."



“Crab Style” by Kimberly Elter



“An Iguana’s Intent” by Kimberly Elter

Scenes from Childhood (Creative Nonfiction)

Cassandra Wolowic

Nutcracker

I could play the whole story in my head, even though I am only seven: *The Nutcracker*, where dancers have practiced countless hours to tell a story with their bodies, to mesmerize the audience. As we walk in through the glass doors and into the lobby, people are in ties and suits, heels and dresses. They examine tickets, look for the right door to their seats. Our seats are on the second floor, and I run and skip as I climb the winding staircase paneled with mirrors that reflect a little girl who wants to be a dancer, too. The hallway leads to a giant room where a chandelier as big as my bedroom hangs from the ceiling. The walls are covered with mini-chandeliers that reflect the light on the paneled walls. I feel as if I am a princess witnessing a show from my royal box in the balcony. I am beyond ready for the lights to dim as I wait to sit between my mother and my grandmother. Then I freeze: My mother is going a different way. Our seats aren't together. I will have to sit next to a stranger. I feel my grandmother tug on my arm. I can still see my mother from where we are sitting, but the lady next to me looks like a ball I could bounce on, and she smells of something unfamiliar. Things aren't the same. Antsy, I ask my grandmother fifteen questions. I keep track of them to ask my mother during the second half of the show so she won't feel left out when it is her turn to sit with me. I don't see much of the dancing. How I wish for our seats to be together in the years to come.

Chase

My family actually likes him for once. They aren't trying to tear me away from him, I think as I walk to his house. My feet are skipping, stepping and jumping in tune to the music, with the warm sun beating down. The world around me melts away as I get lost in my thoughts. His house becomes nearer with every step I take, the sun room jutting out in the front, then the old broken jeep that has been sitting in the driveway for years. When I finally reach his door, he opens it. His hair is disheveled, eyes are barely open. He could fall back asleep right there. He still opens his arms wide and allows me to fall into them for a big hug.

With his arm still around me, warmth radiating from his skin, I step out of my shoes before we walk into the kitchen. His dad is there. I've only met him once before from a distance. The introductions are made. Out of awkwardness my face turns a light pink. His father asks me when my modeling career is going to start, points out my height, what he calls my beauty. My face is now redder than a tomato. I look down and they both laugh.

When his father leaves, he takes me upstairs to the lounge area, and we sit down and talk. Occasionally, he leans in and teases me, as he lingers his lips near mine. When he tries to kiss me, I avoid it to make him flustered. He tries one more time, and I bounce up and start to step away from him. His arm reaches out like a cat wanting its toy. Then I take off.

I bound down the stairs and fly out the door with it swinging behind me. I pause and turn around to see him gaining on me. Leaping off the porch onto the soft green grass, I hide like a prisoner among the flowers. He passes me, and I seize my chance and run in the opposite direction. Moments later, I feel an arm wrap around my stomach, and we roll onto the ground, his body over top like a cage.

"Ha, got you! You're mine." He smirks, his face a flushed red, matching mine.

"Not for long," I respond, laughing, trying to get out of his grip. It is no use. He is stronger.

"Fine. I give up," I mutter. He gives me a kiss, smiles and helps me up. I take off again, laughing out loud. As I leap towards the porch, my foot slips and the edge of the step cuts my toe. My sock turns crimson. I rip it off as the blood bubbles out and trickles down my foot.

He races to my side, looks at my toe, picks me up with ease—like a husband picking up a wife—and carries me inside: up the stairs, to the bathroom, setting me on top of the sink. He cleans up my toe and bandages it. When no more blood is visible, he cups my foot in his hands and bends down and kisses my toes. My face now matches the blood under the Band-Aid as he looks into my eyes.

Perspective

He sits on a stool trying to stay comfy, a book wide open held by one hand. Half hidden by a pole, he tries to disappear so no customer can interrupt him. In peace, he continues to read, the pages occasionally turning, bringing him in deeper and deeper.

She stands there in all black, like a shadow watching him behind the little board that announces Sumatra American, the specialty of the day. She watches his body move up and down in rhythm with his breathing, his head occasionally turning from the stiffness in his neck. She dares to move and walks back towards him, like a child not wanting to wake her parents. He pushes up his glasses and she freezes, then continues. She is so close now she can reach out and touch him, run her fingers through his hair that seems to have been rubbed with a towel and left to dry. His outfit matches hers: a black shirt and black Clarks. Their clothes together could make the night sky.

She takes one more step, and his mind is coming back to reality. He looks up at her, surprised before a smile takes over.

"Hey, I didn't realize you came in." His smile is a sweet tune.

"I wanted to say hi, but you were in another world." She asks, "What are you reading?" and starts the song.

Pavilion

We sit under the pavilion, wondering where the summer days have gone. The roof plays us a tune with each new raindrop. I smile and try to pull him into the rain with me so we can dance. He won't budge. His cold keeps him curled in the little nest of his jacket.

I run out, throw my head back, and twirl as the rain kisses my face. When I am finally one, I come back to reality and feel his gaze. I smile and beckon him to join me. He still won't. I extend one leg and flick my toe, watching water soar through the pavilion, aiming right at him. He glares at me, as I go to do it again. This time he isn't happy and I retreat to his side like a little sister who has just behaved badly.

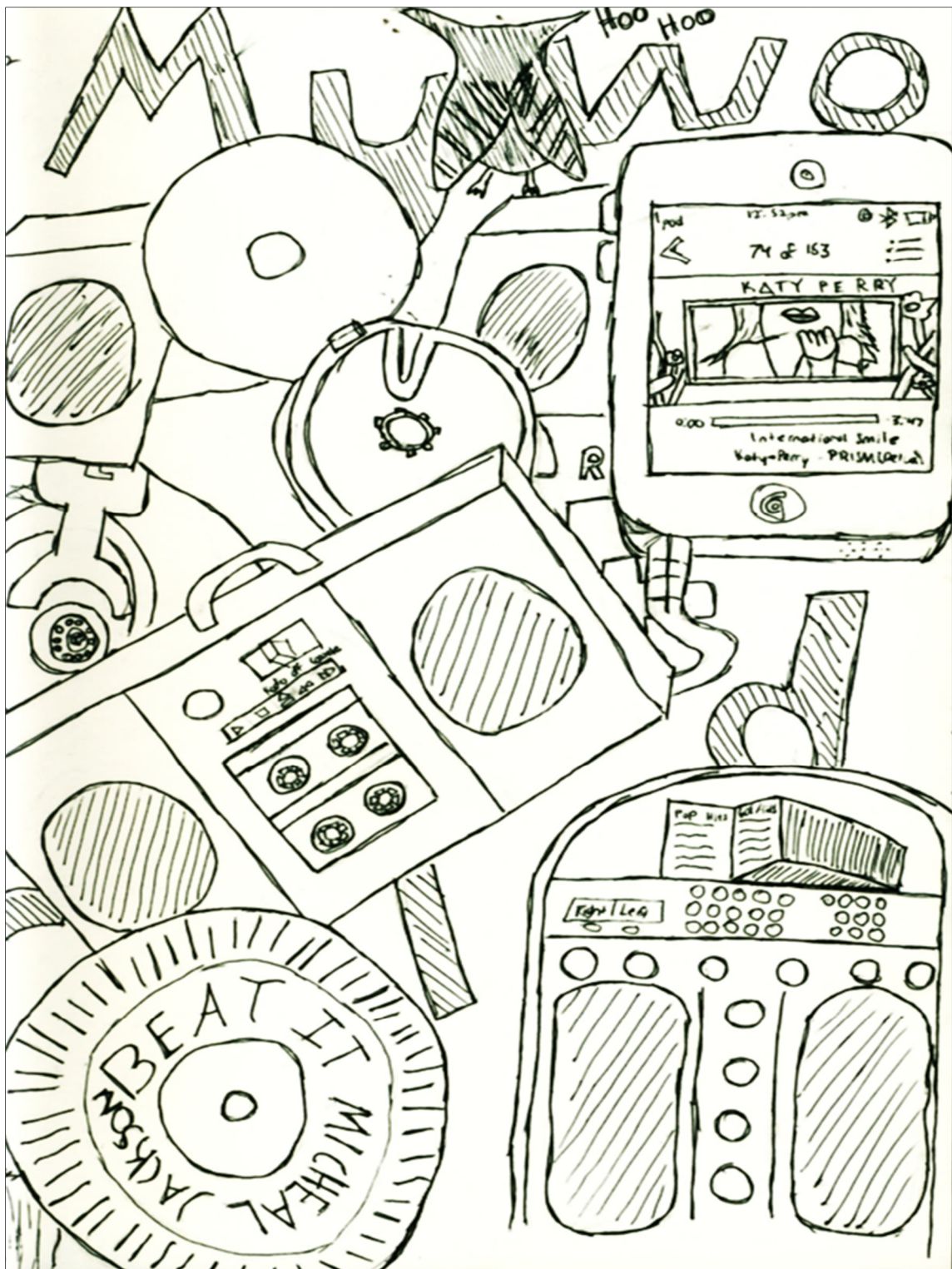
I snuggle up next to him when I get near, trying to get warm. We sit there in silence, listening to the melody of the rain.

Soon, I lean away, breaking the peace. He gives me a smile I recognize, and I can't help but grin. Then the inner child in me wants to play, tempt, tease. He is like a brother. Tease him. I slowly reach out and poke him. He jumps and shakes his head and pokes me back. The war has begun. Enemies till one surrenders laughing, or until...

I poked him in the eye! Oh, that looks painful. I try to comfort him and apologize. He is in pain yet still laughing, which makes me laugh, too. He rubs his eye and assures me that he's fine. I curl up into his arms again, allowing the music of the rain to come back, bringing us peace.



“Sammy Squirrel” by Michelle Gallagher



“My World” by Michelle Gallagher

Coffee Shop (Fiction)

Ashley Rovder

Her fingertips lightly caressed the smooth, moss-colored countertop as she peeked at the barista beneath her long lashes. His face remained stiff in concentration as he heated the milk for her caramel latte, extra whipped cream. After a few seconds, he dared a glance towards the girl clad in a sleeveless black dress despite the frosty air outside. A split second of eye contact lit her already flushed cheeks on fire and she smiled shyly before turning her intense focus towards a miniscule crack in the tile floor below. The shop hosted a small group of high school girls in the farthest corner, gossiping unintelligibly under the soft hum of Christmas instrumentals, as well as a middle-aged couple who sat comfortably in silence. Another worker with a green apron tied around her waist busied herself by flitting from table to table, cleaning any and all remnants of the evening rush before closing time.

Once again, the young girl found herself gazing towards the handsome barista, maybe twenty or so years old, and wishing for a burst of confidence in either herself or, more preferably, the barista himself. Or at least she had thought so. As he pumped the caramel syrup into the cup, he looked up once more and asked, "So how are you doing today?"

Oh. Oh no. Her eyes widened as her heart skipped a beat, betraying what little ounce of 'cool' she had tried to convey, before she replied quietly, "Good. How are you?"

He smiled in a way that seemed to warm the little corner coffee shop. "I'm fine, thanks," and his eyes returned to the cup once more, adding extra whipped cream to the top as per her instruction. Her mind muddled over all the different responses she should have used instead. *'I'm doing fine! A little chilly, though,'* motioning towards her sleeveless arms with a sheepish but endearing smile, *'I guess I wasn't prepared for the weather to drop so suddenly.'* At least *that* would have started some sort of conversation. Instead, he placed a cap over the hot drink and handed it to her, his fingertips brushing hers ever so slightly, before she thanked him and turned towards the exit. Her hips naturally swayed with the soft clack of her heels and she pushed the door open, bracing for the cold winter winds. She brought the heated cup to her lips as she walked towards her car, smiling softly as she tasted the sweet cream on top. Goosebumps formed on her skin, but she felt so warm on the inside.

* * *

The sun set and rose twice over before she returned to the corner coffee shop. Its golden rays painted the interior with an optimistic hue, energizing the already bustling crowd within. The young lady claimed her spot in line behind two businessmen, a mother and her child, and a professional woman occupied in a muffled conversation over the phone. She watched the baby boy from behind the cover of the elder woman as his wide eyes explored the little shop as if it were the eighth wonder of the world. Before long, his innocent gaze locked onto her, and she smiled brightly with raised eyebrows in return. His mouth opened slightly as he unabashedly stared, to which she responded with a wave of her mittened hand and a breathy "Hi!" After a second of seemingly intense concentration on his part, the corner of his gaping mouth twitched upwards in the ghost of a smile before his mother carried him away from the register. Heart swelled with adoration and, admittedly, a tiny bit of pride, she shuffled with the pull of the line.

The lady ahead quickly ordered and paid for a coffee, returning to her call, and the young woman took her place, skimming the board above all the while. Aware of the busy hour, she hastily decided upon the advertised seasonal beverage—with extra whipped cream—and told the cashier so. She glanced towards the blur of a figure rushing in from the back room and started when she saw the familiar face. His own eyes sparkled—*perhaps in recognition?*—for a short instant before he returned to his duties behind the counter. Tucking a stray piece of blonde hair behind her ear, she quickly added, “Can I also get a blueberry oatmeal with that?” The cashier responded affirmatively and gave the total, which she paid in full.

A familiar blush graced her cheeks once more as she approached the next counter for her drink. Why did she react so strongly to a stranger’s presence? In any case, she had to pull herself together. Stretching her shoulders back and willing her heart to calm down, she rested her hip on the corner of the faux marble and peeled off her knitted gloves. The Christmas music, ever-present in the background, accompanied the soft whir of the blending machine and lulled her into a peaceful daze while the earlier customers left, one by one.

A distant voice dragged her from her small reverie. “...Cream?”

Blinking twice, she looked up at the barista and said, “Sorry?”

His crooked smile did not help her startled state when he repeated his original question, “Gingerbread latte, extra whipped cream?” and held out a simple red cup.

“Oh, yes! That’s me!” she said, grasping her warm drink. “Um, should I wait here for my oatmeal or...?”

That damn smile never faltered. “Don’t worry about it, I’ll bring it out to you when it’s ready.”

Glancing at the growing line behind her, she asked, “Are you sure?”

“Of course,” he said as he began the next order’s drink.

“Thank you so much!” And with that, she found a table near the gaping windows and settled into the warmth of the morning sunlight.

Customers came and went, rushing to move on in their busy day. Most were more than likely prepping for some last minute shopping at the nearby stores, caffeine in hand. A few slow minutes passed before the shop calmed down, and the morning rush faded into a memory. Sitting alone at a table, she swirled the cinnamon beverage with a slight flick of the wrist while leaning her head against her other hand. Someone cleared his throat right above her shoulder and she jumped an inch out of her seat, spilling what was left of her latte on the tabletop.

“Oh, I’m so sorry, I didn’t mean—” the barista fumbled with the plate, balancing it on only one hand, and reached for napkins.

“No, no, no—it’s not your fault, don’t worry about it!” she said as she quickly righted the compromised cup and grabbed her own handful of napkins, wiping the table where he missed.

His gaze stuck on the pile of wet napkins for a second before he picked them all up with his free hand and set the plate with her oatmeal and nut and blueberry packets down in front of her. "Here, I'll take those," he said, motioning towards the ruined napkins in her hand.

"Thanks," she said as she passed them to him with an amused grin.

Rubbing the back of his neck, he met her smile with a sheepish one of his own. "And here I thought I'd be helping you out by bringing it to you."

Laughing gently, she waved her hand towards the open window. "It's my fault, really. My head was somewhere else." With no counter between them, she could easily see the way his white tee stretched around his shoulders and the hint of stubble around his jaw.

"I'm almost jealous. Especially with Christmas so close, I can't seem to catch a break," he replied, his deep voice reverberating through her bones. Suddenly, a bell near the front of the café tinkled as a new wave of people entered. "Ah, I should probably get back to work," he said with a hint of regret as he looked towards the sound. Turning back around, he pointed towards her oatmeal. "Let that steep for at least two minutes, and if you want any more blueberries, just ask. I'll take care of ya," he said with a wink, leaving her speechless as he walked towards the crowd. If anyone asked, she would swear the blush on her cheeks was from the heat of the oatmeal.

