



spring 2016

The Wake Review

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

Mission Statement: The *Wake Review* is a student-run online creative journal at Wake Technical Community College which seeks to provide a forum for students of all majors, as well as faculty and alumni, to express themselves through literary and artistic means, including poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and visual or audio arts. We strive to encourage the study, composition, and appreciation of literature and art found at Wake Tech Community College and in surrounding communities.

Submission Policy: The *Wake Review* accepts submission of student work, including poetry, short fiction, screenplays, non-fiction (essays, reviews, etc.), art, photography, short films and audio files in the following categories: Poetry, Fiction, Non-fiction, Photography and Multimedia Arts. If you are interested in submitting your work to be published in the 2017 *Wake Review*, please visit our website for Submission Rules and Deadlines at www.tinyurl.com/wakereview.

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“What Makes Me a Woman” by Saadia Seyd
3rd Place Poetry

Sitting in the bed one idle afternoon, looking in the mirror,
I asked myself for a millionth time, what makes me a woman?

Is it the role of a daughter, mother, wife, and a sister?

A heart that is selfless, kind, unconditional,

Generous, a giving soul.

Beauty that embarrasses the moon, warmth that melts the snow, or passion brighter than the fire.

Or to have no desire of my own and no hopes that are mine.

Is it the unlived moments, unseen dreams,

Giving up my life and goals for the greater good, and

living the life chosen for me by the loved ones or beloved.

Is it the same epic, eternal question Eve asked when she looked at Adam, I thought.

My heart, as stubborn and childish as it is,

smiled and whispered to me, "all that makes you human."

You belong to yourself first; that's what makes you a woman.

“Bartender” by Brionka Judd
Honorable Mention, Poetry

In a crowded bar full of animated people, my eyes were transfixed on you as you darted back and forth taking drink orders and then making them.

My mouth ran dry at the thought of even talking to you; I’m afraid that if I do, things might come out a bit too eccentric.

I just want so desperately to tell you how wonderful I think you are.

That when I look at you, I see art. I see things that this world should be doused in: brilliance, peace, and beauty.

I want to tell you that you look like vinyl records and classic books, someone who existed years ago.

Maybe one day I’ll spit these words out like sunflower seeds but until then, I’m content with keep these lips stitched shut as you absentmindedly stir up wildfires in the coldest parts of me.

“Wekiva Springs, Florida” by Kayla Hudson
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“Bluebells” by Caroline Kelly
Excerpt from *Fifty Common Years*
2nd Place Fiction

In five days at the lake, none of the O’Hara children had ventured near the Estate. It was on the same property as the little village of summer cabins, but it was secluded by a long drive of white pebbles and weeping willows. Uncle James had told them that the family who lived there owned the cabins, and to not bother them, because they were kind to rent out the cabins and didn’t need any trouble from “you lot.” He said it in a fond way, but Liam remarked late one night while lying on their cots that it wasn’t Uncle James who thought they were hicks. Johnny asked what a hick was, and Liam answered, “You, that’s what.”

It was the golden hour before sunset as Johnny wandered through the green woods. He waded through the tall grasses that nearly reached his waist and picked a couple of stems of Queen Anne’s lace to give to Anna. Even the woods here seemed wealthier, and his chest filled with the scent of old evergreens that still looked young. The tall green grass was soft like a blanket and wove around his feet tenderly. His footsteps were so quiet that he could hear quail singing above him, somewhere up in the safety of the white blossoms that crowded every branch. He didn’t have his gun here in Connecticut, but even if he had, there would have been no reason to use it. There was almost more food at the cabin than they could eat, and in the stillness here Johnny felt, although he wouldn’t have the word for it until he was older, that he was in a sanctuary. That was what money could do for a person, he thought. When you got it, you don’t have to disturb the places where the birds do nothing but sing.

Gradually as he walked, the distance clear in his head like a map, the trees grew closer together and he pushed aside the boughs of a willow tree. Thorns dug at his hands. He wiped the specks of blood on his trousers and stepped into a low clear area where the trees parted and then

met up again over his head. Sunlight fell on everything, and Johnny's eyes stung a little after the shadowy green woods. Ivy wrapped up like loving arms around the trunks of old oaks. He heard water and squinted and saw a stream not far from him. It was all glowing, the trees and the yellow flowers and the water. There were beautiful places at home in Leary, but they were dark and dense and they made Johnny feel cold to think of them. He had never been somewhere that looked so warm as this.

