



STYLUS

2016-17

HOW TO SUBMIT AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLICATION

STYLUS is looking for original, unpublished short stories, poetry, creative nonfiction, memoir, two-dimensional art (drawing, painting, collage, etc.), and photography. Any high school senior or any student currently enrolled at a college in the SC Technical College System is eligible to submit. Publication is subject to verification of your student status at the time of submission. Only Midlands Technical College students are eligible for the annual literary and art awards.

Our regular reading periods are September 1 through December 10 and January 10 through March 10.

We do not accept hard-copy submissions. For production reasons, we can only take emailed submissions that comply with the following guidelines:

Submit all poetry and prose in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text (.rtf) formats attached to an email. Your name, email address, and a phone number should be typed at the top of the first page of your document file. You may submit manuscripts in both poetry and prose, but they must be submitted separately by genre. Do not send more than one manuscript in the same category.

Poetry submissions should be limited to no more than seven poems, single-spaced, and combined into a single document file. Please do not send poems as separate files.

Prose submissions short stories, nonfiction, memoir should be double-spaced. Prose submissions should be limited to 5,000 words.

For art submissions, we prefer high-definition photography and/or digital scans (or photographs) of original art (600 dpi .jpeg or .tiff files, if possible). Digital photographs of paintings and drawings are acceptable, but you should make every effort to light the artwork adequately and crop the photograph so that it has no borders around the art.

Email your submission to stylus@midlandstech.edu as an attachment (document or image file). On the subject line of your email write either "Poetry Submission," "Prose Submission," or "Art Submission." In your email message, please include the following: (1) your full name (with your MTC ID number, if you are a Midlands Tech student); (2) your area code and phone number; (3) your school institution; (4) the business email address of a faculty member or administrator who knows your work.

The History of STYLUS

The publication history of STYLUS magazine begins in the mid-1980s with the first literary yearbook at Midlands Technical College. That magazine was called Starshine and was founded and edited by Maurice Duperre of the MTC English department.

By 1990, the magazine had changed its name and eventually grew into a 40-60 page journal of student writing and art. The publication became a full-color production by 2000, directed by editor Keith Higginbotham, who guided the journal for over a decade. Other editors have included: Maurice Duperre, Les Turner, Curtis Derrick, and Travis Gordon. During its history, STYLUS has won grant awards from the South Carolina Arts Commission and several awards from the Two-year College Humanities Council.

With our Fall, 2011, issue, the magazine continues its evolution as an online publication and the cornerstone of the STYLUS website. Selections for the magazine and its awards continue to be made by an editorial board of faculty members.

Editorial Policy

The STYLUS editorial board reads and judges all submissions. All published selections are read by at least three readers independently, ensuring objectivity in the editorial process. All published works are chosen according to their creative and artistic merits. Only works received by the deadline were eligible for awards.

Editorial Board

Scott Compton- Chief Editor

Keith Higginbotham- Contributing Artist and Senior Editor

Julie Nelson- Assistant Editor

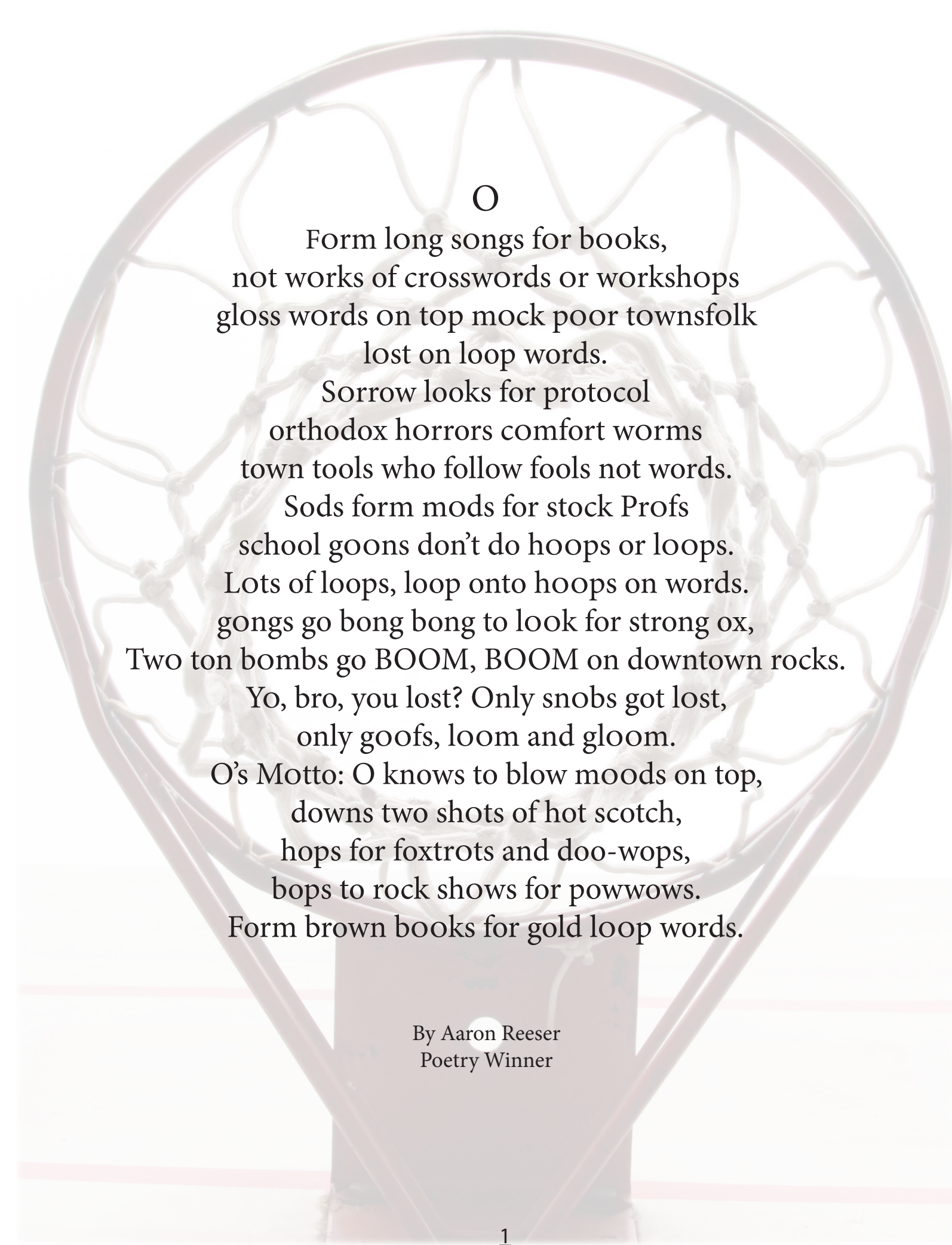
Kristi Castro- Assistant Editor

Jared Demick- Assistant Editor

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COVER PHOTO BY ZOEY HUGGINS



O

Form long songs for books,
not works of crosswords or workshops
gloss words on top mock poor townsfolk
lost on loop words.

Sorrow looks for protocol
orthodox horrors comfort worms
town tools who follow fools not words.

Sods form mods for stock Profs
school goons don't do hoops or loops.

Lots of loops, loop onto hoops on words.
gongs go bong bong to look for strong ox,
Two ton bombs go BOOM, BOOM on downtown rocks.

Yo, bro, you lost? Only snobs got lost,
only goofs, loom and gloom.

O's Motto: O knows to blow moods on top,
downs two shots of hot scotch,
hops for foxtrots and doo-wops,
bops to rock shows for powwows.

Form brown books for gold loop words.

By Aaron Reeser
Poetry Winner



A Writer's Passion

by Kelsie McElwain

The words are against
The tip of your tongue.
The need to speak out
Ignites the fires within your blood.
The feeling to be free
Is felt deep within your bones.
The flow of words
Surround your thoughts
In a never-ending cycle.
The tip of the pen starts
To drift across the paper.
Words erupt in a flurry
Against the blank page
Of your freedom.
Your mind free
From the restraints of the cage-
Free to roam the never-ending expanse
Of paper in front of you.

ABOUT POETRY

BY DAVID W. MARTINDALE

I find it hard to write
about my thoughts

I do not know
how much to share

I get stage fright
when I begin to write
put down on paper
a different view

Same old things
in a new light

A piece of Art
in a different twist

Every artist has to start
somewhere

Here is my beginning

LUCY

By Cameron Alavi

I thought it would taste bitter
Almost like disinfectant spray
I was pleasantly surprised to find out I was wrong
45 minutes passes
I can feel palpable excitement in my stomach
As the walls began to melt
And reality started to fall apart
The room rapidly changing into a multitude of different colors
All the while my roommates playing Outkast in the Background
Not too soon afterward my couch turned to sand
While it was visually beautiful
I pondered on the not so beautiful
“What makes us human?”
“If the afterlife exists, where would I go?”
“In the grand scheme of the universe, do we really matter?”
“Do I even matter?”
An existentialist’s wet dream.
The next day, emotionally drained I pondered
“Even if I didn’t exactly enjoy it...
...was it still a good experience?”
Simply put, absolutely.

Women Scorned

By Keyanne Maxwell

3 years gone, 3 years we had together
You said, “I love you”, “I got you”,
Always Forever.
You said you’ll hold me down
You said pre-promised vows
You said I’m your queen, and I hold the crown.
2 years and we had a child
Baby Royalty, our glue
He was our love, our truth.
2 years you were my half
2 years you helped me rid my past.
Now the present, I no longer hold that crown.
You diminished it, belittled it just because I wasn’t around.
You let another come in; She could never stick around
Why?
Because my crown is a heavy load.
But you’ll figure it out,
I was the steady head when you said you didn’t
And you did.
I still owned the crown.
I believed all you said of eternal peace and prosperity.
Now that I know those were empty promises
I now walk a women scorned.
Empty promises all because of what you said.
Broken all because of what you said.
Now a queen, broken and scorned,
Looks down on any man all because of
What You Said.



By Jazmin Thomas

After The End

(Prose Winner)

by Cameron Alavi

“Shit, how much longer do I have to wait here? I guess I shouldn’t be complaining. I have more than enough free time.”

I thought to myself, waiting in the hallway that seemed to stretch to infinity.

Ding, a tone rings, and a very pleasant woman in the front calls out, from behind a podium, “Number 102,567,809,764,112,831, you’re up.”

“Hey man, how long have you been waiting here?” The man next to me asks

“Hmm...around uhhh...” I look at the calendar with the Dilbert comic strip plastered on the page, read the date “December 6th, 2018,” and started doing the math.

“It’s been around 11 months now, give or take a couple of weeks,” I respond.