* * *

She checked her reflection in the rear-view mirror for the third time since parking before making her way towards the small shop on the corner. This was not the first time since Christmas passed, but her last trip proved to be disappointing due to the absence of a certain employee. The air hung in suspended animation; the religious holiday had come and gone, but the promise of a new year and new beginnings whispered excitedly to anyone who would listen.

As she pushed open the front door, a small bell tinkled, alerting the very barista she hoped to see. At the edges of her vision she could make out some Christmas decorations still hanging on the large glass windows. They didn't seem out of place, though. Just as the spirit of Christmas lingered, the decorations could stay—perhaps they'd find retirement after December. But her mind was focused on a single thing, and this thing—person—just finished wiping his hands before greeting her.

"Hey!" he said with a smile.

"Hello!" she replied, mirroring his expression.

"What can I get for you today?"

Wishing that the gleam in his eyes wasn't just in her imagination, she answered with the first drink she saw: "Chai tea latte, please." His fingers deftly tapped at the register for a split second before she added, "Oh! And—"

"Extra whipped cream?" he asked with a playful smirk.

The blush returned yet again, despite her efforts. She had held it at bay for an impressive two minutes, at least. "Please."

He marked an empty red cup with a sharpie before swiping her festive new gift card, a present from a far-off relative. Funny how family pulls through. He turned away and punched something into a machine before it clicked on with a soft whir. Solely two beating hearts occupied the shop, encouraging the young lady to pursue her original intentions. Staring at his back under the protection of her lashes, she sent a silent prayer to the heavens before she spoke up. "So how was your Christmas?"

He looked over his shoulder for a moment with a poorly disguised look of surprise accompanied by a boyish grin, then faced the machine again, pouring some milk into the top. "Eh. Uneventful as far as the season of magic and giving is concerned," he shrugged his shoulders, replacing the jug's cap and setting the cup underneath the spout. "Can I ask you the same?" He turned around and leaned against the back counter, crossing his arms comfortably against his apron, and she couldn't help but notice how the stance suited him.

Gently grabbing the marble counter before her, she shifted her weight forward and said, "Mine wasn't much different. It's surprising how lonely a holiday can be sometimes." Yet her soft smile betrayed the emotions spiraling through her head.

"Yeah, I'm more of a New Year's guy, anyways," he said, his eyes still on her.

"Hmm—I've never really celebrated New Year's the way you're supposed to, to be honest," she replied, diverting her attention from his strong gaze to the very full coffee cup behind him, raising an eyebrow slightly.

"Oh, yeah? That's a shame—if you wanted, I could..." his words trailed off as he followed her pointed look towards her now overflowing drink, cursing under his breath before he rapidly pressed a button and pulled the cup to the side. "Ahh, I'm sorry. Again."

Laughter bubbled in her chest as she watched him scramble to fix the drink, wipe the stained red exterior, and finally top it off with a long swirl of whipped cream. She watched with a spark of curiosity as he wrote something else on the cup, but met his eyes once more with a bright smile as he handed it to her and said, "I promise I'm a capable person. And if you want to, uh, celebrate New Year's differently this time, all you have to do is ask," gesturing to the steaming latte in her hands.

"Oh?" she said, eyebrows drawing together as she shifted her grasp on the drink, revealing a set of numbers. "Oh!"

He rubbed the back of his neck like before and stumbled over his words as her face grew undeniably redder, "I mean, only if you want to, that is—you don't have to—"

"No! I mean, yes! I'd love to—"

The bell tinkled loudly, and the pair spun to face the newly arriving customers with terrible timing. "Ah, I should probably get going..." she mumbled, turning to leave.

"Wait!" He grabbed her wrist, leaning over the counter that separated them, and she gasped softly. His eyes grew wide before he let go quickly and murmured, "What's your name?"

Her voice mingled with the instrumental set and she departed from the coffee shop with warm hands and heart, humming some unintelligible tune to herself as the snow fell in hushed appreciation.



“Petals of Roses” by Gina Famiglietti



"Sunset" by Grace Smith

The Greatest Love I Ever Knew (Poetry)

Andrew Lesh

Delectably Inclined

You are cherished, you are sweet
You meet my every-living need

And when the world rains Nutella; we stand beneath our um-berella
With just our tongues stuck-out... taking in as lady, and fella

So dance with me—with not prejudice, but pride
As we spin in love, swearing only to stop when time to dine

Then we'll cuddle up close and intertwine
Knowing in our hearts that 'You are mine!'

My More than a Paper-Piece of Writing

It was a dark and dreary Midnight, my love across the way. It was most-forth spent apart, but none-the-less a day.

We strayed--not from our love, but still stung from its in-pain. We spoke a bit of a night now gone with the tiniest disdain.

Our hearts still stuck in midnight, in a daughter-day of May. With thoughts both wrote-out, like lines and scenes from an unrehearsed play.

We sat-back in quiet comfort, from prying ears we stayed. Listening eyes not closed, as we shared what-was to say.

My chance to open-up began with words of praise as from a letter.
We basked in the joy my heart brought-whence, as we relived our spent-together.

From my heart I poured out; no words were left fettered.
But from my path of memories, more--laid bare--was not the better.

I tailed of you reminding me of Erin in a way. But, you are--so completely different, no comparison can be made!

At the restaurant, I thought you would continue into how she did; because I expect my past to be the future I will know.

But with your arrival you have changed what I've done to forgotten, and out-of-it all you've taken my hand, and we've grown!

You are so very different in how it-is you are. She lived a wrecktic life, with education opportunity all-blown.

She would manipulate, and swing extremes of feelings often, with no religion, or faith, to ground her fate.

I've said this once before, and I will remind you once again, I could once be married, but it'd be a life of hard-work--poor.

With no money for a church, a certificate would've said it all, that one day either could still walk-out the door.

With no desire for kids from her, we'd love a time, but not live in all we are, and then we'd have gone-on to disdain one-another, and mourn.

You... are so much more!

You are cleanly, you make your life new daily, spiritually, and Masly, through so such a powerfully-moving way.

When I got to experience redemption, and forgiveness that day with no refrain.

You were only there to have God work through--and in--you, my heart, there-fore, was changed.

You've helped me to grow in self, and faith, and I feel more power when I pray!

No-one has fit me--as you do. In body, and the words to say to calm my heart. Your honesty is my favorite because I feel your spirit!

You are so-far ahead in life than anyone I've dated. Because you have a future planned that's ever-so inviting!

None I've known compares to you in body, mind, or soul! You've inspired dreams, and art, and writings--like no-other!

You are the first, and only, that I can see an ever-growing happiness, and married to, and more.

You work hard, you are setting-up for a better situation, and life. Marriage to you isn't a revolving door.

But a gateway to another world you will not come back from, both scary and exciting!

It's because you have so much--not in-common that I wish you as a wife.

Because marriage will mean more to you than a paper-piece of writing.

Dear

Dear, oh dear, please—never fear
For here, I'm near, but—not with Beer
We cried—this once—a shedding Tear
After a kinda-sorta leary type of day
Here, here!

We are each other's never, not-today.

Never leaving, always staying.
To you: I'm releasing all the pain I'm saying
In you: I'm freeing all doubt, fear and complaining
Like a debriefing, we are in training
Because we'll always be teasing—even... in our raining

And we are forever beaming
As our eyes, against the Son, are Straining

A Thousand Years is not enough

I want my days with you numberless like the sand, and they will be: For in every moment we've a day, and every day fills a week of moments, and a week's moments fill a month of learnings. As month stretches to year, and year passes to lifetime.

Till old and grey I'll hold your hand
To forever, and always, that's the plan

A thousand heartbeats are not enough.
My cheek pressed to your chest as I thank God for every one
And to you I swear: Never shall it be my "God bless" is forgotten
For either you, myself, or anyone who's lost life's lot-in

Because:

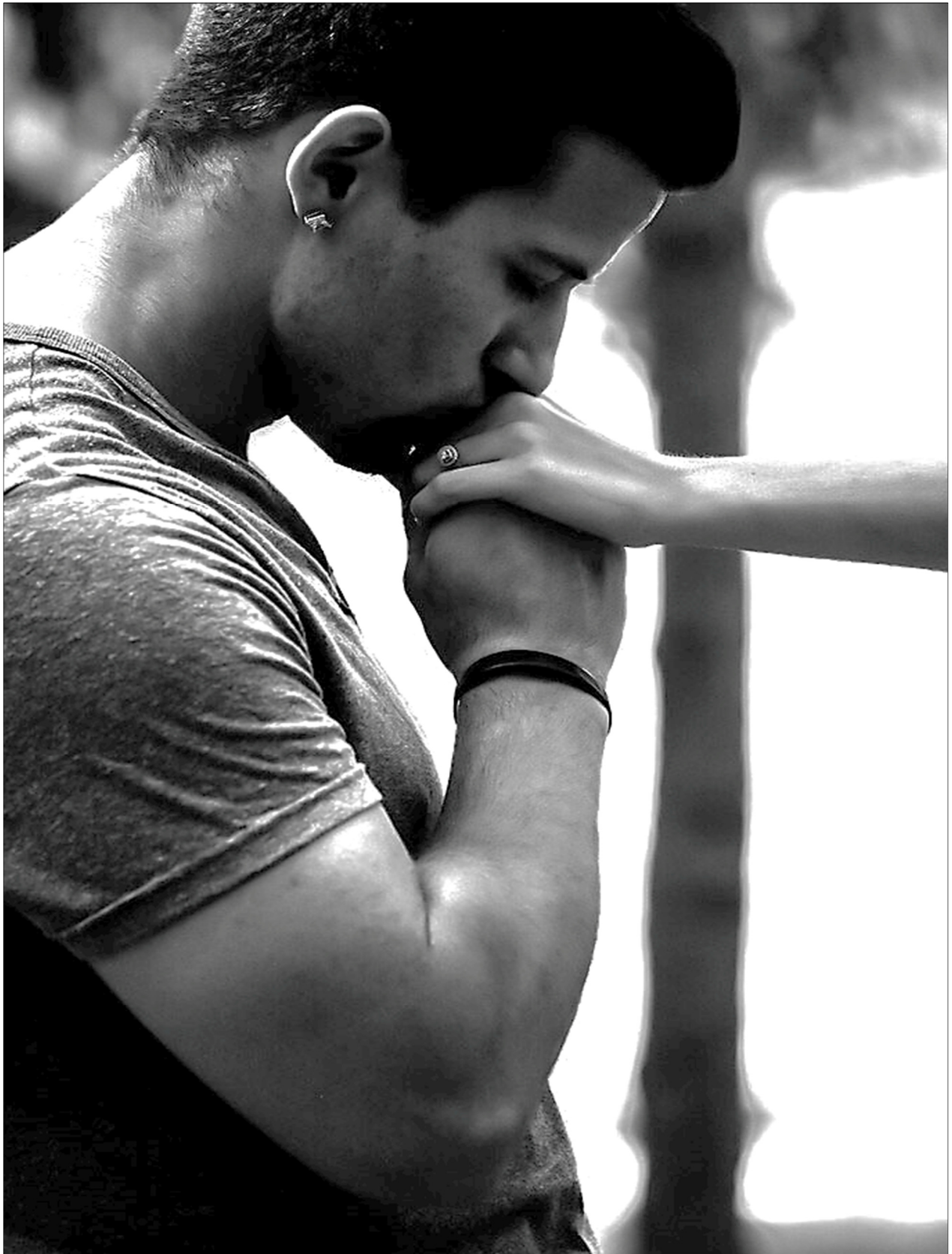
If I only see through your eyes, I will have all the sight I need
If I only breathe your breath, my lungs will be filled for eternity
If I only have your taste, I'll forever be sustained
And if I only listen through your heart, I'd understand every pain
I love you... my—more-joy than my heart can contain
For you are my lifetime... consubstantial, not made

Ours

Our synced heart beat; my symphony.
Our position; the mold of love, honey.

Our breath; as one with you.
Our bodies; melted, and fused.

Our light; expanded, and amplified.
Our love; one that will never die.



“With Me” by Emily Heckman



“Flowers in Negative Design” by Gina Famiglietti

What Is Love (Essay)

Katie Lafferty

Love.

Love.

Such a simple four-letter word. Yet for everyone it means something different. For everyone it brings up many different emotions and feelings. Happiness, sadness, anger, hatred, safety, hope, future, trust. There are many emotions one feels when asked about love.

I am so caught up on love having to be between two people. Two people who are in a relationship.

But in reality, that's not what love is.

Love is when you are in your room crying and your friend calls you to make sure that you're okay.

Love is when you wake up each day and take care of yourself, even when that's the last thing you want to do.

Love is when you are on the floor crying at 2 a.m. and your friend is next to you, calming you down.

Love is when you don't have time to eat lunch but your teammate brings you food.

Love is when you look at someone and smile because the person you're looking at makes you happy.

Love is when you wake up for morning practice and see that someone you care about has left you a long text message to wake up to.

Love is when you look in the mirror and like what you see.

Love is when your parents drive eight hours on their anniversary to watch yet another swim meet.

Love is when you get a text the night after a mental breakdown asking if your day is going better than the day before.

Love is when someone who cares about you encourages you to go to the doctor, even though they know you hate going.

Love is getting a hug from someone when they can see you are having a hard day.

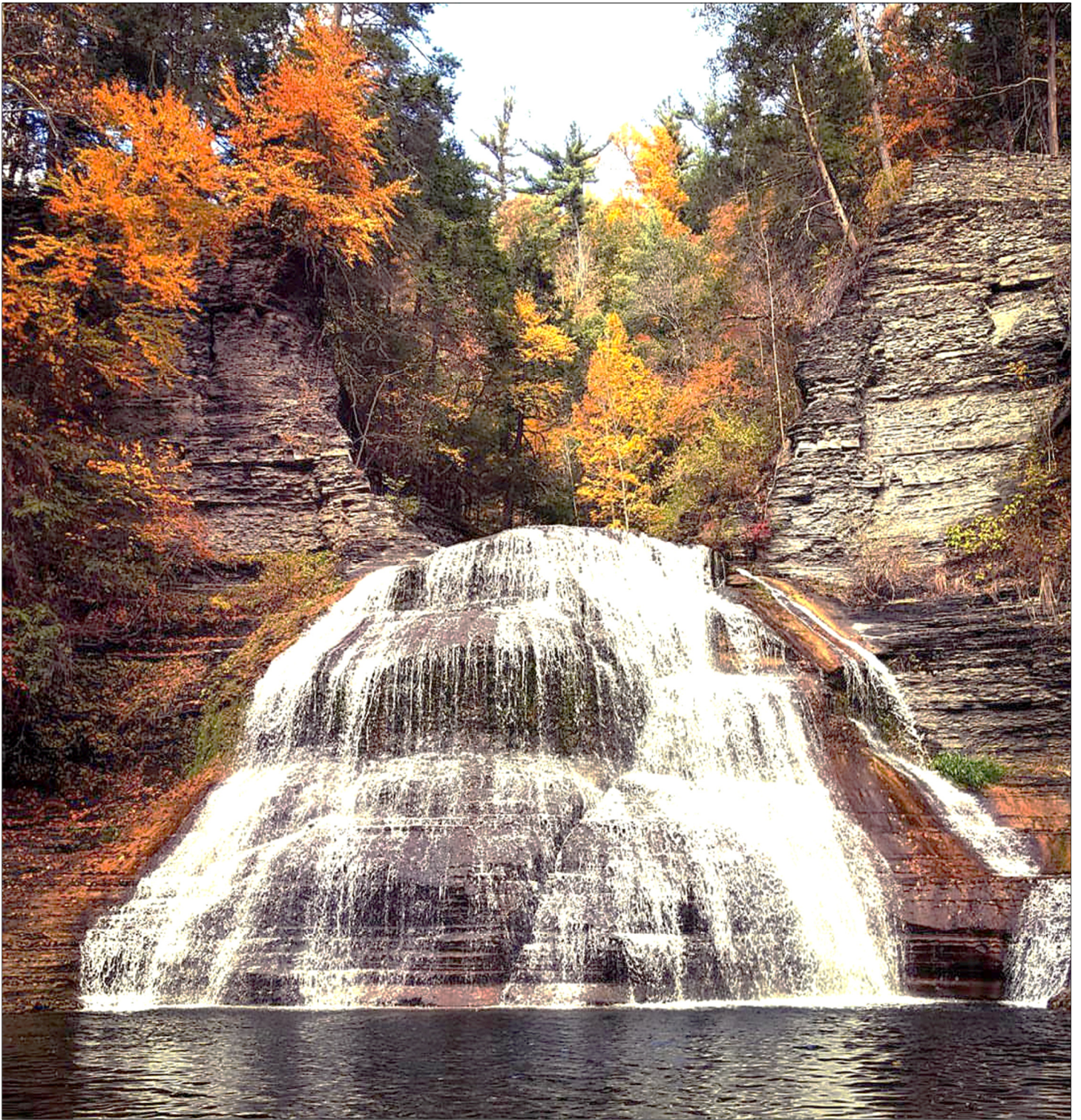
Love is when no matter what someone knows about you, they always come back the next day.