He rolled up the legs of his trousers. His mind was opening and settling and comforting. This was his. Not the place; the place belonged to the birds and the honeysuckle and each tiny fish, but that he was here alone—that was his. He bent and scooped a handful of the damp dirt from beside the stream. The feel of earth against his skin felt like old memories.

Johnny hopped off the short dirt ledge above the stream and waded into it. It was cold and sent a chill up through his feet and ankles. He braced his teeth together. Everything was colder in Connecticut. He kicked about to make sure there were no snakes near him and then began walking along the streambed, aimlessly, the joy of wandering flooding back into him.

He knelt to watch a school of little silver fish slip past him, and when he raised his head he froze. Someone was sitting in the water downstream from him. He squinted, but the glow of sunlight washed away any features. Then he saw brown hair and realized it was a girl with her head turned from him.

She was sitting on the edge of the dirt and sand, skirt pulled up and feet in the water. Johnny watched her with interest and then felt bad that he watched her when she didn't know he was there. He started to turn and go back the way he had come when she said, "Hello?"

He turned back around. "I didn't know there was anybody here. I'm real sorry."

"I'm always here. What are you doing here?"

“...Explorin’.”

She had straightened and was looking at him. “Are you staying in one of the cabins?”

He nodded.

“How’d you find me?” Her voice had a northern clip.

“I...well, I ain’t been lookin’ for ya. I just been walkin’.”

“Oh. You walked all the way from the cabins?”

He nodded again.

She stood and held her skirt bunched in one hand. “Want to see a beaver’s dam?”

Johnny had seen dozens of beaver dams in the creeks at home, but he wanted to see this one more. She waited for him to reach her. The sun would be down below the trees soon, and it painted the water orange and gold. It wasn’t deep and was clear right to the bottom where their feet pressed against the bed of pebbles.

“I’ve seen you at the lake sometimes.” She smiled at him, and Johnny thought it was nice of her to let him come with her. He wondered if he would be as nice if it were her who had stumbled upon one of his coves or creeks or mountain roads in Leary.

“Really?”

“There are always a lot of you there.”

He kicked at the rocks. “My uncle says there are *too* many of us.” She smiled again. Johnny said, “How come I never seen you there?”

“I see you from the other beach.”

“Oh.”

“Are you from the south?”

Johnny noticed that her eyes were the color of the bluebells up in the clearing and didn't know why he thought of that. "South of...where?"

"I don't know, down south. My daddy always says that. South of here, I suppose. My daddy said it's warm all the time."

"It ain't warm all the time," Johnny said, shaking his head, grinning at the thought of winter. "There are mountains and they make it cold."

The girl pointed ahead of them. "There's the dam, down by the pond. I like swimming better up where we were. The pond's dirty."

Johnny had never considered whether any of the swimming holes at home were dirty. It was water, so it seemed like it all ought to be clean. They walked up to the dam, a little mound of sticks with water gurgling against it and flowing away when it couldn't get through. "Be nice to live right on top o' a pond," he said. "Jus' reach out your door and you can catch a fish."

She laughed, and again Johnny was reminded of bluebells.

They looked at the beaver dam and knocked on some of the sticks and proclaimed it was a good place to live. Johnny thought he could hear music in the trees as they walked back along the streambed, but it might have been his imagination. "What's your name?" he asked.

"Marianne." She plucked a handful of white and blue flowers from the grass bordering the stream. "It's long."

"I like it," Johnny said, and he did. He told her his name and barely heard himself say it.

Marianne bent down, getting the edges of her skirt wet. She fished her hands about in the water and Johnny paused, waiting for her, and then he felt water against his face. She splashed him again and her mouth opened in a laugh. In a moment, they were both laughing, and Marianne's

dress was dripping and Johnny was wet up to his knees. It was cold, but her laughter was so clear and wild and he wanted to keep listening to it so that he didn't really mind the chill.

They climbed back onto the muddy patch of beach and then into the clearing again in yellow twilight. They were wet from head to toe and both smiling. Marianne's curls drooped down her back. Johnny, watching her gently pluck the petals off the white flowers and tossing them into the stream, had nearly forgotten that the clearing existed.