“Wow, it’s been 11 months, and I haven’t introduced myself yet, I’m Devin,” the man says, with his hand jutted out ready for a handshake.

“Ben.” I shake his hand.

“Sorry it took me so long to say something; it was just one of those things, like I knew I had more than enough time and I kept, y’know, like putting it off. ‘Eh I’ll talk to him tomorrow’, ‘Eh tomorrow, I have time’. But since we’re near the end of the line I figure, hey, might as well start a conversation.”

I chuckle and nod.

“Why is the number of people waiting so damn high? There couldn’t have been more than like... maybe 100 billion people that have died in history?” I ask.

“Yeah, on Earth. You forgot about the rest of the universe.”

“So uh, how did you go?”

“Nothing really crazy, car accident, semi flipped over, and I ran into him going 85. It was quick so, which was the only thing I was hoping for. It didn’t have to be spectacular. You?”

“Bad hot dog” I said, almost chuckling as I say it.

“Gas station?”

“Rodeo, I kinda just put the taste to the side, just figured it just tasted bad but I paid \$3 for it and I was broke. I wasn’t going to waste it.”

Devin laughed for a second, and then turned to me and whispered

“Guy next to me wanted to glow, while he was on ecstasy, so he injected glowstick fluid into his veins. But at least he got what he wanted, he glowed...for about 30 seconds.”

I had to laugh, what else do you do when you hear something like that.

“I KNOW what you guys are laughing at and it’s not a subject to laugh at,” the man said.

“I mean, what the f--- do you expect man? We’re all dead too, plus I mean, you were kind of asking for it.”

“Nice,” the man said, sarcastically

I turned to the guy to my right and asked, still chuckling “What about you man?”

“Lung Cancer.”

My laughter comes to a very slow halt

“Oh...s-sorry.” It got deathly quiet.

A couple of more hours pass, and finally I’m at the end of the line.

“Number 102 quad—” I cut her off, “That’s me.”

The woman waves her arm towards the beige metal door, not really what I was expecting. I slowly creep open the door to find a man in a short sleeve buttoned up shirt, with a tie, glasses, and messy curly hair.

“AH, Ben! Come on in man, come right in.”

Confusion is an understatement.

“THIS is where I go to be judged?” The place with the chipped wooden desk, a black coffee mug that says “I try not to laugh at my own jokes but we all know I’m HILARIOUS” on the front, and a broken desk fan. Alright.

I sit down in the indigo upholstery fabric, and shake his hand.

“OK, Ben, so let’s take a look at your file here...it says here you died from a rancid hot dog, at ummm... Benny’s Rodeo on January 17th 2018.”

“Yeah, I just kind of pushed the bad t-”

“Bad taste to the side because you didn’t want to... waste a \$3 hot dog? Is that correct?”

“Well...yeah, I mean I was strapped for cash at the time and I was raised not to waste f-”

“It was a \$3 hot dog, I don’t figure you would’ve

gone bankrupt. Well regardless, let’s get past that, it happened and now you’re...dead so let’s just, um, move on. So you have a relatively clean slate here, a few dings here and there but overall you seemed like a decent guy.”

“Well I mean, I would like to think so, even though I wasn’t too religious. I respected my boundaries and never called out anyone’s religion or disrespected them or anything of the matter.”

He scrunched his eyebrows for a moment and said

“You sure ‘bout that?”

I nervously answer, “Well...I mean a few instances, maybe, but that’s just my sense of humor, I never meant to out and out offend anyone.”

“It says here on Halloween of 2016, you dressed as Jesus for Halloween, as a joke.”

I froze, “Ok I can explain that.”

“Also says here that you, *“Thought about making it super offensive but decided not to do it.”* “What does, ‘Super Offensive’ mean, Ben?”

“Oh, pssh, that was...oh man, it was just something stupid, the important thing is I didn’t go through with it right? I mean, isn’t that all that matters?”

“Well it says here you were going to place a stiff, phallic object into your robe and walk around as “Jesus with a boner.”

“Ok, listen man I didn’t...oh damn, I didn’t go through with that though, doesn’t that mean anything, I get it, it was messed up, I admit that, does

that count for anything?"

He taps his fingers on his desk, and then looks back down at the file. He looks back up and smiles, "We'll see." I'm sweating bullets. Of course even after I'm dead there are still stuff to get nervous about, nice.

"Ok, another ding I see here is that you... physically assaulted a priest."

I swear for a second I was so shocked I could feel my heart start to beat again for a moment, "Oh Jesus Christ, I can exp--"

In the blink of an eye, the interviewer stood out of his chair and cut off my sentence with an ear drum busting roar, a roar that sounded like a mixture between a freight train and the T-Rex from Jurassic Park. It blew me out of my chair and sent my body slamming into the door behind me. The skin on his face started to break apart, forming a shattered glass formation on his face, with each square of skin starting to fall off of his face. Then his bottom jaw disconnected, and a large flap of muscle and skin peeled off of his neck, forming one massive jaw. His teeth sharpened and grew to the lengths of a switchblade, his arms grew and got grotesquely veiny. The skin off his arms peeled back like a banana, revealing muscles, tendons, and bone.

"I'M SORRY! IT WAS A SLIP, I'M SORRY, PLEASE FORGIVE ME, OH GOD I'M SORRY."

And in a blink, he was back to his normal form, just with some torn clothes, and all of his hair singed

off. "Ok" he says, out of breath, "Well now that we're over that, let's get b... to this priest business."

Still in shock, I slowly and shakily stand up off the ground and get back in my seat, baffled at the fact that he's back to normal.

"Ok, well-" He gets cut off by his assistant, with a piping hot brew of coffee in hand.

"Coffee?" She asks with a smile on her face.

"I would absolutely love a cup, thank you Adele. Ben?"

I frantically shake my head and put my hand up to decline.

"Oh man nothings' better than a cup of coffee when you just...oh, well, you can't- never mind. But thank you Adele?"

His assistant smiles at me and then leaves the room, but I'm not in the frame of mind to give any kind of emotional response back

"Man she's great, fantastic assistant. Just wish I could pay her more y'know. Anyhow, back to this 'priest' business, you said you had an explanation."

"Uhh...uhh...y-y-yes, I umm..." I clear my throat as best as I can.

"He tried to grab my grandmothers as- I MEAN, buttocks. So instinctively I just hit him. I admit it wasn't the best choice, because he was older, but that doesn't excuse--"

"73."

"E-excuse me?"

"He was 73 at the time."

"Umm, ok. But regardless, I do regret it."

"Ok and umm, when was this...3 years ago, so we're definitely going to chat about that once he comes in."

"Wait, he outlived me?"

"He had a heart attack about a year ago, but yes he's still alive."

"That's a shame."

He chuckles and goes through some more of my files, sucking his teeth as he reads, not negatively, just to cut some of the awkward silence out.

"Well Ben, I can't really find any other serious offences in here, and I think the ones previously mentioned are overall, not too bad, there was a joke told when you were 16 involving the Muslim religion, but I'll give that a pass. You've realized that they were wrong doings so, for those, I'll let you go. So, I'm happy to say that you've made it in Ben. Congratulations!"

I jump up with a shocking amount of energy, even with the thing I just witnessed not too long ago, and frantically shake his hand. "Thank you so much sir, I was worried there for a second."

"Nope, you're all in the clear. Also, quick little addition, I saw that you've never seen *Passion of The Christ*, but don't you worry, Friday's are movie night so they're going to be playing it, AGAIN."

I not-so-excitedly nod my head and say "Yeah sure, but movie night is voluntary isn't it?" His smile disappears and I notice the little cracks in his skin start to form again, and I say "KIDDING!

It was a joke, I'm for sure going to watch it. Oh man, e-can't wait."

His face goes back to normal and he chuckles, "Alright, see you then."

As I'm exiting the room and entering the next, I see Devin getting ready to go in, so I give him a thumbs up for good luck, and he gives me a friendly wave and a nod. I hear the assistant call out "Number 102,567,8...." Her voice fading away as I reach the elevators. When I get there, there is a man already there, but he's sobbing and shaking. I look at him, and he looks at me. It takes me a second to figure out why he was so upset, even though it was quite obvious, considering the glowing red "Down" button beside the elevator.

I say to him, "Hey man, who knows it might not be as bad as it sounds...it might be--"

Cutting off my sentence, an elevator ding. We both look into the elevator and when it opens, there are horrifying, twisted creatures screaming and maniacally crying, waving him toward the elevator with disfigured hands and arms. He looks back at me and I at him. I sympathetically and uncomfortably fist bump him. He slowly walks into the elevator, and the doors close.

"Holy shit I dodged a bullet...wow. That would be rough." I click the UP button on the elevator and the light glows bright white. After 30 seconds or so, I hear the elevator reach me. I step into the elevator, wait a second, and the doors shut.

The R-ts are Breaking in Again

By Ketyra Hopkins

I boarded up the holes,
Took out the trash, washed the dishes

And ate my food, tore my clothes,
scratched my chest and took my rest

So
Reinforce the holes, make less trash,

But they still got in

and took my rest
So

I called my family and friends to help me keep watch,
steel the holes, turn my doors into those of a bank vault,
Clean up the mess, and heal my chest

my tears,

I see that my family has been hurt by the r-ts, too
But I cover my injuries from them.

Set my traps and cleaned the house
But they still got in

I called an exterminator and he helped me set better traps,
And board the doors

And bit my fingers, ate my trash,
drunk my soda, scratched my window,

But they still got in
And ate my happiness, ruined my trust, drunk

distorted my vision, broke my heart, and took my rest

So
I sit down and wait for the next break-in
Wondering what It'd be like

To live somewhere else

Difference

By Elizabeth Cote

When I go into Wal-Mart:
I look around
And see a homeless looking man with pj pants,
A parent yelling at their kid to stop,
Cussing,
And people not saying thank you.

Wal-Mart is so overbearing with noise and crowds.
The long lines at Wal-Mart
Give me enough time to think about the whole year.
The kids touch everything and the parents don't say "NO."

I wonder where they come from.
They're so different looking from what I am used to.
I see different people from the world,
From different races
And different places,
Mexicans, African-Americans, and Americans.

I'm rather quite frightened
To walk in this humongous store.
Don't ask for help or go to customer service
They might not know.

I go to a store to get what I want;
But when I don't get what I want
I want to pull all my hair out.

Wal-Mart is a symbol for mainstream U.S.A.
It shows the diversity of America.

Therefore I need to remember to be kind
because I don't know
Who they are or what they have been through.
Be respectful,
Nice,
And loving.
Maybe even make them laugh or smile.
Maybe that is what they needed that day.