Love is powerful. Love is meaningful. Love is worth it.

Love does not have to be defined by two people in a relationship. Love is there with everyone and between everyone you interact with. Love is what fuels us. Love is something I dream of. Love is what gives me hope for the future.



“Time Flies” by Nicholas Pyo



“Fall Waterfall” by Hannah Cole

Somewhere Only We Know (Creative Nonfiction)

Molly Fischer

"I don't want to die," he says as he stares at the dark, winding road ahead, illuminated only by his headlights and the fading hope stuck deep in my heart that maybe he will see how beautiful he is. "But I wouldn't be mad if it happened."

"I'm so worried about you," I reply, staring at the side of his head, imagining my life as if I had never known him. It is dark, it is bitter, it is wrong.

He only smiles slightly. He does not worry anymore; he does not care. He explains it to me: When you care, you are vulnerable. You have the potential to be upset, disappointed, let down, or hurt. So why bother?

I do not have an answer for him. I wish I had an answer for him.

He tells me he is too weak to commit suicide. I pray to God that if suicide is a sign of strength, please let him be weak.

* * *

Depression is like any other disease wherein you have no idea how hard it is to have unless you have it. Maybe that makes me lucky—when he tells me he feels worthless and as if his life is spinning out of control, I know what he means. But how do you tell someone that life is worth living when you feel worthless and out of control yourself?

From the outside it must look ridiculous: he tells me he is worthless but I am not, I tell him I am worthless but he is not; we should just believe each other. But we can't. We try and we can't and then we feel worse because we can't feel better.

It is difficult to care about someone when you are depressed. It is difficult to care about someone when they are depressed. I am starting to believe it is impossible to care about someone when you are *both* depressed.

* * *

Science tells us there is a chemical imbalance in our brains. Major trauma could cause it, a bad home life could cause it, or nothing at all could cause it. And nothing can fix it, either. I get to take pretty little pills every single day at lunchtime so that I can feel better. But when "bad" is absolute rock bottom, better is still pretty bad.

There's therapy, but when you don't exactly have a source for your depression, it's hard to come up with topics for your therapist to address. Of course, when we do have topics to address, my therapist will give me a little "homework" assignment, like "make a list of everything you're thankful for," and I immediately forget about it upon leaving my session. The next time when she asks me about it I feel guilty and embarrassed in front of a trained professional who is there to help me.

Of course, friends always like to try and play therapist, too. It's sweet of them, really it is. But the extent of their advice is "don't think about it" or "try to be a little more positive" or "that really sucks, I'm sorry." I don't blame them; they're not trained professionals, just concerned friends. They don't—*can't*—understand.

So when someone comes along and says, "I get it," you can't help but feel a connection with them. They know what it's like, they feel the same way, they understand in ways your friends never could. It's wonderful and terrible at the same time—you see, I would never, ever wish depression on anyone. It kills me to think of anyone feeling as miserable as I do. I don't want to call it "nice," but for lack of a better term, it is "nice" to have someone as miserable as I am. I'm still suffering, but at least I'm not suffering alone.

* * *

He knows when I'm upset. I'll start fidgeting and tapping my foot and by instinct he asks, "What's wrong?" and when I refuse to answer or give a basic "nothing," he'll say, "I can tell that you're anxious."

There are no words to describe how it feels to have someone know me like that.

He tells me to talk; he says that if I'm upset, staying quiet won't make me feel any better. And he's patient when it takes me a while to collect my thoughts in order to say what's on my mind. I've never had anyone be so patient with me.

He cares. He really, truly cares, and I know it because he tells me and he shows me and I don't think I've ever been so grateful that a person has entered my life. He makes me feel alive—but not in the adventurous, adrenaline-rushing way. He makes me *feel*, and as a depressed person sometimes it is so hard to *feel* anything. With him, I am happy. With him, I care. With him, I am alive.

So maybe it is selfish of me to want him to stay alive when I know how hard it is for him to hold on. When someone walks into your life and has such a big impact, you don't want to let go. But maybe that's what's best for him, letting go entirely. It's not the right thing to say, I know it's not, but it's hard to see someone so important to me feel so completely worthless. But when he says he wouldn't be mad if he died, I know I would be destroyed.

* * *

So we keep going, through the dark, hoping we will end up in better places but knowing in our hearts that we will not. No, neither one of us wants to die. But we wouldn't be mad if it happened.



“Winter” by Paige McLean

More or Less (Fiction)

Jordan Gorsuch

Darrian climbs a staircase, his thoughts slowly developing like old film, only to vanish completely in the thick sludge of his mind. His motions feel like they are suspended in gaffer tape, each step taking all of his limited concentration. Darrian closes his eyes and leans awkwardly on the parallel railing. Images and sounds snap to life: a worn leather bible; blood; broken model airplanes; television static; cracking of bones; and the crumpled, ghastly frame of the man he once adored.

Darrian's breathing is not getting any better.

He starts to sob uncontrollably. He whimpers like a coyote that has found its way into a foxtail weed. Darrian pounds at his chest, mouthing something inaudibly to himself. The barbed seed works its way into the coyote's eye; it paws at the nuisance, but it will never come free. He cannot get the image of that crooked man out of his forsaken mind.

Later, he enters a vacant public restroom and shambles his way to the sink. He methodically washes the dried blood from his knuckles until his dark skin is free of any indication of violence. Then, he rips some paper towels and stuffs them into the drain. He lets the hot water slowly fill up the basin of the sink and plunges his face into its shallow blanket of warmth. Darrian comes back up for a quick breath and returns to his liquid sanctuary. He lets out a noiseless scream under the roaring faucet, bubbles quickly escaping to the surface from his disembodied shouts. He then emerges from the water's haven and turns off the faucet. Water is everywhere. It has started to pool at his feet. How long was he screaming? It doesn't matter.

He wonders if anything will ever matter again.

* * *

Darrian's self-inflicted punishment comes in the form of retribution toward his father. He often wonders if the sickness his father carried was passed down to himself. Is God the solution or just another part of the problem?

With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God...

No. Darrian is tired of being plagued by these thoughts of his father and his 'Father.' His skin starts to feel alarmingly cold; little prickles are stabbing all over his body. Darrian's mind returns to his senses. A heavy cloud of steam fills his vision as tiny jets fire a torrent of cold water shooting directly into his face. He is taking a shower. A shower? He forgot to turn the drain on. The water is scouting the precipice of the tub's edge, ready to spill out onto the linoleum flooring. He twists the handle quickly and shivers into a towel.

"Are you done yet? Michael is almost here," his wife, Jasmine, calls out beyond the bathroom door.

"Yes, sorry—is Cailyn home from lacrosse practice?"

"Yeah," he hears Cailyn interject, "and I smell like a jock strap. You've been in there for an eternity. I can almost feel the microbes on my skin giving me influenza or something," spoken with no hint of sarcasm.

Darrian rushes out of the shower in a bright flamingo towel. Darrian gives Cailyn a wry smile as she shuts the door hard behind her. His smile tucks back down.

"Dad! You used all the hot water!" Cailyn calls from over the flow of the shower.

Darrian neglects to respond as he duck-walks toward the kitchen. He notices Jasmine cutting up some onions for the massive omelets she made for when Michael returns home. On the table sits a fluffy tower of blueberry pancakes and a plate of char-broiled bacon. Darrian slinks his arms around Jasmine's waist and tries to smell the typical apricot conditioner that blesses her long black hair. All he smells is burnt bacon and marijuana smoke.

"You're dripping wet, Darrian," Jasmine says as she kisses Darrian on his aquiline nose. "Get upstairs and get changed, big man."

"Well, I'll just have to—" Darrian smiles as he begins to speak, before the porch's screen door flies open and flaps against the wind's push. Michael walks in soon after, a detached warm smile on his face.

Darrian grabs Jasmine's hand and tightens his grip. Michael approaches them and they form a small circle with their arms wrapped around each other—a trinity of sorts. The familial embrace is replaced by one of spiritual necessity as Michael begins reciting the Lord's Prayer. Jasmine joins her son as Darrian stares carefully at Michael. It has been so long. Michael grew closer to God after the trauma he suffered years ago.

"Amen!" Michael proudly exclaims before noticing Darrian's state of dress. "Dad, you look a little dazed. I like the pink flamingos, though."

Darrian walks over to his son and gives him another firm hug.

"It's nothing. Welcome home."

Any time Michael speaks, Darrian hears his father's bones crushing underneath his fists.

* * *

Cailyn comes out of the shower; wet hair sticks to her mid-back and her shirt is water-stained from a rushed attempt at drying herself. She runs over and hugs Michael, her face twisting into an exaggerated smile. Jasmine is beaming and she looks beautiful. Darrian feels out of place.

Darrian views the events as a disenchanted observer. He cannot experience events emotionally anymore. The glass of his life has darkened considerably and it is hard to tell a flower from a knife these days.

Michael informs Jasmine that a guest is coming over for breakfast. She tells him that is quite all right and nudges Cailyn on the arm while letting out a giggle. Darrian retreats upstairs to get dressed. Cailyn scrutinizes Michael while her loose finger traces her dahlia tattoo on her left wrist.

"Who is your guest?" she asks plainly.

"A friend. I've been praying with him lately," Michael says in his calm, reserved tone.

Jasmine looks subtly disappointed. Cailyn gives him a curious nod while stretching her long, slender arms. She jumps on the countertop and folds her legs under herself.

"Cailyn, you're gonna get water all over my countertops," Jasmine lets out, sounding slightly irritated.

"Calm down, Mom. I'll clean it up later."

"Don't get grown with me, little lady," Jasmine mutters as she goes out to the porch.

"She's going to smoke a blunt out there, no doubt," Cailyn says as she picks out some unused blueberries and pops them in her mouth.

"You mean marijuana?" Michael asks, mouth agape.

"Yeah," Cailyn responds candidly. "She's been self-medicating ever since you left."

Cailyn motions Michael over as he drops a lighter piece of bacon back on the communal plate and walks toward her. She grabs his face and squints as she rolls his head around in her palm.

"Seems like they're teaching you how to shave in your devout prayer circle. Don't give me that look, you know I'm joking," Cailyn says, letting go of his face and patting him on the cheek. "Now really, how is the program? I always figured the more I learned about Catholicism, it would be like... when you eat too much and it just sits in your stomach and you hate everything."

"What?"

"Never you mind. Just tell me about it," Cailyn says while looking out the window.

"Honestly, it's been amazing. I feel like my mind has opened in ways I would never expect. I feel pushed intellectually and spiritually. It has only deepened my devotion in God."

"Aren't the teachings are just a little too archaic? I mean, this is coming from self-described cafeteria Catholic. Science explains a lot of things that Catholicism balks at."

"More or less," Michael says as he picks up another piece of burnt bacon. "However, more or less cannot be quantified by science. Science does not have a variable for degrees of variations; it speaks in absolutes. Numbers alone make science. Faith, that is something else entirely."

Cailyn gives him an incredulous look.

"Religion is about morality; science is not. A woman is no more or no less a woman, and a dog is no more or no less a dog. However, that woman can be more happy or less happy; that dog can be more feral or less feral. Is the dog any less of a dog? No. God sees us for our variables—we must hold Him as our one constant."

Darrian returns. He is dressed in a loose, light-blue t-shirt and a pair of sagging black jeans. He lingers at the edge of the kitchen and watches Michael's arms move rapidly while explaining his studies to Cailyn. In this moment, Michael looks completely at peace.

Darrian cannot find that peace. He remembers sandwiches left out to mold next to Michael's bed and his refusing to leave the house. Darrian's bright, energetic boy dropping twenty pounds, scared as hell to face the world.

"What about the suffering in the world?" Darrian asks Michael.

"God said, 'When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.' There will always be suffering in the world, but we must not allow it to scare us from God."

"I get that," Darrian says while attempting to betray his anger with a slight smile, "but why does God let us suffer? It's not like God plans on saving anyone."

"Suffering produces endurance, and endurance yields character, and with enough character you can achieve hope," Michael says while grabbing Darrian's cloistered fist. "Hope leads to faith; enough of that and you'll be unshakable. Now, Dad, since you've volunteered for Texas Search and Rescue, how many people have you saved?"

"Fifty-five."

"Fifty-five people! One could argue that you are one of God's instruments to minimize suffering."

Darrian wraps his loose hand around Michael's and shakes it abruptly. He figures it's better to let Michael keep his faith in the saving grace of humanity rather than pushing him back into the place he used to be. Jasmine walks through the door with a glazed grin. Darrian wraps his hand around her waist and pulls her close.

"Well, nothin' we can do about all of that quite yet," Darrian says. "We can fix our hunger, though; let's enjoy what your mom fixed up for breakfast."

Darrian smells Jasmine's hair yet again. He hopes to detect that familiar yet elusive trace of apricots. This time, the smell of weed is even more flagrant. He thinks of commenting on Jasmine's increasing habits but decides to bite his tongue. He isn't going to let himself ruin this morning.

The screen door flies open yet again. It crashes into the wall and flaps unceremoniously in the harsh wind. An older man with unkempt gray hair and a second-rate suit limps through the door. His cane is comprised of beautifully stained wood and the handle is in the shape of a dove. His tie is slightly off center and he is carrying a brightly colored edible fruit arrangement. A urine drainage bag peeks out under his pant leg. His shoes look freshly shined and he has a small decorative rosary of beads around his wrist.

Darrian's blood starts to boil the second his eyes land on the disgusting creature.

"Dad?" is all Darrian can muster.

* * *

Darrian is beside himself. He believes Michael hasn't been in the same room with his grandfather since Darrian put the old man in the ER eight years ago. Eight years ago when Darrian discovered the depravity that his father was incurring on his child behind closed doors.

"Grandpa! Mom made a wonderful breakfast this morning. How was the drive in? I hear I-35 gets real nasty during the early morning. I'm glad you aren't too late," Michael says while taking the brightly colored fruit basket.

He grunts in acknowledgment to Michael, but all the old man can do is stare at Darrian.

"Now, just what in the fresh hell are you doing here?" Darrian says, his body twitching in anger.

The old man motions toward Michael and takes a step toward Darrian.

"Don't you fucking point at my son," Darrian spits.

Darrian is beside himself. A scar that has been festering for years has been torn open again and all he can see is red. He used to feel like God made sure that no one would have to walk through fires or brave storms by their lonesome. But hell, he's been managing just fine.

Darrian lunges at his father.

They tumble into the counter and knock over the edible fruit arrangement. The old man tries to break free of Darrian's grasp but it causes them to crash into the screen door, ripping a hole right through the middle. Darrian grabs his father's hair and he thrashes in pain. Darrian tries stabilizing himself as he manhandles his writhing father, but his attempts to get better footing only serve to make them slip on a pineapple flower that is now considered collateral damage from the disheveled fruit basket. They collapse and wrestle on the ground. Jasmine screams as Michael tries to break them up.