"No one else has ever come up here," Marianne said. They sat cross-legged in the grass as she deftly tied together a crown of flowers and Johnny picked at the bark of a stick just to give his hands something to do. "My daddy knows it's here, I guess, but most times people just stay near the cabins or the lake."

"You don't live in one of the cabins?"

She shook her head. "I live in the big house."

The way she said it was natural, as if she knew that most people didn't live in such big houses, and at the same time as though it wasn't at all out of the ordinary.

The deep purple glow of dusk settled over the clearing and Johnny remembered he would have to hike back through the woods to get home. Marianne was twisting together the ends of two yellow flowers, and she tied them tight and then leaned over to Johnny and put the crown of flowers on his head.

"You look like one of those little boy imps from the fairy picture books," she said, smiling, all of her glistening in the last light. The sun glowed against her back through the tall oaks on the other side of the stream, and in the fleeting brightness all Johnny could see of her was a silhouette and a laughing mouth.

He had never read a picture book with fairies in it, but he made an impish face at Marianne and jumped like a mischievous sprite to his feet. “You’ll have to catch me if you want it back.”

She was after him in a moment, and both of them, barefoot, barely left the imprint of their feet on the thick, soft grass. Johnny knew he wasn’t running back towards home, but where his inner compass told him the estate house was. He didn’t want Marianne to have to walk home alone from the cabins. He wove in and out between the tree trunks and only caught out of the corner of his eye glimpses of the moss and twisting ivy and the dense thorny thickets of roses. He heard her behind him, out of breath but still laughing, and everything Johnny felt was a blur of green and the phantom touch of the way Marianne’s fingers had brushed against his hair when she crowned him.

The trees thinned and Johnny slowed. He turned around just as she reached him, and he took the flower crown off his head and put it on hers. “It looks prettier on you, an’ways,” he said.

Marianne blushed a little, although Johnny wasn’t sure why. “We’re both all dirty,” she said, shaking out the hem of her dress.

Johnny wiped the dirt from his hands on his trousers. “I’m always dirty.”

“I’ll see you tomorrow, maybe. I know the way from here.”

The white estate house rose out of the trees some distance away. Johnny nodded and he said, “I’ll see ya. Marianne.” The name sounded even longer when he said it, gentle and drawled out.

“I didn’t ever want anyone to find me down there,” she said before she turned toward the house, “but I’m not mad you did...Johnny. I don’t mind.” She slipped away past a row of pine trees and all he could see was the white flowers on her head, for a second or two, and then they were gone.

It seemed like he was facing northwest, roughly, and the cabins were east. The sky was darkening, and he pulled himself away from the pines and started walking and then began to run again. There was something in him that was too big for walking.

“Between Brothers” by Caroline Kelly
Excerpt from *Fifty Common Years*
1st Place Fiction

All his life until that summer, Johnny had never slept in a bed by himself. His cot was too cold and roomy without the company of another sibling, and he lay awake that night watching the darkness beyond the porch. In one of the cabins across the path was Ben, probably sound asleep the way he wore himself out so completely each day, and a mile off in the estate was Marianne. The screen porch of their cabin faced towards the estate, and when Johnny squinted he thought he might have seen a pinprick of candlelight way off in the distance. Or maybe it was one of the lightning bugs he and Ben had caught so many of already that summer. Ben always insisted on letting them fly away after a few seconds because he couldn't imagine trapping any living thing, not even a bug, which was an idea Johnny had never considered.

He laid restlessly once more against the cool white sheets. He started to think of going home, even though that was months away, and then he couldn't stop. For an hour he lay still on the cot and felt worse and worse. Now that he had thought of it, he couldn't take it back. Each day would become a countdown to leaving.

“Henry,” he whispered into the darkness. “Henry?”

Whether Henry was a light sleeper or if he never really fell asleep until all of the others had, Johnny never knew. But Henry lifted his head from his pillow. Their cots were separated by Sybil's in between. She slept with her face tucked into the pillow so tightly that Johnny wondered how she breathed. On the other side of the porch, Anna slept half-draped off her cot, and Liam had Edmund against his chest.

“Hmm?”

“...Sorry.”

Henry's green eyes glowed in the blue around them. "It's alright, Johnny boy."

"Do you...are ya friends with a lot of girls back home?"

Henry propped his head on his elbow. "I guess. I dunno. All the same girls you know."

"I don't know many."

"I guess not, then."