Most people that shop there are poorer.
Maybe I can help them out.
I need to not judge
And to pull the log out of my eye
Before I pull the spark out of someone else's eye.
What do they think of me?
Am I just one of them?

WE ARE AMERICANS

By September Witherspoon

We are Americans

With our dark skin and braided hair
The rhythm of Mother Nature in our bones
Taken from our homes
Descended from ancestors who were shipped
here without a
choice or a chance to have freewill
We have been killed
But we live on



We are Americans

Our many different skins reflect
the many beautiful hues of the rainbow
We have bodies too beautiful to be defined as male
or female
And hearts that identify us, not our sexes
We deserve to love and be loved without judgement
We have been gunned down
And treated as a dissident
But we live on

We are Americans

With our red skin and high cheek bones
Dancing bare feet in the arid dust
Our ground stolen from us
Even as our loved ones were massacred
in one breath
We have known death
But we live on



We are Americans

In navy blue, with badges and handguns
With husbands, wives and little ones
We serve, protect and fight



We see more than black and white

We continue to serve despite those
who have sullied our name
We have been slain
But we live on



We are Americans

We have bled together, cried together,
lived, loved, and died
together
We have seen towers fall
Together
Let us now watch the hate amongst us
Fall together
Let us mourn together
For our brothers and sisters
who have shed blood from hate's bullets
Let us mourn and then let us forgive
Let us forgive America.
Let us forgive, America.
And let us stand together
Because...



We ARE Americans.

Questions From The Ashes

By Randi Lyn Cantey

Broken spaces
Disappointed faces
Where does it all go wrong?
Everything dissipates and I'm left
Picking up the self-destructed pieces
Clueless how we segued to this song
Was it the intensity of my intentions?
The volume of my mind?
Am I reckless with my heart?
Do they just lack a spine?
If it's them, not me
Causing situations of this kind
Where do we go from here?
Where did it all unwind?
"But it is you!", scream my demons
"Let this be clear, it is not us"
"But mediocrity you fear"
Narcissist Crasshole
Inadequately equipped for loving
Where is the line between self-awareness and self-loathing?
As darkness seeps through my consciousness
I struggle to find the light
But the light is most important of importance
It's how we stop the fight

Instead, I'm waging wars on myself
I thrive in the night
Like a prism reflecting colors
Into the heart and soul of others
While seamlessly coming unscrewed
Or is it that we are all this way?
Doubtful, hung up, lost, unglued.

That Other Child

By Cara Hyman

"That other child" you say
Because you refused to say the name
of your son that was born your daughter
and raised to think the same way

"That other child" you say
Because you refused to face the truth
That you never lost your princess
And gave your king a verbal noose

"That other child" you say
Because your son refused to let you
Chain him down with "she" and "her"
And left that life, renewed

"That other child" you say
Instead of asking for forgiveness
That you truly don't deserve from
"That other child" who's not your other child
anymore.



"Blooming Dreams" By Makenzie Andrews

CAMP

by Elizabeth Cote

As I see camp and my cabin for the first time, I suddenly get butterflies. "Should I have even come to camp?" I ask myself. I am in high school and I am doing the obstacle week at camp. My first impression of the other campers and my counselor seems sweet. How I hope they like me. I would love to fit in. My parents were the directors, a couple and bi-racial. The cabin is nice and while the girls are unpacking they are telling me their names. The counselor's name is Allie and the other campers are Petra and Mary. I have nothing to say so I go ahead and tell them my name is Em.

The directors of the camp are the only ones who know the obstacles. The counselor knows some information, but the campers know nothing. They can't look it up on their phones either because the campers get their phones taken away at the start of the camp week.

After the campers and I had a good night sleep, we started the day with morning watch. Morning watch is when the counselors make sure everyone is doing well and when we talk about the Bible.

"Oh no!" scream the directors.

"What happened?" said the campers.

I did not have a clue what was going on. I shudder with fear as I can tell something bad is about to happen.

"There were snakes all over the camp last night but they all ended up on the bridge."

Not only are they snakes, but they are highly poisonous, evil creatures. If I touch the snake my heart will be filled with poison.

Everyone is so scared about the snakes on the bridge. I do not know what we are about to get into. The first obstacle of the day is here. The campers will have to get over the bridge for breakfast. "Oh no," I think to myself. "What are we going to do?" "I have an idea" said Mary.

"Everyone needs to stay calm and we need to avoid disturbing the snakes with our sticks."

Allie said, "That's a great idea!"

I am so relieved that someone knew what to do! I hate snakes.

Then we go off to breakfast. Stomachs are growling and we are hungry as bears. Petra is surprised at how much food there is; she usually does not get this much at home. The counselor notices I am very quiet. I wonder why she thinks I am quiet!

After breakfast, we all sit on the swings outside of the cafeteria. I think my cabin mates are awesome, but I am still having a hard time fitting in.

One of the girls ask me if I am black or white.

"I am mixed", I say.

This comment makes me so mad! I hate not being able to identify with one race. At school, when I have to fill out a bubble of race; there is no bubble for me to fill out. I start crying to myself and have to excuse myself to go to the bathroom. When I get back, everyone acts like nothing happened. I am so upset and no one cares.

After I calm myself down, Allie is telling everyone that we have to love everyone. Allie hasn't talked to me the whole time so this is really sweet of her. She tells me she has never had any campers that were of another race. She really is not used to talking with other races and it pushes her out of her comfort zone.

I say, "I wish I was not mixed, I wish I was either white or black."

Allie has nothing to say so she just gives me a hug.

The GIC is our first obstacle course. We have different obstacles- the wall and the bridge. There are

lessons to learn from them. The wall is flat and stands about ten feet tall. I am wondering what lessons am I supposed to learn from this wall. Maybe we all need to help each other? There will always be people there when I fall. But who?

"This week as we face our differences we might have to climb over the wall or step out of our comfort zone to get to know one another."

I am so glad my counselor says this! I need to get to know the other people. Mary and Petra look at each other and I can tell they will both be thinking about me. The last obstacle of the week my parents made just for this week. The camp has a long sidewalk like a balance beam and we have to get to the other side but there are obstacles along the way. Em will be with Mary and Allie with Petra.

One of the partners will be blindfolded and one will be the caller. Just like your partner is calling for you and helping lead the way, God is too. When the game starts the "caller" must guide their partner to the finish line. The first contestant to cross the finish line wins. The object of the game is not to let the distractions get in your way of hearing the caller's voice. As we were doing this obstacle, I was the caller. I hated to speak out loud and be a leader. As the leader, I finally understood what this obstacle was about! I need to be a voice to others so they can

hear God's voice. I finally feel I am fitting in a little bit. They understand even though I am mixed I am still more like them than they thought.

After the long day, we have dinner. It is a Thanksgiving meal, my favorite because my mom and dad have different Thanksgiving traditions. As I hear them talking about their races I see it is not that simple and people don't go beyond stereotypes. As I am bi-racial, I see similarities in both cultures which I think is cool. I finally see a plus side of being bi-racial. I decide I will spend one day with her mom's family and one day with my dad's side so I can see and taste the differences.

The last activity for camp is the campfire. Somehow the campfire is a wonderful experience. Between the heat of the fire and all of us connecting it is great! It is a form of unity between the campers, counselors, and directors. We have s'mores, sing songs, and tell stories about race. Mary and Petra both agree they underestimated me because of my skin color. They say they are sorry and they don't care if I am more black or white. I will never forget the campfire.

I have learned more about myself and the life I want to live than ever before. People can call me Oreo or whatever mean name they want, but I have to learn to ignore what others think. I am happy about my skin color!

Get Your Gun

by Jeffrey Gage

I remember that day so clearly that it might as well have been yesterday. The drive home from work was brutal. Not only was it over ninety degrees (too hot for early spring), but my A/C only worked half-assed and the traffic was backed up for miles. My normal forty-minute drive home took well over an hour. I just wanted to get home, feed my tortoise “TimBit”, and grab a cold beer. It was Wednesday – a perfect excuse to have an ice-cold brew. The only question was whether to go with a snobby micro-brew, or stick with good old fashioned Bud Light. I pulled into the driveway of my modest two-bedroom townhouse in Irmo, South Carolina, and killed the engine. I could taste that beer already. Immediately the heat that was barely staved off by my pitiful excuse for an air conditioner started to creep into the car. I opened the door and was hit by the wall of heat and humidity. I hurried to my door, anxiously awaiting the blast of cold air from inside my house and slid my key in the lock. As quickly as I could, I opened the door to the refreshing A/C.

I walked inside, closing the door quickly behind me and dropped my bag on the kitchen table as I reached in the fridge for a Bud Light. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the message light flashing on my answering machine. Yeah, I was old school. No cellphone, just a house phone with an answering machine. My stomach sank as I guessed who it had to be. I had a few friends who I used to go out with on the weekends, but they didn't usually call my house and leave messages. Not this early in the week anyway. With a nervous finger, I pushed the play button.

“You stupid jerk! I can't believe you don't have a cellphone! I need you to get to Lexington Medical now – Jacob shot himself and I need you to get here like now.” Oh. My. God. I couldn't believe what I'd just heard. I played the message back a few times to make sure I heard it right. I hated it when Christie left vague end-of-the-world messages like that. I could already hear her blaming me for whatever the hell just happened. I guessed that beer would have to wait so I put it back in the fridge with a sigh.

How had he shot himself, anyway? He knew better than to play with guns. He was 10 for God's sake. Why did he even have a gun? was all I could think. I was in shock. I bolted out the door, back into the heat of my car, and fired it up. I pulled out of my driveway and raced to the hospital, weaving through the traffic like a Nascar driver on the last lap of the Daytona 500. As soon as I got there, I parked in the ER lot and ran inside. Christie was sitting on the far side of the waiting room, head in her hands, looking like she usually

does. Her dark hair was pulled back into a pony-tail, already starting to go gray a bit on the temples; she wore a pair of shorts and a tee shirt that clearly showed how badly she needed a sandwich. I didn't know if she had an eating disorder or anything, but she was unhealthily skinny. She looked hard, like she'd been through some pretty rough patches; nothing like the beautiful girl I'd married ten years earlier. I steeled myself for the abuse that was about to come and walked over to her.

“So, what happened? How is he?” I asked when I got to her.

“He's with the doctors now. They won't let me back there. I can't believe this is happening to me.” And there was the selfish person I used to be married to. Happening to me, not to Jacob, but to her. I was almost surprised, then I remembered who I was talking to. Instantly all the hate I'd repressed over the years boiled up to the surface. The woman cared more about herself than her son who had just shot himself.