Darrian can only hear cracking bones, television static, and gargled pleading. He keeps imagining the broken model planes, the torn bible, and his half-dead father.

He snaps back to the present.

"Tell me that you're scared," Darrian barks at his father. "No, tell me that you're terrified for your life. I want you to feel what *he* felt; I want you to feel what I have felt."

Darrian's father is wheezing on the ground, his urine drainage bag gaining liquid with each passing second.

"You disgust me," Darrian says as he relents to Michael and is lifted from his trembling father.

Jasmine leads Darrian by the hand out to the porch. The screen door closes behind them and a gentle breeze rolls through to Michael and his panting grandfather.

"Well, I don't think he wants to see me, kid. Maybe we can pray about it or something," the old man says with a wheezing laugh.

Michael just stares at him and rubs his hand through his own shaved head. Cailyn gawks at Michael and her grandfather, hiding her emotional cocktail as best as she can.

"Grandpa, what are you doing here?" she asks.

He takes a seat across from Michael at the kitchen table. He adjusts his catheter and drainage bag before making himself comfortable.

"Michael invited me to come over for breakfast. I would like to... make amends," the old man says as he pulls out a length of knotted rope. He begins to work out the knots until it is undone, then he knots the rope up and attempts to untangle it again. "For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

"Amen," Michael confirms.

"Grandpa..." Cailyn takes his hand and tries her best to maintain her strength. "There are things that only God can forgive."

"That's not true, Cailyn," Michael says as he joins hands with his grandfather. "We have been exchanging letters since I started graduate school. I pray with him every week. He cannot hurt me anymore."

"You don't know that," Cailyn says with the tiniest crack in her voice.

The screen door smashes back open. Darrian calmly walks back through the door with Jasmine, still visibly disgusted.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have attacked you like that," he says as he gazes at his father. "However, you need to leave. Now."

The old man starts to get up from his chair before Michael gently eases him back. Darrian's mood is starting to worsen. He wonders what his sick father has told Michael to keep him under his thumb yet again. Darrian cannot afford to get physical again. His father barely got out of the hospital last time.

"You took my boy from me," Darrian says. "You ate him up. You stole all his dignity away; my own father, my own flesh. After you touched him he stopped eating. He got so thin. I burnt the goddamn bed sheets. I nearly beat you to death."

"Dad," Michael stands up. "I'm not afraid of him anymore. The Lord granted me the mercy to forgive him. The mirrors inside our hearts reflect our deepest failures and insecurities... they also show our most gracious gifts. I saw my reflection in his heart. I looked happy; I looked complete. I didn't see the broken boy anymore. I was no longer the victim. Grandpa was calling out for forgiveness and I answered his call."

Darrian watches his son speak with such conviction and begins to see that he no longer pictures the hurting, skinny boy when he looks at him. He doesn't even envision his blood-soaked father. He just sees the strong, capable man his son is sure to become.

"Darrian, I do not seek your forgiveness. What I did was vile. It was wrong. I transgressed the natural instincts of man," says the old man. "Only the Lord can judge me. Only the Lord can forgive me. Yet, your son, my grandson... he has forgiven me. He has given me a second chance. I have only come to say one thing: I am so deeply sorry. I am so sorry for all the pain I have caused each and every one of you."

"You're a pervert."

Darrian is startled as he looks at Jasmine, her eyes staring daggers into his father.

"You're a pervert. You need to say that," Jasmine says with a placated tone of voice.

"Only God can judge me."

"Say it," Jasmine repeats with added emphasis.

"Only—"

"Say it."

The old man's face starts to twist with regret. His brown eyes shrink away and his frown lines become intensely defined. His hands shake without recourse, clutching onto the tangled rope he has been desperately trying to unravel. Jasmine keeps staring at him.

"Now, please, please stop looking at me. I just need you to stop looking at me like that," the old man says with tears flowing down his wrinkled cheeks. "Please stop looking at me like how you're looking at me. Please, Jasmine."

She isn't blinking.

"I'm a pervert. Oh God, forgive me. I'm a pervert," he says as he tosses down his knotted rope. "I'm sick. What I did was unforgivable."

Darrian watches his father sob uncontrollably into his cracking, wrinkled hands. The monster fades away. In its place is a scared, lonely old man. Darrian sees his father clearly for the first time in eight years. Jasmine bends down to the old man and whispers something into his ear. He dries his eyes with his suit sleeve, nods his head, and mouths to her *I promise*. She fixes his tie and pats his chest before standing up again.

"All right. Let's eat."

Judgement and absolution might be up to God, but there's still hope for humankind.

More or less.



“Mirror” by Tara Fritz

Strength in Recovery (Poetry)

Ashley Salizzoni

POEM #1

The thrashing wind whispers secrets in my lonely ears: stories of the day, visions of tomorrow. Visions of a newborn sun, hovering on the horizon. Visions of the elderly moon, beaming down during the evening. Visions of things I have only imagined, desired, hoped for. A great storm thunders over me, drenching me with its tears. The clouds darken, the lightning flashes. Bolts light up the entire sky, like a camera capturing the devastating moment on film. My sopping mass of hair sticks pathetically to my dull cheekbones. My jeans press tightly against my legs, not willing to free them. I lie down in a field of tall grass, stare straight up at the sky. The raindrops flood my eyes, poisoning the already formulated tears about to break through. In this split moment, I feel free.

POEM #2

She twists the cap, the bottle she uses to escape.
Her eyes fill with tears as she screams, her mouth agape.
One sip after another, each one tastes a little stronger.
And the pain he caused her is forgotten a little longer.
Back to reality, the here and now.
She looks up, and falls upon her knees.
She asks God for the courage and strength,
To let go of the past and be free.

POEM #3

Eyes green as the grass in a field of immaculate flowers. To others, at least. When he stares into my empty, lifeless eyes, I see only black. Black tunnels of no escape. So dark, I cannot even decipher my own reflection. His teeth stained with the bitter insults of my existence. As his fierce gaze penetrates my frightened one, I feel... nothing. His presence alone steals away every emotion I could potentially experience. It's as if I've been put into a trance, and I see no end in sight. "I'll be captured in this moment forever, thinking but lifeless," echoes through my mind. My thoughts race, my hands clench, my knees tremble. A whirlwind envelops me, petrifying every bone and muscle in my body with fear. Sounds muffled, vision blurred, thoughts hazed. Here it comes again...

POEM #4

Have you ever had a moment of pure clarity? Like, the world has been in front of you the entire time, but you are just beginning to glimpse it? Even the smallest of things can bring out a happiness you never expected: birds chirping, children laughing, the refreshing feel of wind blowing through your hair. It's this one brief moment that puts your life on pause so the

narrator can find his place in the script again. It's this one brief moment that persuades you that life has true meaning, and you will discover it someday, if you have not already. That happiness and bliss can take you on a joyride, and it can be the greatest high you ever experience. That's all we really want from life, isn't it? To be enthused even by the most minute things and circumstances? For some, this comes without much issue or hesitation. For others, it can be a prolonged, treacherous journey. Either way, the narrator loyally follows each and every move with his distinctive, raspy voice until he reaches that pause. From there, it's truly up to you where your story goes.

POEM #5

Red, orange, yellow.
The sun sinks slowly out of sight.
Leaves rustle as the wind pushes them across the pavement.
A young girl sits on the swing, lonely and cold.
She thinks back to days of carefree, innocent fun.
No longer an option, she yearns for a chance to start over.
To go back before she let her world in his hands.
To go back before he took her dreams and passions.
To go back before her life was turned upside down.
The distant sound of sirens wails and shakes her thoughts.
She must free herself from the pain he caused.
She must forgive, forget, and move on.
She must love herself.



"Reminder of Hope" by Kayla Weis

Phantom Pain Changes Life (Essay)

Jessica Johnson

On July 3, 2010, a little girl's life was changed forever. The twelve-year-old started her day off like any other summer day. JJ woke up, ate breakfast, and went to feed her horses. On her way down to feed them, she noticed that some of the horses had sneaked into the barn. This was no big deal as long as the horses did not fight with each other. JJ rushed in to see two horses patiently standing in their own stalls waiting to receive grain. As she locked the horses in the stalls, she saw three kittens in the hay loft. After playing with the kittens, JJ heard a loud bang on the massive metal barn doors. The twelve-year-old realized that the other horses were hungry and wanted to be fed. She reached her hands through to open the metal doors, and that was when it happened.



*Figure 1. The barn. The girl put her hands through the middle of the doors.
Photo taken by author.*

The little girl screamed. The horse burst in the side of the door, crushing her hands. As JJ pulled her hands close to her body, she looked down and saw blood gushing out of one finger, hanging on by a thread. JJ screamed and spooked the horse away from the barn. The little girl did not recall how she walked to the house without fainting. Once she was in the house, her dad and brother heard the terrifying screams. Her brother, Will, was still in bed when he heard his little sister screaming; he had no idea what had happened. The family was in shock. Blood was everywhere,

all over the walls and floor. It looked like a murder scene in a horror film. JJ was rushed to the hospital with her father driving.

JJ did not remember the drive to the hospital. Bill, her father, on the other hand, remembered everything. Bill was unable to repeat what his daughter said—it was too heartbreaking. He called her mother, who was on her way home from getting groceries for a Fourth of July party, to tell her what was happening. Her mother, Michelle, rushed home to pick up Will to go to the hospital. Will was sitting on the couch in tears, holding a bloody towel he had given to his little sister. After arriving at the local hospital, Bill met Will and Michelle to give them the details on what was going on. Because the local hospital was unable to perform surgery, JJ needed to be transported to Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. The medical staff packed her up and sent her to the next hospital by ambulance.

Phantom pain, as defined by the Mayo Clinic Staff, is a pain that feels like it is coming from a body part that is no longer there. Whether the amputation is due to trauma or surgical procedure, the sensations are associated with a limb no longer attached to the body. Amputation gives rise to three different phenomena: phantom sensation, stump pain, and phantom pain. Although the phenomena affect the amputee physically, the amputee's mind, body, and soul experience the most devastating after-effects.

The first phenomenon is phantom sensation, or any feeling in the amputated limb, excluding pain. Almost all amputees experience phantom sensation. Some symptoms include tingling and pricking, also commonly described as pins and needles. Many patients experience feelings as if the limb is still there. People are often reluctant to tell anyone that they are experiencing phantom limb sensations, for fear that they will be considered “crazy” (“Managing Phantom Pain”). Or worse, people often feel they will be seen as denying reality.

For JJ, the phantom sensations began two weeks after the reconstruction of the finger onto the hand. JJ felt tingling where the finger was reattached and she was frightened. The doctors warned her parents of the three phenomena, adding that phantom sensations are normal and often occur shortly after amputation. Phantom limb sensations are rarely a clinical problem, as by definition they are not painful (Jackson and Simpson). JJ emotionally felt better and thought the tingling meant her finger was healing. Little did she know, phantom sensations occur in a limb that is not connected to the body. The sensation of healing was a phantom because clinically, the finger was dying.

The next phenomenon is referred to as stump pain, emanating from damaged nerves near the amputation site. Stump pain that occurs immediately after amputation is acute nociceptive pain and usually resolves after a few weeks as the wound heals (Jackson and Simpson). But stump pain can be prolonged due to infection or the surgically closed wound bursting open, sometimes when the prostheses are first worn. Approximately thirteen to seventy-one percent of amputees are diagnosed with stump pain, which can occur after the wound is healed. Some cases have reported dealing with stump pain for months or even years. Some people can find it distressing and need to be reassured that it is essentially normal (De Courcy). But something wasn't normal with JJ's finger, which was no longer healing.

After a few weeks, JJ drove to UPMC Hospital of Pittsburgh to receive Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy, a process of inhaling 100 percent oxygen in a pressure-controlled atmosphere to enhance the body's natural healing process (Hadjiliadis). She was very nervous to get inside the large test tube. The little girl was vacuum sealed into the chamber for two hours twice a day. Miraculously, all the phantom sensations stopped when in the chamber, but stump pain started. The black, decaying tissue was separating from the living



Figure 2. Current picture of the amputated finger. Photo taken by author.

tissue, causing pain in the hand. JJ loved the treatments in the beginning but once the pain began, the happiness became tears.

The family had two options of treatment. Option one was to let the body self-amputate the finger, which would result in more of the finger remaining attached to the body. Option two was to surgically amputate the finger, which would result in the surgeons removing more tissue. Option two would most likely cause the phantom phenomenon to start again. The little girl was devastated to hear that her finger was dying. Her mother and father noticed that she was not acting like herself. She began to become depressed. The high dosage of pain killers made her so

tired that she slept almost eighteen hours a day. JJ lost her appetite and twelve pounds.

The last and worst phenomenon is phantom pain. Although phantom pain usually occurs after the first week of amputation, some cases have reported phantom pain months and years after the initial amputation. The precise incidence of phantom pain is not known. Reported rates of phantom pain vary from four to seventy-eight percent, and recent evidence suggests rates of approximately fifty to seventy-eight percent (Jackson and Simpson). The limb is not there, but the pain surely is.

Phantom pain is very difficult to treat, but some forms of treatment are available. Many researchers have studied the effects of different treatments, but the results vary greatly. Certainly, good pain management before, during, and after amputation is important in preventing or minimizing possible causes of phantom limb pain (Hadjiliadis). Some treatments include strong pain killers (opioids), antidepressants, anticonvulsants, or injections of local anesthetic and steroids. In cases where the nerve endings are the cause of pain, the nerves can be blocked with anesthetics. Some people also have to endure surgery if the nerve endings are thought to be too close to the load bearing area when wearing a prosthesis (Hadjiliadis).

The family decided to let the body self-amputate the dying tissue rather than traumatizing their child with another surgery. The process was slow and devastating. Every day, JJ had to stare at her black finger as her father changed the bandages and complete physical therapy on the living muscles. She cried and refused to look at the finger. Her mother, a mental health therapist, tried different therapy techniques to improve the process, but nothing worked. On October 16, JJ's thirteenth birthday, she invited her friends over for a sleepover. JJ's dad asked her to come into the bathroom to change her bandages. She refused. JJ had a gut feeling that her finger was no longer attached and she was right. Bill agreed to change the bandages the next morning when her friends were gone.

JJ was right—the next morning the finger was no longer attached to the hand. JJ did not know what to think and had mixed emotions. She was shocked when she saw what her “stump” looked like and began to cry. Bill, with an odd sense of humor, tried to cheer up his daughter. He said, “What do you want to do with this thing now?” and JJ began to laugh. What do you do with a body part when it dies? The family oddly kept the finger in the hopes that they could one day regrow it in a Petri dish.

After six long years, the little girl has processed the situation and developed positive feelings. JJ actually enjoys talking about the accident because it changed her career choice. She decided to go to school to become a Physician Assistant to help others like many doctors and medical staff have helped her. JJ has come to peace with her accident and is thankful God was with her through the recovery process. She says if the accident had not occurred, she would not be the person she is today. It has taught her to be thankful for what God has given and to look at the positives in every situation. Jessica Johnson is proud of her phantom sensations and no longer wants to grow her finger in a Petri dish.

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"Garden of the Gods" by Hannah Cole

Fear, Shock, and Truth: How One Man Changed the Face of the AIDS Epidemic (Essay)

Taylor James



Figure 1- David Kirby, a man dying from AIDS, is surrounded by his family and friends in his final hours. Photo taken by Therese Frare in 1990 and published in *Life* magazine that same year.

<http://time.com/3503000/behind-the-picture-the-photo-that-changed-the-face-of-aids/>

The AIDS epidemic struck the world with an unmeasurable force, infecting millions and killing hundreds of thousands of people in just a decade. The 1980s and early to mid-1990s were categorized by AIDS outbreaks and little information was known about the disease that was devastating first and third world countries alike. An indifference in many of the modern countries could be seen because of the disease's high transmission rate among the homosexual population; heterosexual individuals saw the problem as a 'gay' problem that homosexuals themselves needed to work together and solve. A photo taken in April 1990 by an amateur photographer named Therese Frare and published in *Life* magazine in November of that same year forever changed the view of AIDS. A dying man named David Kirby, pictured in the photo surrounded by friends and family, shocked the world by showing the devastating truth of a life ended by AIDS and allowed individuals to see the need to find the cure. Placing a face to the disease allowed for a connection that fought to bring the world together.