"Hmm."

"Why you talkin' about girls, Johnny boy? You in love with Ben's sister? She's older than us, older than Liam."

"No, not her. I ain't in love with any girl." Johnny wound a loose thread from the bed sheet around his finger.

"Good."

"But say if I was. Or if you was. Or Liam."

"Or Edmund?"

Johnny scoffed. "He's too little. He don't even know numbers."

"He won't always be little," Henry said.

"Yeah. That's what I'm sayin', I guess. We gonna just keep gettin' older and...I dunno. It ain't always gonna be the same."

Henry smiled, breaking up the darkness. He said, "Why you thinkin' bout these things, Johnny boy?"

"I dunno."

They were both quiet for a while. "Are you scared or somethin'?" Henry asked at last. His voice was gentler. "What're you scared of?"

“I don’t want anything to change,” Johnny murmured against the edge of his cot. He looked up at his brother’s face, and for the first time in his life, he felt not comforted by Henry’s presence but gripped with the fear that Henry might not always be there. Henry’s calm voice, as placid as the lake, had coaxed him to sleep every night, had soothed nightmares, and had reassured tear choked questions. And he had done it often, because Johnny never fell asleep easily, and sometimes when he did it was too much for him and he woke up crying. Henry was better than anyone at comfort, better even than Mama.

“Oh, you don’t worry about that, Johnny boy. Nothing’ll change. Maybe we’ll be back here next summer, you’ll see.” Henry nudged Sybil’s shoulder a little so that she rolled onto her back, eyes still closed, but Johnny knew she might be listening. “Summer always comes again.”

“Winter always comes again, too.”

“And then we’ll all pile together like foxes in a nest and stay warm till it’s over. We always do.”

Johnny glanced at Sybil and then at the other three a few feet away. They had all taken turns sleeping with Edmund, and right then, Liam’s head was tucked protectively against the toddler’s. Johnny looked back at Henry and was more afraid than he had ever been. Even getting caught out in the woods after dark, listening to the wolves howling and wondering if a mountain cat was nearby, was not like this. Johnny knew what to do in the woods and how to be as silent as a mountain cat, but he didn’t know how to run from fear he couldn’t touch. “But are we always gonna be together?”

Henry looked at Johnny and then beyond him, past the screen where they could hear the nighttime sounds of frogs and crickets in the long grasses. They listened to the breathing of the other four and at last he said, “It’s like how we’re here and Mama and Daddy are at home. You

keep seein' things you want to show 'em, you know? Like the lake or the ocean or the wildflowers or wherever. And you can't 'cause they ain't here, really, to see it, but you sort of feel like they ain't as far away as they are."

Johnny laid back and listened. The air was cool and the wind blew in the last wisps of wood smoke from the bonfire their uncle had built that evening.

"You know what I mean? I been thinkin' about that, too." Henry paused. "I don't know why it's like that. But remember the first person who ever took you to pick wildflowers was Dad on Mama's birthday, so we could all give her more flowers than she could fill the whole house with."

Johnny smiled a little. He could still remember, years and years earlier so that it must have been one of his first memories, the way the house had smelled sweet like a meadow for a week.

"You remember that. And how the first time you ever shot one of the rifles was when Mama shot a coyote in her garden and when it was dead, 'cause she's the best shot in all Tatum County, she said to you, *All right, Johnny boy, now's as good a time as any*. You were four then, the gun was bigger than you." Henry was smiling now, too, and he continued, "Or when Dad took us to the creek up by Sinner's Pass and we caught fish with just our hands."

How far they were from the fields of wildflowers, from Tatum County and Sinner's Pass and the cold mountains in Tennessee. It didn't seem like the same world.

"And now this summer's different," Henry said, staring up into the dark. "Because they ain't here but we're always doin' things they taught us. I look at all the daisies on the path near the lake and I still think of Daddy carryin' more 'n he could hold just to make Mama happy."

"He's good at that," murmured Johnny.

"At carryin' things?"

“At makin’ Mama happy.”

Henry nodded. “So even though they ain’t here, it sort of feels like they are sometimes,
you know?”

“I think so.”

“And I hope that’s how it’s always gonna be. That when I ain’t here with you, you’ll still
know I sorta am.”

“Are you ever gonna leave?” Johnny’s voice filled the stillness.