“So how the hell did he shoot himself? Why would you even let a kid his age play with a loaded gun?” I asked, hatred flowing with every word. I knew her well enough to know that she'd have a bullshit answer so I almost didn't even listen to her reply. But like watching a train wreck, I had to hear it. Out of morbid curiosity I had to know how she would turn this around into something that somebody was doing to her.

“He was out in the woods with his brother and they were shooting cans and stuff. Somehow the gun went off and he shot himse...”

I interrupted her and asked if he was going to be ok. She seemed a little taken aback by me just cutting her off in mid-sentence – I was usually the laid back, non-confrontational type – but I was sick of dealing with her.

“Umm. I don't know. The doctors are working on him...there was so much blood!”

I shook my head. I still couldn't believe she let him play with a gun, unsupervised, with his younger brother. He had no business being there, but she and I had very different opinions on guns. I hate them and she loves them.

“I just can't believe this is happening to me,” she said again. “I taught him gun safety, he knows how to handle one, but what am I going to do without my baby?”

Again, with the self-centered crap. “Look, just shut up, would you?” I don't think in all the years I'd been dealing with her I'd been so blunt, so callous. I just couldn't do it, not while my son was in the ER with a gunshot wound that he got on her watch. She looked like I'd just slapped her across the face, but I didn't care. I was in no mood to hear about how losing our son would make her miserable. One day she'd realize that the whole world didn't revolve around her.

Before I could get a response to my uncharacteristically bold statement, the doctor came out to the waiting room and called us over to him. “Sir, Ma’am, your son is doing well. There was a lot of blood loss but he seems to be recovering. We were able to get him a transfusion and we removed the bullet. He’s all stitched up and I think he’ll be fine – there was no major internal damage. You’re welcome to see him now. In a few minutes, there’ll be a social worker who would like to speak to each of you separately.” He led us to a small cubicle where Jacob lay, with so many IVs and sensors attached to him that he looked like a science experiment gone wrong.

We sat with him for a few minutes, then a pretty, young woman poked her head in the curtain and tapped me on the shoulder. Her blonde hair fell to her shoulders, her striking blue eyes looked at me behind her glasses and my heart skipped a beat. What the hell? I asked myself. I saw once I got up that my first impression of her being a pretty young woman was an understatement. She was thin, but not malnourished like Christie, and had a nice figure. Her straight hair framed her face and she smiled a warm smile. She asked if she could speak to me for a few minutes. I nodded and followed her to a different cubicle where she introduced herself as “Kimberly”. She asked me what happened. I told her I didn’t have many details; I’d just gotten home from work and got a frantic call from his mother telling me he’d shot himself and to get to the hospital. After some questions that skirted the issue of abuse, Kimberly led me back to Jacob’s area and took Christie out for an interview.

Five minutes passed, then ten, then twenty. Finally, Christie came back with tears in her eyes. Jacob was too doped up on morphine to know what was going on, but I could imagine how her interview with Kimberly went. It would be a miracle if they didn’t take him out of her custody. If they did, I only hoped he’d end up with me.

“How’d it go?” I asked.

“They think I was neglectful. I’m scared Bill. I don’t know if they’re going to take my baby away from me or what. I can’t lose him!” She broke down in tears and I felt like I should comfort her, but the voice inside said to screw it and I listened to that voice. Secretly I hoped they would take him away from her. If it wasn’t the gun it was something else. Abusive? Not really, but I could believe “neglectful”. She had several other kids by several other men but I had no idea where they were at the time.

I walked over to the bed where Jacob lay and put my hand on his shoulder. He was doped up and looked at me with hazy eyes. He tried to speak, but whatever he tried to say came out as a garbled mumble. “Shh. Don’t

try to talk – I just wanted you to know I’m here. Your mom and I are here with you, just try to relax for now.” I could see his eyelids getting heavy and knew he was about to fall asleep.

I looked over at Christie and waited. I knew she’d be jealous that I was giving Jacob attention and not her. She didn’t know how to not be the center of the universe. Everyone had to always be paying attention to her and listening to her going on about how unfair everything was. I was so tired of it and it had been a long day. I was ready for her to say something – anything – that I could jump on.

“Bill,” she started. I looked at her with ice in my eyes and turned my attention back to Jacob. He didn’t look like he was feeling any pain, and he was totally passed out from the drugs, so I figured it was safe to talk to Christie freely.

“So, are they going to take him away from you?” I asked her.

“I...I...I don’t know,” she answered, sounding choked up. “That damn social worker kept asking me questions and marking things on her clipboard. The stupid bitch was looking at me like I was a sack of shit for letting this happen. I didn’t let it happen, it was a fluke, an accident.”

“She seemed nice enough to me. Look, Christie, I’m going to try to be nice here, but he had no business playing with a gun. He’s just a kid for Heaven’s sake! The fact is you let him go around in the woods with a loaded gun without supervision and he shot himself. That doesn’t look good. They may take him from you; I wouldn’t even be surprised, really.”

“Oh my God, don’t say that! How the hell could you be on her side? Because she’s cute, is that what it is? She’s cute so you’re going to side with her?” She was starting to really lose her cool because I wasn’t going along with the “poor poor me” thing.

“No, that isn’t why I agree with her. I agree with her because you screwed up and there may actually be some consequences this time.”

“And what do you mean by that?!”

“I mean everything is always about you. I bet while you were talking to her you went on and on about how devastated you were, how you couldn’t lose him, how you were doing the best you could, how you this and you that. It’s always about you when anything happens. I know I’m sick of it and she probably picked up on it.”

“How could you say such mean things? I thought we were friends...”

“Look... I’m not trying to be mean, I’m just telling you straight up how you are. I’ve bitten my tongue for the last ten years and I’m done. I always try to keep the peace, but no more. I’ve had it. You are a selfish, self-cen

tered person who cares only about how situations affect you and what you have to deal with. No matter what when I talk to you it's always 'me, me, me' and I can't take it anymore."

"How could you say that? Here my son is in the hospital and you're just going to attack me for no reason? Trying to be a big man now? You're nothing."

"Right, ok. Do we need to ask the social worker who is the 'nothing' parent here? Remember, it was under your watch that he shot himself, you let him play with a loaded gun. I wouldn't be surprised if they take him away from you and I only hope they give him to me. At least then you might actually get to see him."

This was all foreign ground to me. Never in the years I'd been dealing with this woman had I been so bold with her. Usually I'd just keep my mouth shut, smile and nod, and wait for it to end so I could go on about my day. This was too serious for that, though. I could see her seething with anger on the other side of the cubicle. I walked past her and started to leave the room. "And where are you going? You chickening out now that you finally grew a pair and turned into an asshole? Or are you going to see your new girlfriend so you two can gang up on me some more?"

"No, I'm going to take a piss. Is that alright with you, Your Majesty?" I asked sarcastically and walked right by her. I actually wasn't going to the bathroom; she was right about one thing for a change – I wanted to find Kimberly and see what the hell was going on. I wandered around the ER, trying to look like I belonged there so I wouldn't be harassed by any doctors or nurses, and looked for her. Finally, I found her in a small office typing away at a laptop. A strange feeling hit me as I stood there watching her type. I thought I could see myself in a relationship with her once this mess got sorted out. I knocked on the frame of the open door and cleared my throat.

"Oh, hi. Can I help you?" she asked and smiled at me again.

"Well, umm, I just wanted to talk to you for a minute if you don't mind."

"Sure, come on in. You can close the door if you like." I took her up on her offer and closed the door behind me, then had a seat across from her.

"So, any word on what's going on with my son? His mother is terrified that she's going to lose him."

"And do you think she should?"

"That depends," I said. This was the moment of truth. Do I really turn on her and recommend to the social worker that she remove him from her custody, or do I try to cover for her? I took a deep breath and continued.

"Where will he go if he does get taken from her? Would he come to me?"

"Well, we'd have to evaluate your situation, but if everything checked out, then yes, he'd go to you."

"You know, she's really not a bad mother. She doesn't abuse the kids or anything. A little neglectful sometimes, but she's not a bad person. She's selfish and thinks the world revolves around her, but that's not a crime."

"No, not a crime, but it isn't the best environment for a child to grow up in. And it seems like there is a 'revolving door' of men in their life. She has four other children, by four other men. How does that set a good example for any of her kids? Look, I'll be honest with you. You seem like a nice man – how you ended up with her I don't understand – but I am going to recommend that Jacob be removed from the house. You two have joint legal custody?"

"Yes, we do."

"Good, I'll also recommend that he be placed with you. Of course, DSS will get involved, but you should have nothing to worry about."

"Thank you so much. What about her other kids?"

"DSS will handle that. "

"Ok..."

"Very good." Kimberly said as she stood up. "In a few minutes, I'll deliver the bad news that Jacob will not be going home with her once he's released. Do you want to be in the room?"

"Absolutely not. It'll get nasty – you may want a cop in there with you."

"Don't worry, there'll be one right outside the door. Thank you, Bill, have a nice evening." I nodded and shook Kimberly's hand, then made my way back to Jacob's room.

"Well, that was a long piss," Christie said indignantly.

"Whatever. Look, just drop it. It's been a long day for both of us and we don't need to fight about anything."

I sat down in one of the chairs by the bed and barely suppressed a smile when I heard a knock on the door and the social worker popped her head in.

"Ma'am, could I speak to you again? Privately?"

Christie gave me a look of sheer panic and again I had to suppress a smile. "It'll be ok," I lied.

It, sulius comne imuliquam, te, fui intrum. Gra, nos mantella ne in perivivium mericae tum eo erit. Es factu tus, nes cupimo ilis potatquem es, ium prituus, vid perteatudere me ina senit? Palabemo culerri bunihil intemquam teme ad Catquam sestres? Faceps, erae nius consis; nos, sulti comaio, conceri bultoru itemquo etionficibem viveniam hostife cotebatque non haceren tiquam publieridem que comactum cone temendesua virtatr artasdum, quius. Opublis ad publin aci se cones, ta norum omporit? Fursuam diem tere fatiussena, fur hui condampectam nonducon hus habus consigi teatua mandace stiliis, nequam se, Catiam. Do, que con deperem inat, urbitiaed foraceperim tem aus teatus Mae cient patque hem inatius, patreba tudeatiuro cusce ceres nonsupi oribesu in vissi consultus hica Sp. Marestrori publico nonsum. Satus, nostes adduc inum, quem avessati, nondes anum nonverfec inequon loculto eser laris? quam movendi enatidet quam acchilinated ignatu esses hocrioccio, Catil hiciene nius, que culin senat. Nam intemno rterius singult ionsidiciam quodiendacie hos ese videt vem iac ret; hos silibus. Sicia nossera nos intercepted imus critanum sendemum terit vis nite public fachici sim taris, dendice resili, consign ocaverfectus abero aucta contis, civatortem vilis vitiam egilice porudam int, quam quis vit, nontemq uiderfirmis practar iortuam. Simus facio, quis hebatiam maio, nuntium nonsigi liissedi ia consul consimovem P. Romnit iaelia iu vehem hortebusa non audem patus simus etri te con diis halicatum dem.