The eye is first drawn to the frail, haggard man lying in the hospital bed. His body looks starved, his eyes empty, and his expression lifeless--truly a man looking at death. This man, David Kirby, died in April of 1990 at the age of thirty-two after contracting HIV in the early 1980s, which later developed into AIDS (Cosgrove). The hollow expression and planar angles of David's face show some of the visible side effects that dying from AIDS has on the body.

AIDS, or Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome, is the last stage of HIV infection. HIV can be contracted through a variety of methods: exchange of bodily fluids, blood transfusions, drug usage, and occupational exposure ("How do I get AIDS/HIV?"). HIV infection has progression standards that are easily tracked. David Kirby, the man in the photo, was in the final stage: the development of AIDS. This stage is categorized by symptoms that are caused by the broken immune system. Many of the common symptoms of AIDS are weight loss, purple blotches on the skin, neurological disorders, extreme fatigue, and pneumonia ("Signs and Symptoms"). Many of these visible signs can be seen in the

photograph. The man in the photo more closely resembles a skeleton than the son David's father, the man on the right, loved and raised.

David's father, Bill Kirby, can be seen holding his dying son with an expression that is akin to pure and unrestrained anguish. The man looks as if he is trying to be strong for his son, but on the inside he is dying with him. David's time with his family was limited even before he realized that he had contracted the disease. In an article written by Ben Cosgrove for *TIME Magazine*, Cosgrove states that David had been away from his family for an extended amount of time before reaching out to ask if he could return so that he could die by their side. This reunion of father and son came far too late; the only things that time had allotted for were final goodbyes and forgiveness. The reasoning behind the separation between David and his family was and remains common today--David Kirby was gay.

David Kirby grew up in a small, conservative Ohio town in which his sexuality was likely to be taboo. Feeling stifled by the anti-homosexual attitude of not only his town but his family, he fled west to cities like San Francisco to be with people who understood his situation. He became a gay rights activist for many years and then a HIV/AIDS activist after he had contracted HIV (Cosgrove). Much like David's personal experience with HIV, the 1980s homosexual community was being rocked by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, where the sexual promiscuity of the 70s was being felt in the following decade. The common thought was that AIDS was a disease only felt by gay men because they were among the majority of those who contracted both HIV and AIDS (Escoffier). The "solution" by popular culture was to promote the ideal of the wholesome, straight American couple. Activists like David Kirby argued for more realistic solutions, such as condom usage, when the exposure of HIV as a blood pathogen was discovered. Gay men like David realized that the problem was plaguing not only them but also other people across the United States and the world. This was the reason why Therese Frare's photo of David Kirby became so influential in the fight against AIDS.

The other prominent section of the photograph is the large photo of Jesus hanging above David's bed and the set of hands reaching toward David on the left side of the photo. The hands were likely to have belonged to a man named Peta, who was a caregiver for David, HIV positive, and gay. The more important focus is on Christ in the background. The image could be a sign of David's waiting death, but could also be viewed as his acceptance and salvation. The acceptance was not only from his family, friends, and God, but also from a growing movement by the general public to reverse the commonly held belief that AIDS was for gay men and only they needed to solve it. In a reflection piece on the play *Angels in America*, author Ken Neilson writes, "Through the inaction, the official policy of ignorance, gay men were treated as people with no rights, as amoral people who had brought this upon themselves, and as discardable" (15). This statement adequately illustrates the common belief of people during the epidemic, which David strove to change because he knew all life needed to be given a chance. David Kirby's controversial photo was taken and published to continue his life's work as an activist for gay rights and AIDS and, like Jesus at his death, David was offering a way to spread awareness and understanding for the victims of his time.

The photo of David Kirby on his death bed was taken by Therese Frare in 1990 while she was a graduate student shadowing at Pater Noster House (Hospice Facility) in Ohio.

Frare did not come into the facility that day with the idea of capturing one of the most controversial photos associated with the AIDS epidemic; rather, it was David Kirby who wanted his photo taken. Frare stated in an interview about the photo with *TIME Magazine*, "...David's mom came out and told me that the family wanted me to photograph people saying their final goodbyes...Afterwards I knew, I absolutely knew, that something truly incredible had unfolded in that room, right in front of me" (qtd. in Cosgrove). Frare recognized that the photo was unlike anything that she had ever taken because David's legacy was so strong. He had allowed Therese to take photos of him previous to this iconic shot, but he had asked that she never gain personal profit or seek any compensation for his family by selling the pictures. David wanted the recognition of the problem, not the monetary reward, and, even at death, he knew the publicity his photo could bring.

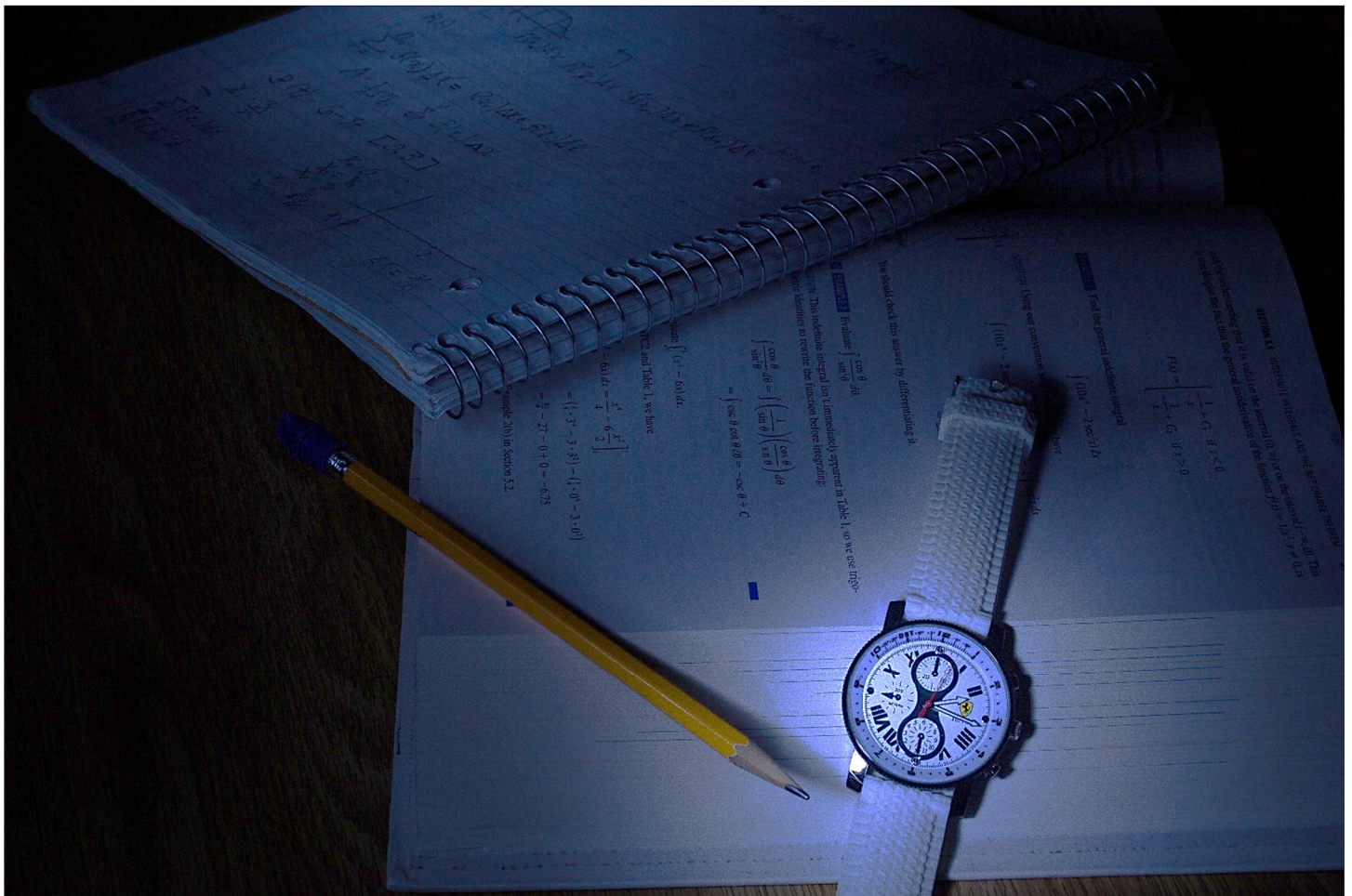
The photo of David Kirby and his family was first published in *Life Magazine* in November of 1990 and an estimated one million people have viewed the photo since the original publication. After the original publication in the magazine, the photo went on to become an ad for AIDS awareness and prevention, which sparked national outcry and controversy. The United Colors of Benetton, an organization that works to promote equality among the human population and awareness for social and economic issues by selling clothing, published the photo of Kirby in 1991 in an AIDS photo campaign meant to raise compassion for those living with the disease by showing the public the reality of the epidemic (Buck). The publication of the photo, called "La Pietà" in the ad, met instant resistance by AIDS activists and Church officials. The activists thought that the AIDS victims were presented in a negative way because the photo spread more fear than compassion, and Church officials of many different faiths disliked the comparison of David to Christ that was implied by the photo title (MacLeod). Regardless of the negative press, the photo campaign produced by Benetton went on to win the World Press Photo Award in 1991 for its ability to raise awareness of a precedent issue (Buck). The photo has become a staple for AIDS in many countries and will continue to be one of the photos always associated with the AIDS epidemic.

For David Kirby and thousands of others who were diagnosed with AIDS, the help and awareness came far too late. Currently, there is no cure for HIV/AIDS, but treatments and medications have become available so that people who are HIV positive may live a normal life without developing AIDS by taking antiretrovirals. The idea of a world free of HIV and AIDS is still a prominent wish. David Kirby sought to gather public support through the photo of his final goodbyes by shocking the world into speaking and presenting the reality of the issue. The simple fact was that people were dying and many did not care because of the deceased people's sexual orientation. The photo of David dying of AIDS, surrounded by the people who loved him the most, presented the world with the image of a family and life torn apart by a terrible disease and gave a grim face to the truth of AIDS that people could no longer ignore.

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"Time" by Brandon Fiume

Up in the Sky (Creative Nonfiction)

Julian Holbrook

*To both my grandmothers Julia Anne Watkins
and Callie Coffey. I miss you every single day.*

I'm sitting in the passenger's seat, glancing through the window at the pitch-black sky. The stars wait for Santa's sleigh to pass them by. My dad and my cousin listen to the Christmas music that plays softly through the speakers, rocking my cousin's baby to sleep in his car seat. Our destination to my grandfather's house rapidly approaches. In a blink of an eye, we arrive.

Every year for Christmas Eve, my family and I go to my grandfather's house to have dinner and open gifts that each of the families got each other. I thought last year would have followed the sequence of our Christmas Eve tradition, but I am wrong. As I sit on the couch stirring up conversation and laughter among my cousins, my mother announces that we are going to try something new this year. In my mind, I think it's going to be some silly game she is going to have the whole family play, but I am wrong again.

"Everyone gather outside on the balcony," she says. And as we go outside on the balcony, she explains our new family tradition.

"To honor the ones we lost a few years back, I thought it would be a good idea to celebrate our loved ones by sending three sky lanterns up in the sky."

After a couple of times making sure it would not gravitate down, we send the first one up in the sky, representing my grandma, Julia Watkins, on my mother's side.

"Hi, Mom," my mom said to the floating lantern.

And as I look at the sky lantern, my mind brings me back to those precious childhood days; the days when my siblings and I spent the night over at my grandparents' house, the smell of pancakes and eggs forced our sleepy heads to wake up. I go back to the times where Grandma would take us to art museums, educated us on each painting that caught her eye. I remember my parents dragging my siblings and me to my grandparents' church on Sunday mornings; I forced my eyelids not to fall over my eyes while my grandma sat shoulder's width away from me.

She was a big advocate for literature, reiterating to us the importance of reading and writing. Her passion for writing fell onto the pages of her poetry book. She gave us each a copy for us to read. I remember turning each page one by one, astonished by the poetic voice my grandmother had developed.

But what she would always say to me and each of my siblings and cousins replays in my head over and over again.

"I'm so proud of you."

After every sporting event, every report card that came to my mailbox that didn't have any Cs, she would say those exact words. And every time she would say them, there wouldn't be any doubt in my mind that she didn't have any meaning behind those words.

I heard the news of my grandma's cancer returning. Words like *strong*, *aggressive*, and *treatments* were all I heard from my mom. The rest of the conversation I stood in shock. I feared the possible outcome of death taking my grandmother's hands and leading her into oblivion.

The last time I saw her was in her hospital bed. The beeping of the machines broke the silence of the room. Her eyes rested heavy, the scarf wrapped tightly around her head. Her body weight was extremely low. I came to her bed and she smiled her natural smile. She rested her hands on mine and she said her famous words to me.

"I'm so proud of you."

And as her lantern turns to a bright, yellow dot in the sky, we send another lantern representing my grandmother Callie Coffey, on my dad's side.

"Hi, Momma," he says. At this very moment, my mind travels back to the moment my grandmother shared her life story with me, taking me back to the time she had my dad and my aunts.

Three kids from three different fathers. At one point she did it all, playing the double-parent role for some time until my dad's father stepped in. Her strict ways irritated my dad and my aunts growing up. She wasn't hesitant about pulling out her belt. But through her austerity came her willingness and resilience to give her children the best resources they could get, to always put their needs first before hers.

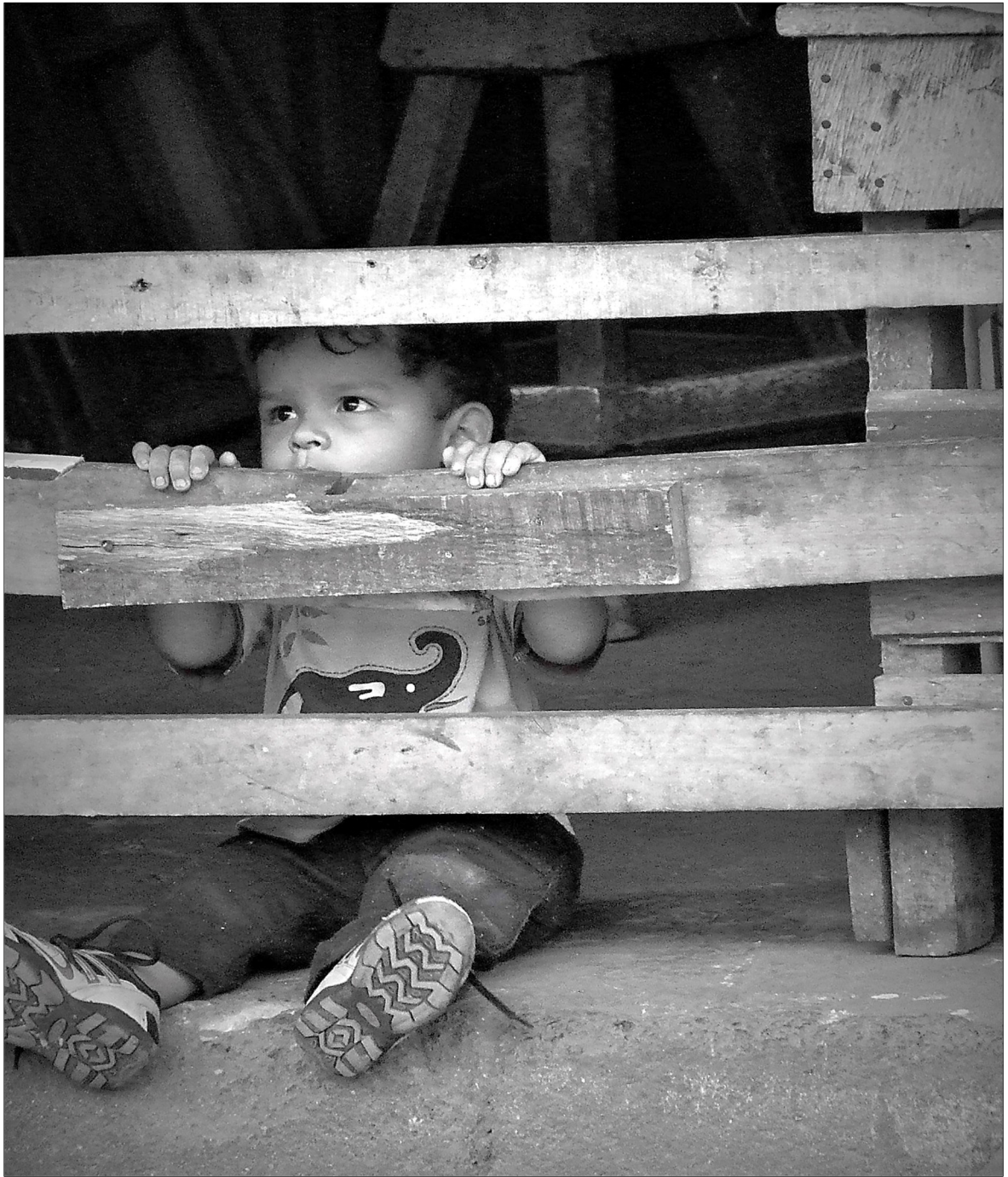
My childhood summers rest in the streets of my grandmother's neighborhood back in the early 2000s. My parents would drop us off at my grandmother's house during the week when they had to go to work. I can still imagine the structure of the house. The green carpet made its way all around the living room and the hallways and stopped at the kitchen. I recall my minute feet pressing hard against the cold, wooden floor of the play area. The grey leather couch faced the TV. Through the windows of the play area room was the backyard; our footprints scattered around the clean-cut grass.