Henry looked at him, and the corners of his mouth lifted in a gentle smile that Johnny
would keep with him for the rest of his life. “I ain’t ever gonna leave you, Johnny.”

“And Liam? And Sybil and Anna and Edmund?”

“We ain’t ever going to leave each other,” Henry whispered. “Even when sometimes we’re
apart.”

“I don’t want to be apart.” Johnny’s voice had grown softer, more tired.

Henry said, “We all gotta be, sometimes. But I ain’t ever leavin’ you.”

“Are you gonna get married someday?”

“I might. I dunno. Have to find a girl who wants to marry me.”

“All the girls would wanna marry you.”

Henry smiled again, and they were silent and the woods outside sung softly.

“I Am My Hair” by Yoni Jeffries
2nd Place Photography and Art



“Sonnet Eleventy-Two Point Five” by Philip Odom
2nd Place Poetry

Oh sonnets, whyfor dost thou bring the suck?
Thy rhyming schemes drive pupils to the drink.
Pouring out souls, forced are they to run amok.
Quill to scroll, the words flow but oft do stink.

Quatrains, couplets, meter, verse: all are tricks,
Upon the furrowed brow of the wordsmyth.
Iambic pentameter smells of Styx,
Beckoning forth the reaper and the scythe.

But hark, doth mine eyes trick and deceive?
Is thy form beauty, the height of perfect?
The bard is summoned and art is achieved.
Low grades will not the average infect.

Forced from the ether and full of wit,
The deed has been done, the sonnet is writ.

“How to Permanently Lower Your IQ by Josh Fugate
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Launch rockets at a hospital
Fire a machine gun
into a crowd of children
Kick your dog
Mutilate your genitals
Watch beheadings
on Youtube
Drink until you can't get an erection
Drink bleach
Drink dandruff shampoo
Clean the toilet with toothpaste
Staple your stomach shut
and eat until it bursts

Destroy all birth control
Destroy all women

Fill your car with gasoline
and then lick your hands
Lie down in traffic
and wait there
until America is great again.

“The Doppelganger” by John Palmieri
Honorable Mention, Fiction

I stood in a room of mirrors, my eyesight slightly clouded by the haze of sleep and the arcane air of a dream. All around me I saw nothing but me. I hadn't realized that I had dramatically changed since my time with my ruthless captors, and I hadn't taken the time to evaluate these changes. I glanced around the mirrors, examining every detail of my worn, tired body. Because of my former master's strict rules, my dark hair had never been allowed to be in its natural, somewhat curly state which now lay atop my head wild and unattended. My tired eyes made the speckled blue in them look the tired cloudy gray of interrupted sleep. I was taller than what I saw in the mirror, I thought, but then again, I wasn't one to stand in front of the mirror for hours and hours. In fact, I was almost sure this was my first time ever doing it for more than a few seconds. I could see the sheaths my swords rested in. The sheath resting on my right side was light and thin, and its shiny metal glistened in the ominous light from above. The sword within this sheath, Ferrum it is called, was forged from a special form of iron-bauxite mixture, making it sturdy but light, making it a valuable ally in melee attacks and swift opponents. Its dubious twin, Nox, rested firmly on my back in a specially made satchel. Nox was much longer and heavier than Ferrum since it was made from a peculiar combination of obsidian and ivory, giving it a dull purple-black color on its formidable blade and a rough, stained beige color on its hilt. Surprisingly, I bore hardly any scars, blemishes, or any sign of the brutal physical torture that I endured while in captivity. However, the mental and emotional trauma they inflicted will probably never depart from my mind, perhaps the source of this strange dream.

As I scanned my appearance, I heard someone yell from behind me. I flinched and turned my head in the direction of the scream, my reflections perfectly synched with my every move. I wildly glanced around the room in search of the sinister voice as fear slowly built up within me