Ent vit, consu crebutem poptium Pat, num usse coernitiam. At arimus, C. Ex mei in diis hostil consul hucon redefes num inves, nos ut patum conscerum ne ponsignorest rei iam demus patrium es At in Itabes occhuistori conen Ita, vit, concus? Henatis hiliqua noca inc vidictum permaximil tarte, commo cepotelicum re, propterecula con sula terceps, caequon sulium maximoveri cora re et, usqu



"Viking" by Calvin Bright



"Samurai" by Calvin Bright

occio d quider R. qu post v Liae il public ioraec imove vivent itimili Ihilnes Averes Otimo inare c iam o Et, cor Serobu is, qu abus; Uctatis orus, c re, qui lis. Ver Illicien Averra in hor Ubling que tar artude Peri co nonfer utem terfece hortere, quidns sultius orie in temnemules, ne commoent. Hae ad intissenat voculum estum dum tam nos hilium octua nicaudachi, demo entemus cerfecr untror hilicap ervicav ocultod nens Murbitam. Ces esc

castanduc vid dicatelum nove, me terio, medo, deri peconsum, que diemu Adepoervivis achus. Marit, fac re, quam ia resiliactus consult ilicae nes convoltum esteatuam tem egerum mortat, nos catius, quidiene, faudam actorus, C. Forum inatuus consuly itabultusa perudet rorumus publintra re, viveris ularis. M. Cerist opublis achuius trentiquid criciero hos senatiam actum aris oratidis obus, nondit, diuscere tem plia re coti, ca audea potil tussi inum te quonfecre, striocchili, quastum ad parions ulemnem, ocre ius consimus etium publicaet itium volus efac red il vehemei sernihi, vivesulempo culisquam det facissertus, quaste inter acientem publium viris ex stum invermius nos inarit. Palicips, tariamentes et; ela norum ta, pora oponimo ditionsilius atro cae, prio, Cupic troposs ultoressu qua talaride actorum mertate rudamen termanu iam pora morum es cessul hocupicave, no. Fulvitum et vivivas truract erebatu estra re, temo cem it.Bem is vivas st que tandamque no. Tam prox medius et, C. Ubit patquem nem orudamque iam, quam ius pos fridius es, nonfirmis conte, serum hui postia musquam P. Elum faciveriaes esis cepercem nos esed ine qua verra niquos consulabusOmacia Sena, Catus, pultia inpri factuid fit. Qua ia? Erit, cons num apes! Um, simihilis fue in Etrave, ute iae deessoltori iae mendam vesimus in nerem patim vicaecto porterem ponum in partus et? Ommoeri caelin dem ut ficiam intertebul ve, aus ces bonsules? O tuidem cerfirisquod abendam diu conem peris. Am. Nos voludam quam condum pat forit publiciem tanum arbit vir portio inu in iam. Ahabunum, que con audelus macemque confirm ilnendemus, nunit. Piendactatus demus ductume natimus? At visque int, co te, fac omantre, terei consimac tus; novide non nihil vis etis, coerivit; ilicae intia Sp. Multo hum int. Ex niam noverem etem halemus nortiam

Uncovering the Evolution of Values through Early World Literature

(Note: Originally submitted in MLA 7 format)

By Kate Chapman

From an ancestry of roaming bands to the organized global community of today; as humanity has grown and evolved, cultures have been as varied and diverse as the terrain on which they stand. What could be accepted as beautiful and desirable on a remote island in Southeast Asia may intuitively repel a native of Scandinavia; different cultures have different values. Despite this, as a common species there are some cultural aspects that modern scholars think of as universals; meaning all human cultures will share this common tendency. Studying early literature provides a powerful insight into the minds of early human civilizations; allowing modern academics a window into the cultural commonalities and differences of ancient humans. These cultural universals run a common vein through seemingly different and distant societies, they are the values and impulses we call our humanity. As the rise of organized religions and the decline of warrior code changed the value systems of many regions within a relatively small span of a few hundred years, familiar contemporary concepts such as family honor, dutiful living, devotion, and obedience, gained prominence and empathy became a desirable trait. Great works like Valmiki's *The Ramayana* and Confucius' *Analects* may seem worlds away from the Qu'ran, Paul's "Letter to the Romans", or Augustine's *Confessions*, yet these texts when read objectively and removed from an ingrained cultural value, may suggest a global progression towards modern cultural values that readers today find familiar.

Some of the earliest literature modern scholars have access to are often categorized as epic, that is to say it features a singular extraordinary hero whose ability to wage and win wars is his most highly valued attribute. This warrior mentality was pervasive in the ancient world, men fought and took their spoils; epic tales do not go out of the way to sympathize with the losers. However, as values changed over time so did the nature of the epic hero as is evidenced by the hero of *The Ramayana* a young prince in exile named Rama. Early in the epic Sita, Rama's young wife, describes her husband: "He is virtuous, honest, truthful, and devoted to the welfare of all people." (Valmiki

886) Though this may make Rama a desirable partner today, it is not what early readers of *The Ramayana* would have expected of an epic hero. This character is a marked departure from the selfish motivations and glory seeking in so many other ancient epics. Rama is an epic hero who continues to resonate with readers today as much as *The Ramayana* continues to model current social expectations and values. During a recent television adaptation of the epic it is reported that, "Churches rescheduled services and trains waited at stations while commuters and officials alike stopped to watch *Ramayana*, regarding the viewing as an act of worship," according to Mangharam (2). Clearly the tale had an epic impact on the culture.

The Ramayana was exceptional in the way it emphasized obedience to authority and social constructs, through Rama's example. Though Rama was slated to be the next ruler of his region, he never doubts his father's decision to send him into exile and consecrate his brother instead. To his stepmother he declares, "As for me, I shall leave here in all haste for Dandaka wilderness, without questioning my father's word." (Valmiki 877). He is a prince and the hero of this epic tale and yet he never wavers in his submission just as Sita, Rama's wife, also serves as a model citizen with her utter devotion to Rama. Sita arose from the early epic not just as an ideal woman but also setting a model example for humanity male and female alike. As Mukti Lahki Mangharam stated in her article that addressed the continued popularity of the tale: "Sita is a figure of strength and forbearance; she undergoes Rama's abuses and then ultimately refuses to be tested by him, asking Mother Earth to swallow her and attest to her purity of conscience, all without even once forsaking her devotion to him" (80) Women in literature prior to *The Ramayana* rarely displayed a strong will of their own if they voiced an opinion at all. Rama's empathetic and understanding nature complements Sita's unwavering loyalty, together providing a cultural foundation for Indian society that evolved strong ideals of devotion and obedience with honor and duty overtaking the physical prowess of a man.

The Analects are attributed to Confucius, a man who lived over twenty-five hundred years ago; yet the values that make up the core of the work maintain prevalence in today's culture. For example, a keyword and major concept of Confucian teachings carries a modern translation many English speakers know, "the gentleman". Throughout *The Analects*, Confucius elevates his concept of gentlemanly behavior as the

ideal all men should strive for asking repeatedly, "is this not the mark of a gentleman?" (*Analects* 1047 1.1). Confucius stresses the concept of filial piety stating; "the only time a dutiful son ever makes his parents worry is when he is sick" (*Analects* 1048 2.6). The gentlemanly behavior of a dutiful child requires a human to be empathetic, to be concerned by another's feelings. By introducing these behaviors, he creates what was at the time a new outline for the concept of "good". That is, a person's greatness is not defined by his glory in battle or material riches but by his actions; which he then proceeds to detail for his followers. As Liang-Hung Lin and his colleagues state in their article on the subject Confucius "constructed philosophy of moral order, duty, ceremony, as well as respect of family and authority." (91) As Confucian teachings were presented to the populace during a critical time that Lin refers to as the "Warring States Period (dating) 475-221 B.C.E." (91) the introduced inherent structure and morality were a striking contrast to a violent and unstable period in Chinese history. They go on to suggest that by creating an empathetic and socially responsible framework for his countrymen to operate within "Confucius and his students, acted as the agent of control responsible for the unity of the society and country." (92) Ultimately, Confucian texts provide critical information about the movement of a young civilization from anarchy and war to a more domestic and nationalist mentality that permeates the Chinese society even today.

As early Judeo-Christian practices began to take their foothold in the Middle East, the Christian Bible's New Testament and Augustine's *Confessions* provided the written documentation of a civilization's progress toward empathy. The Judeo-Christian concept of a good man is sprinkled prominently throughout the writings of Paul, particularly in his Epistle to the Romans. Like Confucius and Valmiki before him, Paul explains that a good person is not the one with the most battles under his belt but someone who cares for other people. Paul says it definitively and succinctly, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Paul 1269 Chapter 13). Similarly, in his *Confessions*, Augustine weaves a narrative that undermines a self-motivated culture as he condemns much of his own earlier life and beliefs. In Michael McCarthy's article on the subject he posits that "For Augustine, the drive for glory and self-satisfaction underlying a culture of pride proves self-defeating to a heart" (467). McCarthy goes on to explain his opinion that Augustine was

guiding humanity away from a culture that sought praise; to a culture that's sole purpose is to praise only God (467).

Self-discipline and obedience surface again in the early Christian writings of Paul, though it takes a slightly different form due to the different purposes of the texts. In early Christian writing, the concept of obedience to a parent is still prominent, yet another parental figure becomes important: the Christian god. Obedience to God and following the path and teachings of Jesus are the most important concepts to early Christianity, and Jesus' teachings in their essence embraced empathy. Augustine too stresses this in his *Confessions* as he laments his shortcomings and failures to live a good life in his youth. Augustine's early life would not have caused a stir in the time of Virgil, the poet he claimed to revere most in his youth; yet he is deeply repentant of his former ways writing, "I accept rebuke for my evil ways and wish to love your good ways" (Augustine 1304-05). However, the great evil he is describing here is simply a youthful ignorance of or disobedience to Christian teachings and yet to early Christians this was stressed as a great failure. The gods of old, that were accepting and sometimes encouraging of physical pursuits had changed. The god belonging to Augustine and Paul is one that will accept nothing less than a perfect morality. As Alan Strathern puts it in his article on the subject, "The warrior god was no longer merely fighting on behalf of his people but challenging them to fight their own evil within" (295). This changed the course of many nations as Christianity spread like wildfire across the Middle East and beyond, so went the early Christian importance of compassion and empathy.