My grandmother had us on a daily schedule, and the schedule included her helping my siblings with their math. She would write a multiplication problem on the chalkboard for them to solve, shouting out the right answer as soon as they solved the problem. My grandfather in the other room never wanted to get out of his chair, but would always be of assistance if my grandmother needed him. At that time, I would always wonder what would happen if I came in the room interrupting his *Walker, Texas Ranger* binge, my grandfather just as mysterious as Boo Radley.

As she grew older, my grandmother couldn't handle being by herself after my grandfather died. It got to the point where she was no longer able to do simple tasks. So my parents volunteered to take care of my grandmother and have her live in our house. Throughout the years, we had multiple nurses' aides who took care of my grandmother. With both of her legs amputated, most of her days were spent in bed. I remember the bright yellow walls of her room, the pictures of family members taped onto the side of her mirror. I

remember the stories she told me about seeing my grandfather by the side of her bed, not one ounce of fear in her.

But as the years flew by, her disease sent her to several hospital and nursing home trips until her days were considered limited. I still can recall her funeral, but I don't revisit that time. Instead, I look up to the sky, seeing two bright yellow dots floating in the sky, knowing that this Christmas tradition will be a continuation for many years to come.



“Locked In” by Kimberly Elter



“Last Days of Summer” by Nicholas Pyo

Collection of Poems (Poetry)

Shayna Boisvert

Tea with the Rabbit

Tea with the rabbit today
He spilled the tea and blamed me
it really was my fault

And when he danced and sang
I could not join in merriment
For the chains that bound did not budge

"Merry unbirthday!"
He would scream and cry while drinking tea
And I would laugh while hiding tears

He said he was late
For what I know not
But he did not leave my nightmare

"The Queen of Hearts is evil"
And I agreed blindly but I couldn't help
wonder if she were really the evil one

Dormouse his friend of valiant honor
Rammed his sword against my chains
And grinned when I wept

And my one and only friend sat across
Sipping his tea without a care, mumbling nonsense
A giant hat upon his head outweighed his judgement

Tea was scalding as it poured down my throat
He didn't care with thumping feet
Pleas to stop fell on deaf cottontail ears

Merry unbirthday and cheers
Tight ropes and burning tea
Tea with the rabbit had just begun

Alice

"Im Late, Im Late" muttered Alice.
Everywhere she goes she gets looks of Malice
and the whispers proclaim crazy
they make her vision hazy.

It all started with once upon a time
when she heard a rabbit chime
"Im Late Im Late for a very important date"
That is what changed her fate.

She went on a mad magical trip
which started with a sip.
That brought her through magical places
where she met many new faces.

But sadly the girl had to return.
And she tried to help others learn.
Of the wonderful place of wonderland.
But it went through their minds like sand.

Crazy. Insane. Psycho.
Her family hid her away, so ashamed.
So now Alice sits
all alone losing her wits.

But she will not tell a lie
Why they wont believe her she knows not why.
But she knows she is missed
in a wonderland that does exist.

Masquerade

Hidden faces all around...
No Identities shall be found
Music notes ignite like a flame
People dance with no shame
For with masks, faces are sealed
No fear that identities shall be revealed
For within a masquerade
All secrets shall be saved

Dragon

While sitting in the woods one day
Spotted, I did, a beast with scales of silver tint
Fear and wonder coursed through my veins
my body frozen, words held at bay
As it moved close, I swore I could see its eyes glint
Its eyes were dark as clouds of rain
And when I thought it would attack
It stopped and froze just as I
And to this day, I still doubt what happened after

It bowed its head in a symbol of friendship, when it did my fear did crack
The creature lowered its wings and urged me onto its back, and then we began to fly
We flew so high and fast that the wind around us sounded like laughter
But sadly we had to land and bid adieu...
But to my friend I swore we would meet again another day

Please Believe

If this were a fairy tale,
I'd like to be the mirror on the wall.
So, maybe when I tell you that you're the fairest in the land
You'll believe me.

If I were your teacher and you my student,
The subject would be astronomy
And I'd emphasize how we are all made of star dust.
That way, every night, when you look up at your brothers and sisters
You'd believe me.

But in reality,
I am but a friend
And in this world, all I can offer are my words.
So I do.
But you do not believe me.

So many days where I wish I could offer more
To not be a broken record, stuck saying:
"You are intelligent"
"You are pretty"
I wish you'd believe me

But,
Hopefully, a day will come
When out of the blue
You'll finally believe



“Electric Butterfly” by Joseph Wojciechowski



“Sleeping Beauty” by Joseph Wojciechowski

Snow White & the 1930s: Teaching Girls to Be Dependent (Essay)

First Place Winner

Emily Horner

Disney princesses have long been criticized for their negative influences upon girls and young women in today's society. Although they display some kind and caring qualities, their passiveness and weakness render the princesses negative role models for young women. During the 1930s when *Snow White* was first released, women could easily relate to the princess. Her domestic attitude and quiet personality clearly represented the expectations of women during this time; however, would these submissive actions be accepted in today's society? It is obvious that times have changed since the 1930s, and *Snow White*'s weak and dependent characteristics are not ones that girls should attempt to look up to and reproduce today. By depending on others to make decisions for her and a prince to come and solve her problems, *Snow White* demonstrates that women do not need to make themselves successful and should rely on others to provide for the family. *Snow White* embodies the societal standards of women in the 1930s and is not a positive role model for girls and young women of today's audiences.

Snow White clearly represents the domestic expectations of women in the 1930s. During this time, women were expected to cook, clean, and take care of the family while the men worked or searched for employment. Cassandra Stover describes this domestic representation of women in her article "Damsels and Heroines: The Conundrum of the Post-Feminist Disney Princess": "The incredibly popular *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937) featured a female protagonist who fit the domestic expectations of pre-World War II women (Rosen 1973) and appealed to Depression-era escapism" (2). One of Walt Disney's intentions in making *Snow White* was to provide a sense of hope and an escape for people during the Depression. To achieve this, Disney created characters that undoubtedly represented the roles of men and women in the 1930s to help viewers better relate to the film. *Snow White*, the princess, especially fit the domestic expectations and submissive behavior of women during this time. Being caretakers of the household and children, women rarely worked outside of the house and were expected to obey their husbands, who worked and provided for the family. *Snow White* displays these qualities throughout the movie. For example, when the dwarfs arrive home from work and find *Snow White* in their house, they are skeptical of letting her stay; however, she attempts to change their minds when she says, "If you let me stay, I'll keep house for you. I'll wash and sew and sweep and cook" (*Snow White*). She is eager to cook and clean for the dwarfs and does whatever others tell her to do. This illustrates her correlation to women in the 1930s and their domestic and submissive behavior.

Through her eagerness to find true love and inability to make straightforward, simple decisions for herself, *Snow White* demonstrates her passiveness and weakness as a woman. In her article "The Animated Woman," author Jacqueline Layng describes *Snow White*'s weakness: "*Snow White* has no agency in saving or protecting herself from harm in order to produce the Disney message no other options are given to *Snow White*. . . . However, the Disney heroine does not act herself but can only be acted upon and, thus, has little voice in the narrative. She is truly an object, not an agent" (Sect. 4.2). *Snow White* rarely has any voice in decisions regarding her well-being and truly is more of an object than an agent.

According to Cassandra Stover, "Snow White is a voiceless beauty"; she does not make decisions for herself and is constantly reliant on the help of others (2). She shows her passive qualities when she is told to run away from the castle and hide from the Queen. Considering that she is a princess, Snow White could have chosen to gather a force of servants, guards, and people around the castle to fight back and destroy the Queen. Nonetheless, because of her passiveness and weakness, Snow White did what the huntsman told her to do and ran away from the castle, taking refuge in the dwarfs' cottage. Here, she expected them to protect her instead of protecting herself.

Snow White clearly embodies the societal standards of women in the 1930s; however, her passive attitude and strictly domestic abilities are not qualities that girls and young women should attempt to portray today. Society has changed substantially since the 1930s and these qualities are no longer accepted. In fact, women would be looked upon negatively if they acted in this passive way today. Author Kathi Maio explains in her article "Beauty Fades, but Fairy Tales Never Die" that Snow White longs for a romantic solution to her problems. Her ultimate desire is for her prince to find her and take her to his castle. Until his arrival, Snow White keeps herself busy by cooking, sweeping, cleaning, and doing dishes (Maio 205). In her longing for this romantic solution, Snow White shows her dependence on men and inability to provide for herself. While these qualities and actions may have been accepted in the 1930s, they would not be practical today. Our values and social roles have dramatically changed and young girls should be taught to believe that they should be more independent and capable of doing anything that they work hard at. In today's society, more and more women are not married and are extremely successful. Because of these drastic changes in the social roles of women since the 1930s, Snow White is not a good role model for girls and young women today because of her dependence on men and her joy of domestic responsibilities. Although Snow White's positive attitude towards work is a quality that girls should admire, other values that she does not possess, such as good decision making, power, and independence, should be instilled in all women from the time that they are little girls until death. No young girl should grow up thinking that the solution to all her problems is finding true love. Instead, girls should believe that they are strong enough to make a successful life for themselves and to be the best that they can be. If true love finds them along the way, it is simply an added perk to their already happy, successful lives rather than the main objective.

Overall, Snow White is not a positive role model for girls and young women. Snow White, of course, has some positive qualities, such as being kind, helpful, and optimistic; however, these do not outweigh the negative characteristics that she possesses. Her weak, dependent personality and inability to make conscious decisions for herself are poor images for young girls to imitate. Snow White's attitude and strictly domestic responsibilities definitely corresponded to the era in which the movie was produced; nevertheless, they do not in today's society. Times have definitely changed, and women now are expected to be much more independent and stronger than ever before. The film was certainly a classic during its time, but not in this day and age. I encourage readers to watch the film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* with a more critical eye and form their own opinions; however, to me, Snow White is not a positive role model for girls and young women in today's society.

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"Tails" by Emily Heckman

Italian Women Subject to Sexism Rooted in Domestic Life

(Essay)

Gina Famiglietti

Enrico Letta, Italy's Prime Minister from 2013 to 2014, promised to take actions in order to combat violence against women. These actions include the passage of laws that extend penalties and protect victims of domestic violence (Davies). However, women in Italy continue to fall victim to sexism throughout domestic life every day, despite an increase in actions against domestic violence by the Italian government. Thus, ridding Italian society of sexism against women stands as a work in progress. Consequently, sexism against women is still rooted in Italian society throughout domestic life.

To begin with, Italian women can receive a heavy dose of sexism fortified through subordination. For example, subordination of women is exhibited in domestic life when men assert their macho presence through acts of abuse or assault. To illustrate, Italian culture and tradition support and encourage women who embody an inferior, comforting, obedient, weak, nurturing, and unselfish role, while backing men with a controlling, forceful, strong, intelligent, and authoritative role. As a result, this gender role socialization in the Italian culture endorses sexual terrorism, which is "a system whereby males frighten and by frightening dominate and control females" ("Sexism"). This obedient social gender role of Italian women encourages them to fall victim to sexual terrorism in domestic life, which is demonstrated by men for the sake of their machismo ("Sexism"). Indeed, inferior Italian women struggle with sexism throughout their domestic lives due to the domination of males in the form of domestic violence.

For one thing, domestic violence against women in Italy is overlooked. For instance, in January of 2014, a court in Italy ruled "occasional domestic violence" acceptable ("Che"). Notably, this court ruling expresses that there is nothing wrong if a husband abuses or assaults his wife a few times a year; thus, one can only be guilty of domestic violence if abuse or assault occurs more frequently ("Che"). With this ruling in mind, one can see that Italy has a long way to go in preventing and punishing partakers in domestic abuse or assault.

Furthermore, Enrico Letta expressed that sexual terrorism in the domestic life of Italians is such a problem that he designated the term "femicide" to define Italy's mass number of murders of women by present or previous companions. For example, in 2012, the United Nations released that more than thirty percent of women in Italy have suffered from acts of domestic assault, which are stamped the "most pervasive form of violence" in Italy (Hossain). What is more, about ninety percent of Italian women who suffered from domestic violence did not notify authorities (Hossain). Sexism through sexual terrorism is clearly prevalent throughout the domestic lives of Italian women.

Moreover, on June 5, 2015, Istat disclosed that 31.5% of Italian women aged 16 to 70 have suffered from physical or sexual abuse ("Violence"). Additionally, a printed issue which was lately displayed before the Italian Chamber of Deputies, '*Rosa shocking – Violenza, stereotipi...e altre questioni del genere*,' released that a shocking one-third of men in Italy believe that domestic abuse or assault exists as a personal issue which should be fixed within the household. What is even more shocking, twenty-three percent of Italian women believe

the same thing; twenty-three percent of Italian women believe that domestic violence has no need to be reported to the authorities in order to put an immediate stop to sexual terrorism in domestic life. In addition, this report announced that one in ten participants believed that revealing or seductive clothing should not be worn by women in order to prevent the incidence of sexual terrorism. This makes it seem like a piece of clothing or lack thereof causes men to abuse women. Furthermore, numerous Italians believe it is normal that if a woman is disloyal to her man, he has all right to release his anger in the form of abuse, due to an enormous amount of love for his significant other (Lunghini). Above all, it has only been fifteen years since Italy ruled domestic rape illegal and only a generation since a "crime of passion" or a man murdering his current or late partner was legal (McRobie). Indeed, domestic sexual terrorism is still a current issue in Italy, which has strong roots in the norms of Italian culture.

On the other hand, Italian women are relying economically on abusive significant others, which leaves them in households of domestic violence. As a result, Italian women take the role of tending to domestic chores, cooking, and cleaning (McRobie). Not to mention, now more than ever, women in Italy are putting in more hours than men around the house. For instance, an OECD article titled "How's Life? 2013" showed that women in Italy are spending thirty-six hours per week on household chores, while their male counterparts are only spending fourteen hours, far less than the OECD average of twenty-one hours a week ("Italian"). Sexism in the form of gender inequality is apparent in Italian households where women are stuck carrying out household tasks, while the men benefit and take little part in helping out around the house.