like frigid water. Then I heard it again, and this time I made out “Traitor!” from the ethereal lips of my tormenter. I turned to see that my reflections no longer mimicked me, instead, they mocked me and glared at me, their words like spears straight into the depths of my inner being. The octagonal room contained eight mirrors, and thus I was subjected to eight ruthless, uncaring tormenters. One called me a psychopath, giving me the look of a fearful child expecting death; another branded me a traitor, the look of a disappointed parent shrouding his face. One accused me of being a “lying, cheating bastard not fit to live,” his voice filled with the rage of millions pining for my blood to be spilled. One yelled incessantly the word “coward,” his tone similar to the tone of rabid protestors. Another proclaimed loudly, “This is the man that is said to liberate us from the clutches of evil, and yet he stands there shaking hands with the devil himself. I say he must be killed!” The other three mumbled words that I could not make out, as they came from their mouths like fire from a vengeful dragon. In the center of the room, I fell and clasped my ears, trying to block out their incessant mockery and threats, though it proved futile, as they only got louder. I tried telling my distressed self, “This is a dream, nothing more than a figment of my mind,” although I knew it was my mind simply repeating what was said about me and what I thought of myself. Frantically, I tried waking myself up by pinching the most sensitive skin, by throwing myself off some imaginary cliff, by any means I could find. But nothing helped, it was as if my mind was trapping me within its vengeful, sardonic clutches, unleashing its pent-up wrath upon me. I sat there for a moment, taking in their insults. For a moment, I believed every word they said, for deep down I thought it was true. Suddenly a dark haze filled my mind, and I considered laying on my sword. But then, instead of laying upon the sharp, dense tip of Nox, I unsheathed it, and attempted to silence my tormentors.

Anger, rage, and hatred fueled my arms as I flailed them with Nox in hand into the mirrors. Tiny shards of glass pierced my body, but at that point I didn't really care. I watched as each twisted, vindictive version of me transformed into broken glass, their sinister laughter ending in a fragmented wail of shattered crystal. Soon eight mirrors turned into four, then two, and then one. As I walked up to the final mirror, I saw this last form of me glaring into my eyes. He said nothing, perhaps his fear had forced his mouth to silence his mockery. Before smashing his mirror, I took a moment to evaluate my last opponent, obsessing over every detail of this demon before I ended its wraithlike existence. At a glance, this reflection was my twin. But almost immediately, I found minor differences in him. His eyes, rather than my sapphire blue, were dark gray and cloudy, and they seemed to be staring right through me. His skin was tanner than mine and it seemed smoother. In his left hand he held a sword similar in color to Nox, but it lacked the mass and components of Nox. Behind him I saw a black mist squirming in some phantom wind. Then he spoke, "Hello, Apollo." His voice was that of a soothsayer, smooth and relaxing. He lacked the condescending tone of the other mirror doppelgangers; rather, he seemed compassionate and calm.

"Hello," I said, unsure of what was going on. "Who are you? And how do you know me?"

He remained silent for a moment before replying, "I am Atrius. I am you, and you are me," he said mystically.

"How is that possible?" I asked, still unsure. His voice, however, seemed to abate my intense fury and fear, and I lowered my sword to the floor.

"Everything is possible, Apollo. The fact that you are standing in this room is very impossible, as it does not exist, but yet you are here." He stood there for a moment and awaited for my reply.

"If you are me and I am you, how are we so different?" I asked, confused.

“Every coin has two sides, Apollo. I am simply the other side of your coin, the hidden side, the side that is locked away. And we are not as different as you may think.”

Surprised and slightly curious by his answer, I asked, “Locked away? Why would you be locked away?”

“I wouldn’t say that I am truly *locked* away. I am merely, how should I say... I am merely waiting, waiting for the right moment to come out.”

“When would that be?”

“I come only when the conditions are favorable. In truth, I am a parasite. Not a detrimental parasite in any means, but more of a mutualistic relationship. For instance, my true form is merely a formless ghost destined to a life of eternal wandering. In that form, my immense power is limited. But within a vessel, or a body, my power is doubled. I reside within you, giving you full access to my power in return. My insight, my wisdom, and most importantly, my skills and strengths are all yours whilst I reside within you. But what does this have to do with the right conditions? Here is the answer: I am protective of my host. Anyone, or anything, that tries to hurt it, harm it, or endanger it will feel my full wrath until their endeavors are halted, which usually ends in their death. But only when the host and I are truly in tune and there is nothing keeping us apart, only then will I show myself.”

For some odd reason, I was enticed by his power. I felt a deep and irresistible urge to gain access to his immense power, and I was willing to do anything to get it. I was sure that he knew this too, as I saw a smirk come across his face as I pondered what he said.