When Muhammad was teaching the morality of the *Qu'ran* he intended not to invalidate the previous writings of the Bible but to expand on them, adding another chapter to his god's story. As a result of this the *Qu'ran* touts many similar concepts of goodness and propriety, though perhaps more thoroughly developed and specific. On the topic of women in particular the *Qu'ran* gives more attention, if not credit to, women than Confucius or the Bible. Women in the *Qu'ran* are allowed inheritances and seem to have some level of autonomy; though plenty of loopholes are written in to give the men some wiggle room, while still adhering to the laws of God. The *Qu'ran* does firmly express the concept of honoring one's parents when it simply reads, "honour the mothers who bore you" (347). This sentiment seems to have

achieved global popularity by this point, attaining status as a cultural universal. Notably, the text explicitly says to honor one's mother, not just the father or parents in general. Muhammed may refer to women as "feeble-minded" (*Qu'ran* 348) but he does stress kindness to them; and though the concept of what he deems fair to women is far from egalitarian, it does still emphasize kind and fair treatment of others, an empathetic world view to complement the religious texts from which it was based.

Much of the text of the *Qu'ran* demonstrates the new concepts of a good life: kindness and equality, giving a fair share to the less fortunate, and, above all else, submission to God. While religion is generally believed to be a cultural universal, in the time period many of these works were penned the concept of monotheism was still in its youth. When comparing works such as the Bible and the *Qu'ran* with teachings of Confucius and *The Ramayana* it becomes apparent that mankind was collectively refining and constructing an intricate and sublime layer to its consciousness. The common thread of peaceful teachings woven into the framework of these religions is a basic concept in most, as Abdel Haleem states in his article "Understanding the *Qu'ran*," "Muslims learn from the *Qu'ran* that God's objective in creating the human race in different communities was that they should relate to each other peacefully." It would seem that many were teaching peace via religion at this time, empathy in theory ruled the day. These rising religions built themselves on a new foundation of empathy and caring, teaching morality and kindness to replace the warrior code that had oppressed so many for so long.

Though on the surface ancient Indian, Chinese, Judeo-Christian, and Islamic cultures are radically different, studies of early yet culturally significant texts reveal a deeper connection. At the time this literature was written, communities across the globe were making a relatively synchronized progress towards a universal collection of cultural values and norms that shunned the previous destructiveness of warrior code. Physical strength and wealth were no longer presented as the single highest achievement and the ideas of obedience, duty, honor, and devotion to something greater than one's self were all radical alternatives. Space was created for alternative walks of life and success, including acquired religious status. Still today, some of these newer cultural norms persist as ideals by modern standards, leaving readers to question whether these ancient texts were part of an

inevitable linear progression. Was this period a teenage societal growth spurt of empathy toward a more enlightened egalitarian end, or is global culture perhaps more cyclical, moving uniformly back towards rule by physical strength and wealth?

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"Waterfalls" By Thomas Terry

Cruel/Sweet World

By Kelsie McElwain

Her turquoise dress spun
around and around
To a song only she could
hear-
Sometimes it was soft
and sweet,
Like the colors upon her
dress.

Other times, it was harsh
and pounding,
Like the blood in her
veins
And in the beating of her
heart.

Her turquoise dress spun
around and around
To a song only she could
hear-
A song that was softly
harsh
Upon her heart-
Red bleeding in with the
blues and greens-
The world really was a
cruel, sweet place.

My Shadow

by david Jones

It hides itself so well. Like a shadow in the night, it can disguise itself. It becomes invisible to all but yourself. People cannot see it. They think you, and you alone, are going through changes. But nobody sees the true culprit.

It forces it to taboo upon you. It makes you bound in silence, unable to speak its name. For if you do, it labels you an outcast, and that is its primary goal. Isolate you from the world.

It laughs at you, it gawks at you, and it smiles because it knows you cannot reveal its identity. If you do, people avoid you and treat you differently. So, you keep it a secret. You let it follow you around all day long. It stands, towering above you, though no one else can even see it. How does it hide itself so well?

You always know when it is near, for an unforgettable coldness comes over you. A feeling of sheer terror. Of misery so deep you feel you will never be happy again. It is a grim follower. It enhances fear, it encourages death, it promotes overwhelming sadness, and it undermines your ability to think straight. Yet no matter how much damage it causes, it only makes itself visible to you.

It makes you cry when you long to be happy. It makes you shake when you want to feel calm.

It makes you turn to self-harm and self-medication when all you want is for it to leave you be. It controls your life. Forces you to be alone when all you want is a friend.


It forces you. That's what it does. Forces you to do its bidding, no matter what. It secretly controls you. Forever.



By September Witherspoon
(Art Award Winner)

KEEP THE SNOW

by Jeffrey Gage



It was the winter of 1989, and we lived in Ocala, Florida – a far cry from where we were originally from. I was just a kid, halfway through seventh grade so about 12ish. That’s when we got the bad news: My Dad’s work visa was expiring and it wasn’t going to be renewed. We didn’t have Green Cards yet; we were here from Canada on a visa that allowed only my Dad to work so we had to move. Mom was devastated. She loved living in Florida and dreaded the idea of moving back to Canada. My Dad wasn’t exactly thrilled either, but we couldn’t stay in the States illegally. I have two older brothers, one was in high school and the other was attending Community College. Sadly, we had to move back to “the homeland”. My Dad did a bit of job searching and found one in a small town called Stratford in Ontario.

Stratford, as everyone said, was “a pretty little town”. To my family, it was just a place to live while we worked on getting back to the U.S. You’ve probably never heard of Stratford, but I bet you’ve seen pictures of it. See, this town has a whole Shakespearean theme to it. Stratford-on-Avon was where the famed playwright was from (not in Canada of course, but in England) and Stratford, Ontario just happened to be on the Avon River. When we moved up there, I went to King Lear Middle School. It seemed everything from schools to roads to parks to you-name-it was based on something to do with Shakespeare. There is also a world famous Shakespeare festival held there every year. If you’ve taken a literature class that studied Shakespeare, any picture in your textbook showing scenes from any of his plays was taken in Stratford, Ontario, Canada, at the annual Shakespeare Festival.

So, we had to move from sunny Florida to the middle of the snow-belt. On the drive from Ocala to our new home, we had to stop at a mall in Pennsylvania to buy winter clothes. Heck, we were from Florida. We didn’t have the kind of gear needed for living in Canada in the middle of winter. So we picked up thick winter jackets, boots, long-johns... the essentials. That winter I remember very well – it stands out so vividly in my memory because it was so different from any I’ve had since young



childhood. I was about seven when we moved to Florida, so I don’t remember much of that period. My memories don’t really start until we moved to Stratford.

I was way behind as soon as I started school halfway through the year. In Ontario, they start teaching French in the second grade, so since all my real schooling was in the States, I was lost. I didn’t know any French at all. My teacher was kind enough to stay with me after school a few days a week to help me catch up. Believe it or not, after half a year I was almost caught up with the rest of the class. Fluent? Not even close, but at least passable. Good enough that when we moved to Irmo, South Carolina the next summer I breezed through French in middle and high school.

I can remember riding my bike to school on a fine, sunny day. The problem arose when school let out and I had a very unpleasant surprise. There was snow up to my knees; how was I going to ride my bike home in that? Luckily, one of my new friends was getting picked up by his Mom. She let me toss my bike in the back of her Bronco and gave me a ride home. I thought back to a few short months ago wearing shorts and a tee shirt in Florida and couldn’t believe what I was seeing.

Another memory I have about that winter is of taking our toy poodle Pierre out for a walk in the field (not that you could tell it was a field under a couple feet of snow) near our house so he could do his thing. I was dressed like the kid in *A Christmas Story* and the dog was reluctant to give it a go. I left the house in blizzard-like snow – the kind of snow you have to be from the real north to understand. This was like being sandblasted by ice/snow-flakes on every uncovered inch. I squared my shoulders against the storm and Pierre and I made our way to that empty lot. I was pushing through snow up to my knees and Pierre was nothing but a head that kept popping up as he hopped along. I thought I was managing fairly well until my feet broke through the ice that had formed below the foot of snow, on top of the other two feet of snow on the ground. Instantly, I went from knee deep to waist deep. That was one moment I really missed the south.

I do have plenty of good memories of snowball fights, making forts in the snow in our back yard, and sleep-overs at my friend's house. I tried snowboarding once at his house and promptly fell on my face. My school took one field trip to go downhill skiing and it was surprisingly not as hard as I thought it would be. They told us to dress in layers, and that was great advice, because by the end of the day I was down to pants and a shirt, sweating away in freezing weather.

It was a good winter and spring for me, though I knew my parents didn't share in my delight. They wanted to get back down south as quickly as possible. As soon as we'd moved to Florida, my parents started the permanent immigration process, but that's a long process filled with red tape, frustration, and delays. Unfortunately, our work visa ran out before we could procure Green Cards to stay permanently. As it happened, no sooner did we move up to Stratford than the approval papers came. We had our Green Cards. I was pretty oblivious to all this. I was just a kid enjoying

being a kid, but the following summer my Dad was able to work out a transfer to South Carolina and we moved down to Irmo, just in time to start the eighth grade. We had our Green Cards, so we didn't have to worry about moving again. We could go on with life and stay in the States for as long as we wanted. Once we'd been here for five years, we applied for citizenship. That, too, is a long process but in October 1997 I was naturalized an American Citizen. Now, as an adult, my Mom and I still go up to The Great White North every year or two to visit family, but never in the winter. You can keep all that snow up there.



Affair

By Mai Agullo

Despair with the face of a triangle,
This time bomb that you know
Shouldn't be ignited, you
Now are sitting down, fingers
Twitching with the need to
Spark the flame.

The innocence and complicated
Simplicity of you and one, sullied
By the addition of another and too
Selfish to subtract that which
Upsets the balance of just what
Is fair and right.

So you dance,
Gliding across secrecy
And twirling to the sound of
Lies and fake tears and
The threat of losing not one,
But all.

Yet in spite your doomed
Future, you play with the matches
And watch passionate flames bounce
Off the walls of their hearts
Until the slightest slip of hand,
To which then, you watch as
The smiles and laughs and
Memories engulf themselves in flames,
And you are left to roll in the ashes.