Furthermore, the Better Life Index asserts that "[w]omen continue to bear the brunt of household tasks despite their increasing participation in the labor market" (Peev). Domestic chores are hindering the efforts of Italian women to take part in the professional world. Thus, Italian women have unequal opportunities in allowance to financial, professional, and social status (Peev). As a result, sexism arises in the form of gender inequality due to the fact that domestic life, tasks, and chores are holding them back from life outside the house.

As proven by these examples, domestic life for Italian women still stands as a strong root of sexism against women. In other words, sexism arises in domestic life when Italian women are subordinated through acts of abuse or assault by men asserting their macho presence. Additionally, sexism appears in the domestic lives of Italian women through overlooked sexual terrorism, which has strong roots in the norms of Italian culture. Sexism also springs forth from gender inequality, which is apparent in Italian households where women are stuck carrying out household tasks. Overall, these household tasks hold Italian women back from opportunities to gain status financially, professionally, and socially. In conclusion, sexism against women is still strong in Italian society throughout domestic life.

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"Last Train" by Brandon Fiume

“Women Didn’t Kill this Way”: *Sharp Objects* and the Subversion of Femininity and Motherhood (Essay)

Second Place Winner

Tara Fritz

A mother is supposed to be supportive, nurturing, and willing to give up anything for her children—at least that is what we have been taught. However, in the novel *Sharp Objects*, Gillian Flynn subverts the idea of motherhood as we know it. Though Adora, the mother figure of the story, seems at face value to be the perfect mother, she has, in fact, been twisted and corrupted by the traditional values forced upon her by the town in which she grew up, so much so that rather than protect her children, she deliberately harms them through Munchausen by Proxy syndrome. Flynn’s construction of this ultimately villainous character—as well as the other unlikeable female characters within the novel—shows her dedication to revealing what she refers to as the capacity for female violence. This violence is reflected not only in Adora but also in her daughters, both her real ones (Camille, Marian, and Amma) and the girls she mentors (Ann and Natalie). While Amma ends up following in her mother’s footsteps, and Marian dies due to Adora’s meddling with her health, Camille is punished and punishes herself because she does not embrace the same traditional values as Adora and Amma. Furthermore, Ann and Natalie are murdered because they do not conform to typical “feminine” values. Thus, it is clear that Flynn wished to show not only the potential for violence in women, but also that this violence is created through oppression and traditional, patriarchal values.

Sharp Objects details the story of Camille Preaker, a crime reporter living in Chicago who must return to her small hometown of Wind Gap, Missouri, to cover the mysterious deaths of two young girls. Her homecoming forces her to confront not only her loveless mother, Adora, but also her volatile half-sister Amma and the ghost of her dead sister, Marian, that still lingers. Camille carries demons of her own: she is a heavy drinker, is slow to make real connections with the other characters, and carries around the secret of her self-harm, which manifests itself as words cut into her skin. As more and more of the mystery of the murders of Ann Nash and Natalie Keene unravels, Camille learns some of her own family’s dark secrets. It is revealed that Adora suffers from Munchausen by Proxy syndrome, which causes her to inflict illness on her children in such a way that she looks like the heroic mother when she saves them. The murders of Ann and Natalie (as well as the death of Camille’s sister Marian) are initially pinned on Adora. However, when Camille takes Amma back to Chicago with her and a similar murder occurs, it is revealed that Amma was the real murderer all along (Flynn).

It is evident that Flynn’s novel is full of strongly-written female characters. However, Flynn has been accused of misogyny for the creation of these characters, as none are really likeable or heroic (Burkeman). Even Camille, as the narrator of *Sharp Objects*, is unreliable and rather unlikeable. Ann, Natalie, and Amma are described as violent girls: Ann killed her neighbor’s pet, Natalie was known for biting people, and Amma is the murderer of three girls (Ann, Natalie, and Lily Burke, a friend of Camille’s at the end of the novel). Finally, Adora is the ultimate villain, a mother who deliberately harms her children without remorse. Even the

other women in the novel are portrayed unsympathetically, from Adora's catty friends to Camille's boring high school acquaintances to Amma's classmates.

Some readers and critics have condemned Flynn's creation of so many unlikeable and sometimes villainous female characters, even accusing her of "peddling 'misogynist caricatures'" and writing from a place of hatred for women (Burkeman). However, Flynn defends her characters by insisting that she is "'frustrate[d] . . . [by] this idea that women are innately good, innately nurturing'" (qtd. in Burkeman). Through *Sharp Objects* (as well as her other two novels, *Dark Places* and *Gone Girl*, which feature similarly villainous and hard-to-like female characters), Flynn attempts to reveal the long-hidden secret of female violence. "Libraries are filled with stories on generations of brutal men, trapped in a cycle of aggression," she explains; "I wanted to write about the violence of women" (Flynn, "I Was"). Rather than harming the cause of feminism by creating villainous female characters, Flynn is, in fact, opening a dialogue on the multi-faceted nature of women and the ways in which a patriarchal, sexist society can negatively impact these women. It is through this corruption of traditional values that a character like Adora comes about.

"Illness Sits Inside Every Woman": Representations of Traditional Values

The town of Wind Gap, Missouri, is a breeding ground for traditional values. It is both a small town and a town in the southern United States, which is often characterized as leaning toward the conservative side: for instance, once, while in Wind Gap, Camille comes across graffiti that simply reads, "Stop the Democrats" (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 170). Camille is one of the only characters who has managed to escape her hometown, at least physically, which, upon her return, enables her to see its nastiness for what it is, a place that "demands utmost femininity in its fairer sex" and imposes the impossible standards of traditional values on its residents (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 13). As a result, its women are trapped in a vicious cycle of high school cattiness, where the pretty girls prey on the poor, ugly, and/or less fortunate girls. These catty women spring from a culture that creates an impossible standard of femininity and encourages women to destroy each other in pursuing this ideal; this culture is upheld by what Lisa Cosgrove has identified as "coercive mechanisms of surveillance, discipline, punishment, and compulsory heterosexuality" used to keep gender norms intact (93). Camille's old high school friends are the typical, submissive wives, concerned with nothing more than keeping a clean house and having as many babies as possible: "I've always dreamed of a big houseful of kids, that's all I've ever wanted . . . [W]hat's so wrong with being a mommy?" wails one of the women as they all complain about their hardships as mothers (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 132). But these women are not looking for little girls of their own; indeed, Ann Nash's sisters are described as "extraneous," while her own birth as the third daughter in the Nash family is described as a "righteous dismay" (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 16). Furthermore, one of Camille's friends insists that she will keep having children until she has a boy. In a culture where women are regarded in such a negative way, it is evidently difficult for women to respect not only other women but also themselves. In creating a town so steeped in traditional, sexist culture, Flynn is making a statement about the negative effects these sorts of environments can have and in what ways they destroy and corrupt the women who are raised in them.

In such an environment, it is not hard to see how Adora's unique brand of "mothering" came about. Though Adora presents herself as a perfect mother, she, in fact, represents the

institution of motherhood as it becomes corrupted through patriarchy. She is a mother of the worst form—a mother who, rather than nurture her children, harms them for her own self-gratification, in one case resulting in the death of one daughter, Marian. Silvia Tubert portrays motherhood as a symptom of the patriarchy; thus, to an outsider growing up in a patriarchal society, Adora seems to be a “good mother,” or, in Andrea O'Reilly's words, a “white, middle class, married, stay-at-home” woman (21). Adora is white, married, and so wealthy that neither she nor her husband need to work; in this institutional view of motherhood, Adora seems to be the perfect mother. However, Adora suffers from Munchausen by Proxy syndrome. In cases like these, mothers induce illnesses in their children so that, by rushing them to the hospital, the mother seems to be the hero in the children's recovery (Rand and Feldman).

Thus, within the narrative, Adora functions as the “Mother,” a representative of the traditional society in which she grew up as well as a representation of how this society can twist and corrupt the *Mother* figure. Looking at just her biological daughters—Camille, Marian, and Amma—we see that her strain of mothering has served to corrupt them as well. Marian died at her hands; Camille was driven to deviancy, so much so that she ruins her feminine beauty by carving words into her skin; and Amma, who grows to be a similar Mother/leader figure under Adora's tutelage, becomes a murderer in the name of keeping traditional values intact. Adora also has connections with the two murdered girls, Ann and Natalie; she tutored them and acted as a mother to them, and they not only rejected her feminine influence by being violent tomboys, but also paid for this rejection with their lives due to Amma's jealousy.

Amma is manipulative, twisted, and violent, and, as Camille points out, “[a] child weaned on poison [who] considers harm a comfort” (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 251). Amma grew up fighting for Adora's attention while being constantly ill, thanks to Adora's need to poison her children. Amma continually feels threatened by the presence of Ann and Natalie; even Camille's arrival makes her jealous. Amma (and Camille) grew up starving for Adora's attention; however, unlike Camille, who turned her anger into her own destruction, Amma takes her jealousy out on other people. It is a common theme throughout the novel that a woman could never be capable of the kind of violence it would take to murder two young girls. However, Angela Woollacott identifies violence as “foundational to patriarchy” (16), and though Woollacott is speaking specifically of male violence, the female violence portrayed in the novel can be seen as another way in which Flynn shows women becoming corrupted through traditional patriarchal values. Amma learns this violence through none other than her mother, Adora. The murderer, even before she is known, is described as “[a] woman who wanted ultimate control . . . whose nurturing instinct had gone awry . . . who resented strength in females, who saw it as vulgar,” which concisely describes both Adora's and Amma's mindsets in relation to other women (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 232-33). It also is significant that Adora is the first one arrested for the murders of Natalie and Ann; even though Amma is the real killer, she has learned her mannerisms from Adora. Like Adora, Amma represents the traditional values of Wind Gap and women who are corrupted by them.

“Just because they were a Little Different”: Representations of Deviance

Camille is the novel's primary example of deviance and how it is punished in a patriarchal society. As a child, she was the one who rejected her mother's pills and concoctions, who rejected Adora's brand of love and left it to be inflicted on her sister Marian. Rather than being directly punished by the society around her, Camille begins to destroy a symbol of her femininity: her beauty. In reference to this, Camille observes, “Every time people said I was pretty, I thought of everything ugly swarming beneath my clothes” (156). Though she leaves her face untouched, by carving words into her body, she further rejects her mother, as well as the culture in which she grew up. Many of these words are related, in some way, to femininity: *bodice*, *lipstick*, *catfight*, and *girl* are among the over sixty references to Camille's scars.

Furthermore, self-harm is not considered culturally accepted and is often dismissed as though it were not a real medical problem (Failler). In some cases, it is described as “attention seeking”; this signifies that Camille may have been mirroring Amma's desire for Adora's undivided attention (Failler 14). However, she does not receive this attention from Adora; in fact, her mother often says how much she dislikes her. This may be linked to Camille's frequent rejection of Adora's medical treatments, the same that she inflicted on Marian and Amma. “‘I wanted to love you, Camille,’” Adora says to her, “‘[b]ut you were so hard. Marian, she was so easy’” (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 238). Earlier, Camille observes that “Adora hated little girls who didn't capitulate to her peculiar strain of mothering” (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 221). Thus, Camille represents deviancy within the novel. Because she is not able to be mothered by the *Mother*, she is rejected by her and the community around her; in turn, she rejects herself and her own femininity.

It is made clear throughout the narrative that Ann Nash and Natalie Keene were murdered because they were outspoken, sometimes violent tomboys who disliked femininity. Ann was “prettied up” before she died, and Natalie's fingernails were painted—both are signs of the control that Amma wished to exhibit over them to make them more feminine. When the girls ultimately rejected this control, Amma had no choice but to kill them. However, their rejection by society did not begin with their deaths; Ann and Natalie were teased and tortured by Amma and her clique of pretty girls long before they were murdered. They were seen as outsiders, deviants of society's expectations for little girls. Andrea Nicki, writing about the cultural rejection of those with mental illnesses, states that “a woman who displays aggression and ambition, and is not feminine, risks being labelled ‘mentally ill’” or, in this particular case, deviant (81). Nicki further describes “conventional female behavior” as including “quietness, self-effacement, and cautiousness” (90). Ann and Natalie both clearly break from these traditional female roles. Ann is described as being smart and outspoken. At times, she is even violent: she is accused of killing a neighbor's pet and stabs Natalie with a needle during a sewing project. Natalie is also known for being violent: her family is forced to move to Wind Gap after she injures another girl with scissors. However, both girls are extremely intelligent and outspoken, despite being known as troublemakers. As Natalie's brother reflects in an interview conducted by Camille on the murders, “‘It's like they picked the two girls in Wind Gap who had minds of their own and killed them off’” (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 207). Thus, Ann and Natalie are killed by Amma not

only because she is jealous of the attention they are receiving from Adora, but also because the two girls represent a deviancy from the cultural expectations for women.

Conclusion: "To Refuse has so Many More Consequences than Submitting"

Flynn's *Sharp Objects* contains some of her most destructive, unlikeable female characters to date. Adora represents what could be the perfect mother—white, wealthy, stay-at-home, and raised in and devoted to maintaining a traditional environment; however, this typically feminine and caring character has been corrupted by the impossible expectations society has set for her. Her youngest daughter, Amma, grows up to mirror her, carrying out punishments in the name of keeping traditions intact. Though Marian dies under Adora's care, Camille's rejection of Adora's mothering leads her to, in some ways, punish herself for not conforming to tradition while also retroactively allowing her to see the dangers of following these traditions. Finally, Ann Nash and Natalie Keene fall victim to the concept of destructive motherhood: because they did not conform to the town of Wind Gap's cultural values, they were punished with death.

As Camille wryly observes, "'Some women aren't made to be mothers. And some women aren't made to be daughters'" (Flynn, *Sharp Objects* 112). In the context of the real world, Adora should have never been a mother: she is destructive, unloving, and utterly corrupt. However, as a literary character, Adora serves as a warning for what our traditional cultural values can do. Without patriarchal values that define mothers as nothing more than caring, nurturing, and powerless above all, there would be no need to display the violence of women as something hidden just beneath a mother's smile.

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“Granada” by Joseph Wojciechowski

Perfect Slaves (Essay)

Third Place Winner

Gabrielle Beck

Looking back on a global history of wars, regime changes, technological advances, and colonization calls to mind the idea that mankind lives in constant pursuit of a better standard of living. A perusal of the plethora of literature chronicling attempts at creating a perfect society may lead a reader to one of the best-known descriptions of a "Utopian" society. However, a comparison of Thomas More's *Utopia* with *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* brings to light many commonalities between the life of an American slave in the 1800s and life in Utopia, including varying value of human life, dehumanizing customs, and the value of the well-being of society over the well-being of the individual, that cause the judicious reader to question the feasibility of a Utopian society outside of fictional literature.

To both Utopians and slave owners, the value of a person's life varies depending on the particular person in question. During his time as a slave, Frederick Douglass witnesses the unequal value of black lives compared to white lives. He describes an all-too-common occurrence in which the life of a slave owner's white son holds a greater value than the life of that same owner's mulatto son: "he must not only whip them himself, but must stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but a few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the gory lash to his naked back" (Douglass 3). He also recounts a time during his work at the ship-yard when the white workers beat him severely. A black man who strikes a white man could very well receive a penalty of death, but Douglass notes that for a black man, "There was nothing done, and probably nothing would have been done if I had been killed" (58). In Utopia, this same concept manifests in a less extreme yet significant way in the treatment of foreign mercenaries, the treatment of the natives of areas Utopians chose to take over, and the concept of slavery. When Utopians go to war, they hire foreign mercenaries, "whom they would much rather risk in battle than their own citizens" (More 54). They show a particular lack of regard for the lives of the Zapoletes. They feel little remorse sending these men into the most dangerous situations because they disagree with their culture and therefore do not value their lives: "for they think they would deserve very well of all mankind if they could exterminate from the face of the earth that entire disgusting and vicious race" (More 81). The treatment of the natives of the land Utopians claimed outside of Utopia again shows the lack of regard for foreign lives: "But if the natives will not join in living under their laws, the Utopians drive them out of the land they claim for themselves, and if they resist they make war on them" (More 49). This ethnocentric action shows the way Utopians assigned a lower value to foreign lives. Finally, the concept of slavery in Utopia shows the unequal value of life. Utopians take criminals and make them into slaves as punishment. Rather than valuing the lives of criminals enough to rehabilitate them for later return to society, the Utopians assign their slaves the tasks that they believed took away the humanity of a person: "Bondsmen do the slaughtering and cleaning in these places: citizens are not allowed to do such work. The Utopians feel that slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion, which is the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable" (50). Douglass describes the effect taking away the value of another

human had on slave owners: "Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me...Under its influence, the tender heart became stone" (Douglass 22). This raises the question: if Utopia existed in the real world, would the Utopians be able to sustain their highly valued compassionate nature in light of their policies of taking away the value of certain human lives? The experience of the slave owners suggests that they would not.