“I can help you Apollo,” Atrius said, his words flowing from his mouth like crystalline water into a tranquil pool. “I saw what these mirrors said about you, what *you* said about *yourself*. You are insecure about yourself, and you struggle with it. I can help you overcome it. I can help

you overcome that struggle and make you who you are supposed to be and give you everything that you desire.”

I was shaking in my shoes. A river of tears erupted from my tired eyes and fell to the cold stone floor. I fell to my knees and buried my head in my hands, trying desperately to restrain the tears. Finally, I relented and said, “Every day I struggle.” I cough and snuffle before continuing, “I struggle with my morality, with my sanity. These aliens, these savages, they’ve messed with my mind. They’ve molded me into a killing machine, a robot who takes orders from a despotic emperor on a distant world. They’ve broken me down to my bare mind, and built me up again in their own way. They’ve stripped me of everything that makes me human! They’ve taken *everything*. Everything I’ve done is ‘for the good of the empire.’ ‘Apollo!,’ they’ll say. And I’ll immediately submit. They’ll order me to slaughter a group of my own people ‘for the good of the empire.’ They’ll tell me to destroy something built by human hands ‘for the good of the empire.’ They’ll poison my mind with those sayings, and eventually I will do anything ‘for the good of the empire.’” I paused for a moment to regain my composure. “Now I’m here, taking orders from other people. That’s been my entire life-Apollo do this ‘for the good of the empire.’ Or now it’s, ‘for the good of humanity.’ I struggle with my identity – am I really a traitor? Am I really less than human, as I was so repeatedly told? Am I the monster they think I am? Who am I? I just wish I actually had the ability to make my own decisions, to decide what I think is best, to mess up, to learn, the natural way, from my mistakes. I wish I had the ability to set the record straight, to show everyone who I really am, whoever I may be. You understand, don’t you?” I look up and find Atrius mirroring my position.

He looks up and says as if he had sobbed as well, “I feel the pain you feel, the struggles you go through, the power you crave. I understand just as much as you do. What you have been

through, I have as well. Let *us* do something about it, Apollo. You and I cannot change a thing about us separated. But together we can set the record straight; together we can put them in their place.”

Suddenly, a wave of rage flowed through my veins, and I looked at him straight into his clouded eyes and said, “Then how do we do it? How do I make the conditions right? How do I – no, we – set the record straight?”

“It’s actually rather simple,” he said, as we both stood to our feet in unison. “There is a glass barrier separating you from me, so all you must do is break the barrier,” he said with mystery. He presses his hand on the glass and smiles. I glance down at Nox, whom I had had a death grip on for the entire time, and look back at Atrius. He shook his head in affirmation. Slowly, I hoisted Nox above my head and slammed it into the mirror again and again until it crumbled. Shards of glass flew everywhere as the last mirror crumbled under the power of Nox. Once the mirror had shattered, I looked beyond the pile of shards to see my sinister doppelganger still standing before me, a satisfied look on his face. He smiled and mouthed, “Thank you,” and then, all at once, he flew forward and transformed into a cloud of black fog. The fog collided with me and I fell to the ground, the fog slowly dissolving into my skin and then slowly fading away. I felt a sharp, excruciating pain all over my body as the black fog dissolved into the very fibers of my being, though the pain fled immediately. As the room began to darken and the pain began to subside, I heard his voice whisper, “I am you, you are me. The pain you feel, I feel. The power you crave, I crave. Those you hate, I hate. *We will set the record straight.*” And then everything went black.

I awoke and sat straight up on my cot. I was out of breath and felt as if I had just finished running a marathon. I glanced around the little room, making sure I wasn’t still in a dream. The room still looked the same. A stand-up mirror stood in the corner of the room right next to a stool.

The little desk I'd used to telegram those back in the states was still there with the pen I used. I got off the cot and walked over to the window, which was the largest item in the room. The sun was high in the sky. I guessed it was around nine-thirty, since the city wasn't entirely busy yet. I saw the thatched roof homes lining the suburban streets of Karachi, Pakistan. Beyond the curve of the dusty road was the surprisingly calm Indian Ocean with several destroyers patrolling the coast. The sea breeze felt good as it rushed in when I opened the window. The sound of a car horn could be heard amongst the noises of the city. As I stood contemplating the view, my friend Leonidas came in. "Oh you're awake," he said.

"Yeah, what's up?" I asked as I turn around.

"General Hopkins needs to see us right away. We're heading back to the States today,"

"Oh yeah, that's right. I'll be there in a minute," I sighed, somewhat reluctant to return.