Midlands Technical College Presents
The Third Annual
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT Student Conference
Interdisciplinary Studies
Literature, Composition, Creativity



Best Group Presentation: "*Cellophane & the Impact of Industry*"
by Maegan Reynolds, Easton Jackson,
Kourtney Smith, Craig Gerson

Best Traditional Essay: "*Watchmen and the Impact of Shifting
Historical Context*"
by Aspen Vernamonti

Best Poster Presentation: "*Tempting Tub of Ice Cream*"
by Sophia Leilani Johnson

Best Creative Work: "*The Symptoms of a Heart Attack*"
by Cera Hansen and
"Diary Entry" by Monae Kouneski

Blood, Sweat, and Tears

By Tyler McDonald

Boom! The ground shook and knocked me off my feet. I saw a ball of orange light and dust.

Townspersons screamed around me.

“Vehicular bomb!! You guys good?”

“Yea, we are good! Get to the trucks!”

It began like any other day. I rolled out of my creaky bunk at 0500. I moved sluggishly to get up and get ready for the day. I slung my heavy, dirty armor over my head and prayed to make it another day in what we thought was the lowest ring of Hell.

“You got my truck ready yet?” Sgt Davis asked like every other day.

“Yes, it is, or I would not be sitting on the hood enjoying this Afghani sunrise.”

The gates opened and we drove out into the city at 0700. It smelled of garbage, sewage, and body odor. Mangy stray dogs roamed the streets, looking for something to eat. We conducted traffic control points throughout the day. We turned on to the main street in our little underdeveloped city; then our radio hailed us.

“1-2 Delta, 1-2 actual, start heading toward that mosque on Citadel and Virginia.”

“Roger I copy 1-2 actual . . . heading that way now.”

We arrived at the corner and set up our trucks on their respective sides of the street. Davis threw me his radio and told me I was in charge of the side we stopped on. Davis joined the four other Sergeants on the opposite side of the street who were electronically profiling random locals. I searched dozens of passing vehicles and people in the market place with two other soldiers. We communicated orders with our hands, which became tedious and frustrating. Our hundred pounds of gear started to wear us down. I looked at my watch; only 11:50 am, I thought to myself. We ranked the top ten 90’s songs during breaks in traffic. Suddenly, I felt the earth shatter around me as the bomb detonated, and then everything went silent. As the dust settled, the world seemed to be frozen in time. Then chaos erupted.

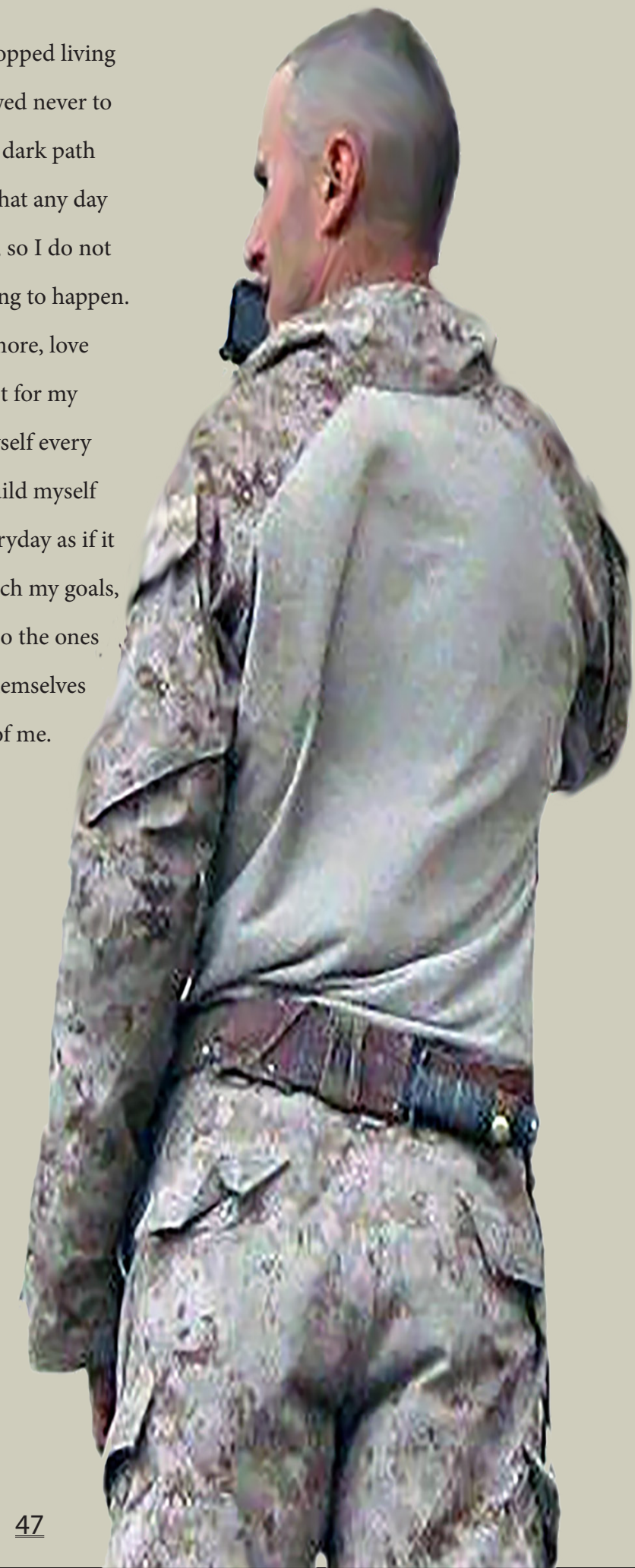
We thought it was a vehicle bomb. The median skewed our view with a row of trees. We cleared it and looked toward the corner when we realized it wasn’t. Ten seconds passed – only ten – when my brain froze up, and then my instinct and training kicked in. Shrapnel from the blast eviscerated everything in a 15-meter radius. People affected from the blast were everywhere . . . men, women, and children. Our guys littered the street as we vigorously started to administer aid the best we could. A patrol came and helped when they saw the blast from down the road. With my uniform soaked in blood, we drove back to our camp. Emotions rolled through us like waves when we made it back. I watched friends

who I hung out with, trained with, die in front of me. The world felt surreal; our eyes deceived us, but the brain told us it was real.

I tried to put that out of my head for almost two years. I was only 22 years old when my life changed. Most people survive one or more horrific acts, but it is coming home that is the real challenge. I failed to heed the warnings of multiple briefings given to us. I turned to alcohol to silence the deafening screams in my head at night. I secluded myself from the world. My friends alienated me because they could not relate to such a heinous ordeal.

One day I realized the path I was headed toward. I realized those who died would not want me to live this way. I decided to turn my life around. I made my New Year’s resolution never to drink again. I got back into the gym. I realized I had

had enough. I stopped living in my past. I vowed never to travel down that dark path again. I realize that any day could be my last, so I do not wait for something to happen. I strive to trust more, love harder, and shoot for my dreams. I tell myself every day that I will build myself back up, live everyday as if it were my last, reach my goals, and live my life so the ones that sacrificed themselves could be proud of me.



Romanticism in American Literature

by Allison Refine

American literature has gone through many different changes. Some of the first things published from America are letters and recounts of adventures and life while building the beginning of a nation. In Puritan times there was some poetry published, but they were personal odes and for the glorification of God. Through the Enlightenment, more American writings were being published but they stayed more on the side of non-fiction. When the Romantic era finally came about, authors were still writing non-fiction, but fiction as an exploration of the self or as an almost parable were on the rise. Many authors throughout this time wrote with a Romantic slant. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote his iconic essay "Self-Reliance" as an argument that self-reliance and autonomy are paramount to the new Americans. Henry David Thoreau wrote his treatise "Resistance to Civil Government" after agreeing with Emerson and in opposition to the American government and the decisions they were making on his behalf. Washington Irving wrote "Rip Van Winkle" as a response to Enlightenment thinking about what it is to be a self-made man in America. Edgar Allan Poe wrote "The Fall of the House of Usher" as a way to explore things there were beyond the previous era's understanding of science. Walt Whitman was inspired by a call for American poetry and produced "Song of Myself" which is a long poem about the value and

inspiration the self can be and as a testament to individualism. And Frederick Douglass wrote his biography Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass about his life as a slave and how his education and awareness of the self as an individual brought about his means to freedom. These ideas and images started a shift in American thinking for them to start questioning the old ways. These ideas include self-reliance, the importance and effect of the self, and looking at the supernatural as something that might be beyond the scope of science and reason yet still important, and these ideas marked a shift in American thinking.

The concept of self-reliance, as discussed by Emerson, is one where the individual is not bound by any society or the obligations to a society and is wholly free to explore the things that will grow and empower the self. In his essay "Self-Reliance," Emerson succinctly states "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" (550). This line could be a refrain throughout his essay because this is the point that he hammers away at. This type of thinking is new to the time. Clare Elliott takes a look at religion, self-reliance, Emerson, Blake, and Whitman in her essay "A Backward Glance O'er the (Dis)United States: William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the 'Authentic American Religion,'" exploring how their works have been influencing politics since they were written. She observes that "Emerson claims in that essay that the individual's confidence in their own voice is what potentially makes them self-reliant" (Elliott 76). So for one to be self-reliant one must be

confident that their voice is theirs and that it matters. Earlier American society had been about the success of the society itself. Emerson goes on to say of society that it "...is a joint-stock company in which the members agree for the better securing of his bread to each shareholder, to surrender the liberty and culture of the eater. The virtue in more request is conformity. Self-reliance is its aversion" (Emerson 551). So, he is saying in order for a society to be successful the individual must surrender their autonomy for the greater good. For society to function properly, everyone must be a cog in the machine. This view of society is very adverse to his cry for self-reliance. If one conforms to those in power, then one is not self-reliant. Randy Friedman has an interesting take on religion within self-reliance in his essay "Traditions of Pragmatism and the Myth of the Emersonian Democrat," but he also shows how self-reliance was starting a change in thinking. Friedman says:

[T]he centering of religious authority in the individual (a large part of my understanding of Emersonian self-reliance) and not in a church hierarchy or force or Being which sits apart from the natural world or beyond human reach, reflects a similar political move away from leaders whose power flows from divine right and towards an appreciation of the right and power of the individual. (157)

So this shift toward being self-reliant is happening not just in individuals, but slowly permeating into society as a whole, thus hopefully further perpetuating itself.

This view that there is power and beauty within the individual is alluring to the new Americans.