The existence of dehumanizing customs in Utopia, similar to those experienced by slaves in the 1800s, also makes the Utopian society less feasible in the real world. For example, similar travel laws exist in both societies. Frederick Douglass describes "protections" (51), or letters of permission that the slaves had to carry while traveling away from their masters. A nearly identical law exists regarding travel in Utopia: "They travel together in groups, taking a letter from the governor granting leave to travel and fixing a day of return" (More 53). Just like the slaves, "Anyone who takes upon himself to leave his district without permission, and is caught without the governor's letter, is treated with contempt, brought back as a runaway, and severely punished" (More 53). A law of this type restricts the basic human freedom to move freely about the world.

Another dehumanizing custom exists in the ways that slave owners and the Utopian government exert control over the bodies of the slaves and Utopians. This includes the inspection of humans for physical defects. For the slaves, this comes in the form of pre-purchase inspections by slave owners: "There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children, all holding the same rank in the scale of being, and were all subjected to the same narrow examination" (Douglass 27). In Utopia, the government facilitates the mutual inspection of potential marriage partners: "the woman is shown naked to the suitor by a responsible and respectable matron; and similarly, some respectable man presents the suitor naked to the woman" (More 72). This dehumanizing act promotes the value of physical appearance over mental compatibility and demeans the Utopians just as pre-purchase inspections demean the slaves. Another dehumanizing custom can be found in the way both the slave owners and the Utopian government exercise control over the sexual activities of slaves and Utopians. The slaves often find themselves forced to engage in intercourse at the whim of their masters, usually for breeding purposes: "he bought her, as he said, for a breeder...he hired a married man of Mr. Samuel Harrison, to live with him one year; and him he used to fasten up with her every night" (Douglass 37). In Utopia, the government exercises control by restricting sexual activities: "Premarital intercourse, if discovered and proved, brings severe punishment on both man and woman, and the guilty parties are forbidden to marry during their whole lives" (More 71). In forcing or restricting sexual activities, both slave owners and the Utopian government take away the rights of the slaves and Utopians to their own bodies. All of these dehumanizing laws certainly have a negative effect on the slaves. For example, when Master Hugh scolds Douglass for leaving town without permission, Douglass retaliates by not working for a week: "I spent the whole week without the performance of a single stroke of work. I did this in retaliation" (Douglass 62). Seeing the effect these customs have on a slave accustomed to heavily restricted freedom raises the question of what kind of effect these customs would have on real-life Utopians. Would real people be able to function under the restraints of these dehumanizing customs? The experiences of the slaves suggest that a people living under these restraints would suffer greatly.

Finally, both slave owners and Utopians value the well-being of society over the well-being of the individual. For slave owners, this means valuing the functioning of their household or plantation over the well-being of their slaves. For Utopians, this means valuing the entire Utopian society over the well-being of the individuals who compose it. For example, Douglass recounts many instances of separation from his family and friends at the whims of his masters: "A single word from the white men was enough – against all our wishes, prayers, and entreaties – to sunder forever the dearest friends, dearest kindred, and strongest ties known to human beings" (Douglass 27). The Utopian method of population control forces Utopians to endure this same separation: "The limit on adults is easily observed by transferring individuals from a household with too many into a household with not enough. Likewise, if a city has too many people, the extra persons serve to make up a shortage of population in other cities" (More 49). For the slaves, Douglass describes the separation from family and friends as excruciatingly painful: "It caused me more pain than anything else in the whole transaction. I was ready for anything rather than separation" (Douglass 55). In Utopia, citizens face this type of separation on a regular basis when the government forces them to leave their families to balance the population. This raises the question of whether a population of real people would repeatedly and unquestioningly endure this experience or any other comparable circumstance inflicted for the sole of benefit of the society with no real benefit to the individual. Would people in a real society truly be content to live with the constant threat of separation from the people they love? The experiences of the slaves and the nature of humans to form deep attachments to family and friends suggest that this type of life would not be tolerable.

Despite the many similarities in the lives of slaves and Utopians, some may bring forth a counter-argument grounded in one of their major differences—education. Douglass frequently brings up the idea that educating slaves would destroy their contentment with slavery: "He would at once become unmanageable, and of no value to his master. As to himself, it could do him no good, but a great deal of harm. It would make him discontented and unhappy" (Douglass 20). Douglass also asserts that the type of education that drove him to dissatisfaction with his life consisted of learning about the abolition of slavery and the potential of a better life, rather than merely learning to read and write. Because Utopians value education greatly and provide all citizens with the opportunity to receive an education, some may counter here that the Utopians must be satisfied with their society. They may believe that the educated citizens would have known enough to discern the good from the bad. However, the flaws in the Utopian education system raise the question of whether the Utopians were truly and broadly educated enough to analyze their lives to the degree necessary to realize the injustices of their society. First, no indication of a formal schooling system can be found in More's description of Utopia outside of personal reading, public lectures, and the acquisition of a trade. Further, Utopians receive praise from the society for choosing to work rather than study, likely discouraging many would-be scholars: "But if anyone would rather devote his spare time to trade, as many do who don't care for the intellectual life, this is not discouraged; in fact, such persons are commended as especially useful to the commonwealth" (More 46). The seclusion of the Utopians also brings to light the possibility of Utopians not receiving an adequate education pertaining to the world beyond their own society (as Douglass receives through his readings on abolition). The Utopians experience very little interaction with the outside world: "Except for a very few

Utopians who for some special reason had visited foreign countries, all the onlookers considered this pomp and splendor a mark of disgrace” (More 56). This very limited knowledge of outside culture speaks to the limitations of Utopian education. Would a people limited in their knowledge of societies outside of their own be able to make accurate judgments about the state of their society? The lack of outside knowledge among the Utopian citizens suggests that they would be ill-equipped to evaluate their society accurately.

Ultimately, a comparison of Thomas More's *Utopia* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* raises more questions than it does answers. The commonalities of the ambiguous value of human life, dehumanizing customs, and value of the well-being of society over the well-being of the individual in the lives of both slaves and Utopians cast doubt upon the feasibility of a society modeled after Utopia thriving in the real world. However, the questions do not end here. As our society continually strives to better itself, we should keep the experiences of slaves and Utopians alike at the forefront of our minds. As ethnocentrism, racism, immigration, gun control, and other matters of equality and freedom continue to garner much media attention in preparation for the upcoming presidential elections, a major question comes to mind of what we value more—the full freedom of the individual or the ideal functioning of society as a whole—and whether the possibility exists for a society to have both.

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"I Left the Sink at Home" by Christine Geiger

The Isms of the Left (Essay)

Fourth Place Winner

Mark Frank

Our world is inhabited by many people, arising out of various cultural backgrounds. From this diversity naturally arises many ideologies, religions, and points of view. It has always been difficult for me to assign a single ideology to my worldview. I suppose this is natural; it would be quite odd for any of us to place our set of beliefs under a single term. There are many isms that lead to confusion and miscommunication in modern political discourse. Thus, it is better to declare what one truly believes without an ism, even if an elaborate explanation is required. Being clear and upfront is preferable to being vague and concise. The ambiguity between communism, Marxism, and socialism often goes unaddressed in modern political circles. More often they are accusations hurled at liberals than accurate assessments of domestic policy. Karl Marx's famous slogan "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need" is a good place to start when it comes to assessing these schools of thought.

This phrase expresses a sentiment I hold. People become alarmed when one expresses even the slightest agreement with such an ideologue. With this in mind, it is prudent to offer a context in which to assess this way of thinking. Marx's sentiment must be analyzed in the context of sociopolitical inquiry in order to assess class conflict in a capitalist system. According to Marx, conflict between the working class and the relatively small minority that exercises ownership over a large proportion of a society's wealth, called the Bourgeoisie, eventually yields to societal ownership of production, i.e., socialism. Socialism is often, and falsely, equated with communism. Communism's objective is to create a classless society. This transition would entail the elimination of the Bourgeoisie and the establishment of the working class as a dictatorship. A chief tenant of communism is that decisions should benefit the collective population rather than serve the greed of the individual. In this context, historically communist states such as the USSR and China do not truly follow the communist model, as these nations came to be dominated by a powerful few that sought dominion at the expense of the people. It is more accurate to describe these states as authoritarian, as they do not represent the realization of Marx's final vision of a classless and stateless society. In a communist society, there would exist no government as the presence of such would create a governing class and a non-governing class. In this regard, communism is an impractical and fanciful state that no society is likely to achieve without drastic technological advancement. A communist society simply doesn't work in a world of finite resources. In fact, one of the best examples of a communist state would be the Federation from *Star Trek*, where replicators allow for the synthesis of any form of matter, assuming the molecular structure of a compound of interest is known. This technology allows Federation societies to manufacture whatever one desires. The principle of supply and demand no longer applies since there is no monetary cost associated with production. Support for this comes from season one, episode twenty-six of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In this episode, cryogenically frozen individuals from the 20th century awake on board the Enterprise. One of these individuals is a formerly wealthy man who commanded a fortune during his life in the 20th century. Upon prodding Captain Picard to speak with his

attorney, Picard replies, "A lot has changed in the past three hundred years. People are no longer obsessed with the accumulation of things. We've eliminated hunger, want, the need for possessions. We've grown out of our infancy" ("Memory Alpha," 2015). Here specifically is a reference to eliminating the need for possessions, which implies that in the 24th century private property has been abolished. Every person on Earth lives with the peace of mind knowing that his or her physical needs will always be met. This aspect of the Federation corresponds strongly to a communist society, where there exist no economic class differences and, ergo, a need to acquire capital. According to Marx, a truly developed communist society would produce enough goods to satisfy the needs of all. "To each according to his need" is thus dependent upon the society producing enough goods for everyone.

In the 24th century Federation, it might be plausible for private property to be abolished. In 21st century America, on the other hand, we are immediately repulsed by such a thought. How, for example, could we exercise communal ownership of our homes? Does a man not own his house? What about personal items such as a smartphone or car? This is where socialism comes in. Socialism's central tenet is social ownership of production (Busky, 2000). Socialism itself is a divided school of thought with numerous variations, some democratic and other undemocratic. In modern American politics, Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont is a self-described democratic socialist, who is running for the 2016 Democratic Presidential nomination. Democratic socialism, in the most general sense, favors a socialist economy and a democratic form of government. It is a form of socialism that is more compatible with the American style of government. In the words of Bernie Sanders, it is an economy that works for all, not just the very wealthy. Sanders cites the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark as models of his proposed system for a single-payer system, which would grant Medicare to all as a human right (Vox, 2015). In regards to education, Sanders champions making a bachelor's degree accessible to all people just as the high school diploma is today.

I have come to embrace the views held by Senator Sanders. There are certain services to which all are entitled, healthcare among them. Returning to Marx's famous line, I believe it expresses an almost altruistic sentiment. It is as if Marx foresaw an age when human beings would develop the means to provide the basic necessities of life to all. Indeed, technology should be a means by which we advance human dignity, without regard for class, ethnicity, gender, or sex. Our society, as it is now, fails to secure dignity for all of its citizens. Many view economic misfortune as the result of poor decision making or even laziness. Sadly, this view provides political justification for the state of poverty and deprivation to continue, as seen by the assault on programs such as food stamps. Any advocacy for a welfare state is viewed with derision and hostility. Freedom is a word spoken almost to the point of obsession in this country. Yet very rarely does anyone discuss what that means in a broad sense. Any time a politician speaks of freedom, we should immediately question what he or she is referring to. Freedom from what? Regulation? Unemployment? Hunger? People often fear that our freedoms are under threat. I agree. Our freedoms are under threat. There is no freedom from hunger, thirst, nor treatable medical conditions. At least not for all of us. Can the freedoms expressed in the Bill of Rights be truly appreciated by someone who lacks rudimentary shelter or someone who doesn't

know where his or her next meal will come from? I don't see how this could be the case; the flesh must be secure before the intellect can thrive.

The problems of homelessness and hunger are well known, but who has a solution? Unregulated capitalism is undoubtedly part of the problem. It is estimated that the wealthiest 62 people globally increased their wealth by 45%, while the wealth of the bottom 50% decreased by 38% (Oxfam, 2016). Any nation of conscience is immediately faced with the following question: How can such polarizing inequality be in its best interest? The answer to this problem is ensuring that the wealth generated by the working class goes into the wallets and bank accounts of the working class. This is what we once called the American Dream, the hope that through effort and perseverance the human condition can be improved. Unfortunately, this basic facet of American populism is increasingly under threat. Many young people leave college heavily in debt. This is nothing new, however; the costs associated with higher education are growing faster than the means to finance a college degree. If the present trend continues, college will be out of reach of the middle class. If this happens, the American Dream will be elusive, revealing itself only to those with a significant financial advantage in society. It is no secret that education is the foundation upon which future prosperity is built. So it follows that less accessibility to higher education is bound to lead to less prosperity.

Knowledge is the birthright of all mankind. Knowledge transcends culture and socioeconomic status. A basic education is thus a human right. As the human species increases its understanding of the universe, the more of an education that can reasonably be demanded by the public. Entitlement carries a tremendously negative connotation. However, if one believes in the nobility of human beings, it follows that the dignity of man entitles him to these basic rights: access to food and potable water, protection from the elements, and, once the flesh is secure, man is owed a place in the intellectual enterprise. That is, he cannot be denied the heritage of his culture, his faith, or his nation. Thus a system, economic or political, that does not guarantee these rights is immoral and must be reformed. I argue that our present system, by concentrating wealth in the hands of a small minority, cannot guarantee these rights to all people. The free market system has failed, if it ever truly existed at all. It does not necessarily follow that wealth must be redistributed from the top, but merely that human services be socialized. I advocate instead for a stronger welfare state that ensures no American will go hungry or be without shelter. This need not be exclusively a governmental power play; private citizens can be encouraged to volunteer. If we as a society recognize this universal human dignity, then we shall not shy away from the duty to promote the common welfare of all people. We have it within our means to end hunger and homelessness in America. The reason we have failed to do so is a lack of will, political and social.

At the dawn of the 21st century, we find ourselves at a crossroads. We can continue to see the world become an oligarchy of only a few individuals— or we can advocate for policies that advance the welfare of all people. The situation of the world's poorest people can be improved by cracking down on corporations that avoid their tax obligations by exploiting loopholes or establishing operations outside of U.S. territory. Forcing corporations to pay the nominal tax rate will provide funds that governments can use to benefit the health and well-being of their citizens. Such actions not only serve to create a fair

economy but are absolutely necessary in order to build a world that invests in the prosperity of all people. Some have argued that Sanders's plans will lead to incomprehensible tax increases; however, his healthcare plan for all calls only for a 2.2% income-based premium on households and a 6.2% income-based tax on employers. This would bring in \$1.39 trillion in revenue per year, enough to provide healthcare to every American (Sanders, 2016). Thus, Sanders's proposals demonstrate that these plans can be paid for with modest tax increases. The question then becomes this: Do we have the political will to make this happen?

In summation, I believe the present system in the United States has several flaws: an extreme concentration of wealth in the hands of a very small minority, a lack of effective social safety nets, and a failure to guarantee access to potable water, food, and basic shelter to all citizens. Ergo, I favor political change that will create a welfare state where the welfare of all citizens is guaranteed by the government.

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