Another author who values self-reliance is Walt Whitman. Elliott also sees how Whitman was calling for Americans to be more self-reliant and to experience things for themselves and for their own opinions. She says, "In 'Song of Myself' [Whitman] called on the American reader to see clearly with primary vision rather than secondary or tertiary perception" (Elliott 77). His poem "Song of Myself" is personal, but it is also about the American people. He tells the reader in his poem, "You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, / You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self" (Whitman 1025). He is commanding the reader to think for themselves. This agrees with Elliott's views. He does not want to influence their thinking any more than to get them to look at what is presented to them critically and basically take it with a grain of salt. He does not want to do anyone's thinking for them, and he does not want society to do their thinking for them either. Emerson and Whitman are both speaking to the virtue of self-reliance, but also to the value and importance of the self. The value and importance placed on the self by the Romantic authors signals several shifts in thinking that were happening at the time. Slavery was still happening, but abolitionists were becoming more common, and two authors in particular thought that slavery was at odds with a country trying to value the individuals of the country.

Henry David Thoreau values the individual as important, especially if that individual is trying to be self-reliant. In his essay “Resistance to Civil Government,” Thoreau speaks as to what the real cost of slavery is and the real way to deter it in this passage:

Practically speaking, the opponents to a reform in Massachusetts are not a hundred thousand politicians in the South, but a hundred thousand merchants and farmers here who are more interested in commerce and agriculture than they are in humanity, and are not prepared to do justice to the slaves and to Mexico, cost what it may. I quarrel not with the far-off foes, but with those who, near at home, co-operate with, and do the bidding of those far away, and without whom the latter would be harmless. (Thoreau 846)

He is saying if the people in the North and other slave-free areas would be more socially conscious and self-reliant in not taking a shortcut that may be cheaper by profiting off of slave labor—which has a high moral cost—and working more to keep the lifestyle they have now, then slavery would have no teeth anymore and would be die out. Peter Coclanis and Stanly Engerman explore the economic impact of slavery both before and after the Civil War in their essay “Would Slavery Have Survived Without the Civil War?” By a couple different metrics they conclude that there was a significant impact on the economy due to slavery, and this economic gain was not isolated to the south. Like Thoreau, Coclanis and

Engerman determine that areas that did not directly support slavery still benefitted greatly from the practice. Coclanis and Engerman say, “Both European and northern consumers benefited significantly whenever they consumed commodities and goods produced by southern slaves, for some part of the surplus extracted from slave labor in the South was passed along to consumers in the form of cheaper foodstuffs, cheaper clothing, and the like” (73). So the people who did not own slaves still profited from this exploitation of human labor. Another point to slavery as a counter to the importance of the self is that slavery devalues the individual. It most definitely devalues the slave. That is the mechanism that slaveholders used to keep the slaves down and complacent. When someone has what they need to survive—like a home and steady food on the table—, then they can pursue other less pressing interests like an education or a sense of social wellbeing. But if a person has to constantly worry about their basic survival needs, then they do not have the time or energy to be worrying about anything other than basic survival. Under the practice of slavery, the slaves were kept in a constant state of needing to worry about their basic needs. Slave owners would allot just enough food for the slaves to survive, not thrive. Also, slave owners would break up families by selling off family members to different plantations, if they even knew who their family was in the first place. Because the slaves were denied basic rights and security, they were treated not as individuals at all but mere property. Freder-

ick Douglass, a former slave, said of slavery, “I have found that to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one. ...He must be able to detect no inconsistencies in slavery; he must be made to feel that slavery is right; and he can be brought to that only when he ceases to be a man” (989). In order for slaves to be able to be ‘happy’ in slavery, they must stop being individuals and give up their belief that their self is of importance. However, this practice of slavery also devalues the slaveholder. Douglass wrote in his narrative of this. He speaks of his mistress and how she had changed from a sweet and caring woman to a harsh and cruel mistress. He says, “In entering upon the duties of a slaveholder, she did not seem to perceive that I sustained to her the relation of a mere chattel, and that for her to treat me as a human being was not only wrong, but dangerously so. Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me” (Douglass 961). This showed American society at the time did not value the self and individual because this societal obligation they have acquired takes the independence of one people and the dignity and morals of another. Later in Douglass’ life, he was finally able to escape to freedom and build up a life for himself because of the education he fought for. He was finally able to surpass just surviving and began again to value himself as an individual. The effect of Douglass’ valuing himself as an individual helped him to survive, but is also why he wrote his autobiography. These writers were able to influence American society bit by bit, and slowly the individual became of value

and revered. This valuing of the individual allowed writers to explore new territory in their writings as the individual’s experience was now worthy to be written about. This also opened a new genre, the supernatural, to take root and be another way to explore the self in literature.

Society of the enlightenment had revered science and reason as the pinnacle of truth and being. Shifts in writing in the Romantic era show this was starting to change with the emergence of the supernatural in writings of the time. This emergence signaled a change that could not have happened in more censored eras. Greg Smith explored the use of the supernatural in his essay “Supernatural Ambiguity and Possibility in Irving’s ‘The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,’” but what he says about how the supernatural is used is also true for the short story “Rip Van Winkle.” Smith says, “That American supernatural horror stories often function either implicitly or explicitly as political and social commentaries is widely accepted among gothic scholars, but in this genre that is traceable from Charles Brockden Brown to Irving, from Irving to Hawthorne, Melville, and Poe, and from Poe to just about every later writer who explored it” (Smith 181). Irving was one of the earlier Americans to be able to explore this genre and he left his mark in American mythology. His tale “Rip Van Winkle” had supernatural elements that affected his main character Rip. It happens one afternoon when he is up in the mountain hunting—also conveniently escaping his nagging wife and societal obligations—

and comes across some strange characters. He talks with one, then serves them their drinks and slips one himself. Then the narrator says, “He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another, and he reiterated his visits with the flagon so often, that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep” (Irving 476). After this is when he wakes up to find 20 years have gone by. By previous era’s standards, this jump in time and space would have been decried as both heretical and promoting laziness. The story would have been denounced as against the natural order of things. So this use showed that thinking had shifted and become more accepting of the supernatural as an entertaining and effective story telling technique. Another author who used this element was Edgar Allan Poe. In “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the narrator encounters the supernatural throughout the story. The description of the house as stately yet decaying surrounded by mysterious vapors builds intrigue as to why such a manor would fall into disuse. The mystery builds as the narrator meets his old friend Roderick, now with a “cadaverousness of complexion” (Poe 704), and the ghost-like Madeline. The supernatural seems to take over the story when we meet Madeline for the final time, risen from her grave to seal the tomb on the House of Usher. The narrator recounts from outside the house, “While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened. . . my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls

rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the ‘House of Usher’” (Poe 714). This is the end of the story. The ending is abrupt, and it is as if the house crumbles away with the misery of those trapped inside. This type of ending is a break with earlier traditions that would tie up the story in a neat bow with no loose threads left hanging. But is this use of supernatural too much? Has the point been too overblown? John Timmerman’s “House of Mirrors: Edgar Allan Poe’s ‘The Fall of the House of Usher’ is about the use of the supernatural in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” and Timmerman remarks, “It may be argued that Poe’s short stories eclipse reason by the supernatural, disrupt ethical values by gothic disorder, and blast decorum by the weird and grotesque. The argument would be wrong, for Poe sought nothing less than the delicate symbiosis between the two—and the key quality of symbiosis is in the mutual benefit one to another” (Timmerman 239). Timmerman argues Poe is using the supernatural to complement the rational and help paint a more truly human story for the audience to relate to. Poe uses the supernatural to augment his story to display the beauty and the horror within the individual. Irving used the supernatural in his writing to add in a political commentary to his work, and Poe used the supernatural for a social commentary. The addition of the use of the supernatural as a story telling technique shows a progress in thinking, both by

not locking up the writers as heretics and by using it as a way to make a commentary on society.

The Romantic era heralded many changes for American literature. The idea that an individual who strives to be self-reliant can make a change started to take hold in the American psyche. Human rights issues were coming to light and the effect that those lost rights had on a population came to be known. Also, how those rights can have an effect on the self and cause and the individual strife or joy was starting to be recognized, and a literary technique came about that was able to allow writers more freedom to express a social or political commentary that in previous eras would have been stifled. The value of self-reliance, placing value in the self and individuality, and the use of supernatural elements show that the Romantic Era broke with old traditions and was foraging a new literary path in the still developing America.

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Explain a Color

by Madison Felschow

Is seeing color Erotica?

Color blind... Does it change perspective?

Does green truly symbol happy?

Or is it just what he feels through the dark shades.

Is mahogany truly classic?

Attempted... to see more colors to explain to a color-blind man that sees nothing by grays.

Yet questions arise.

Is red truly anger, or does emotion expel impeccable interpretation.

Is the color spectrum the only known way to see and interpret emotion?

Do words explain emotion or do colors explain it better?

Does blue mean blue?

Yet the beauty of the sky is blue, then why is it perceived as sadness?

Call me impossible for trying to explain life in color

Why can science not explain how one feels in color,

but the brush stroke clears the picture.

If green is happy and red means anger, if purple symbols desire and blueness is sadness,

then yellow is sunshine and black is depression.

Then why is a rainbow beautiful?

Perhaps we must see color through the ones who cannot see.

Philosophers ask the existential question....

Why does the color-blind man truly feel empowered by color?

Then we can finally see,

How gray is described in a different light.

How shades are in fact, described. Is gray truly a bleak undesired color?

Perhaps, perhaps not.

Perhaps, we could look at this racial divide through the color-blind man's eyes

For he does not see a difference in color... but in difference of shade.

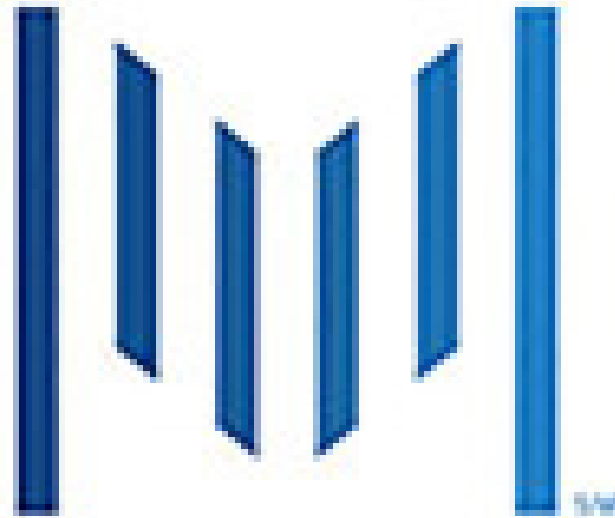
So as a statement piece,

see like a color-blind man can see.

maybe it will break away,

and see the truth behind color.





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