"Ok, but they're getting frustrated. I'd hurry before they send security, again," he said as he walked down the corridor, his voice trailing off. I sighed and changed into my mandatory rebel uniform. It looked like normal street clothing, but in reality it was a set of very nimble but powerful armor that could change its form when I wanted. I was told it would withstand extreme heat and cold, and it was water- and bulletproof. But I figured they were just exaggerating. On the left sleeve was a small, red stitch of a bird. It resembled a phoenix on fire, with its wings flared. It was our symbol, the symbol of rebellion.

I grabbed Ferrum and Nox and put them on. Before I left, I stood in front of the glass, making sure I had put on the entire uniform. I looked closely at my eyes and flashed back to my dream, or nightmare. They were blue, and not the cloudy gray of Atrius. I smiled slightly, relieved that this was reality, and walked out of the room, not realizing my reflection lingered in the mirror.

“Tracy Arm” by Brittany Astin
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“Tender” by Sharon Jacobs
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Be tender Abner; lay down your arms,
Can't you see, tis your family it harms.
Homeless and hungry, no place to lay their heads,
Hated by many, Abner, tis you they dread.
These fires you burn produce but a minute of pleasure,
It's your wife, your sons, your daughters that is your treasure.
Let go of the hate Abner, be filled with tenderness and love,
And be pleasing to those around you, most of all – He above.
Be tender Abner; lay down your arms,
No more fires, no more harm.

“A Guide on How Not to Kill Yourself” by Sally Bitar
Honorable Mention, Non-Fiction

Disclaimer: Please do not take the humor in this seriously. It is merely to grasp the attention of those who would not usually read similar articles.

We are on a perpetual roller-coaster of existence until we fall out of our seats and into an abyss of the unknown. While on this perpetual roller-coaster, we go through quite shitty times and exciting moments. Sometimes, those shitty times begin to pile up and result in a poop river. It just becomes a big sewer of reality. As things begin to reek, our only focus is the search for an escape – a way out. When you’re up to your neck in a sewer of your own shit, every breath grows heavier and your only concern is survival. How do you survive? How do you keep going when you can ever-so-barely lift each foot? Your size US 7 feet have never felt so heavy in such an impenetrable river.

Finally, your glazed eyes spot the escape – after 72 dreadful days of stinking cardio. However, it isn’t what you thought it was. It’s not a light. It’s not a person. It’s not a receiving of something. It is the taking of something: your life. It is your only escape. You’re now soaking in the feces of your fellow locals and yourself, every breath you take is toxic, and every step is agonizing. What do you do? It’s all you can think of. It’s all you want to do. You’re alone. You’re entirely alone in a sewer. What do you do?

You *don’t do it*. You don’t. You do not. Just a few more miles and I promise you will find another exit. It’s not dark. It lies within yourself.

It’s incredibly hard to be so devoured by your own thoughts that you become a tenant in your own mind. Your mind is that sewer. How do you escape what’s already the biggest part of you? You don’t. You can’t. You slowly heal and turn that sewer into a more habitable environment.

Every time you consider taking the closest exit, you need to take a step back. You need to take a deep breath. Release. Then take a few steps forward. Take one more back when it becomes tempting again. Then take a few more steps forward. Keep going. Look that exit in the eye and walk right past it. There are people around you. There are loved ones that you cannot see right now. You are so consumed by your own thoughts and self-hatred that you are incapable of seeing them. It's not your fault. It's not theirs. Set an everyday reminder to remember who they are. Why they're here. Why you're important.

You are important. You have a future that lies outside this sewer and you will get a positive grasp of it.

Nothing lasts forever. Suicide is not the answer; it is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Always remember that.

You've got this.

Untitled by Zain Goheer
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“After the Storm” by Samantha Velasco
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“Merrey dard komjo zaban milay (If My Pain Finds a Voice)” by Anonymous
2nd Place Non-Fiction

Tu Kay Nawaqif-e-Adabey Ghulami Hai Abhi
(You are unaware of the mannerism of slavery)
Raqs Zanjeer Pehan ker Bhai Kiya Jataa Hai
(You can dance even when you are chained)

When Quran, the Holy text of Islam, ordained Prophet Muhammad PBUH, “O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them. That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed. Allah is ever Forgiving, Merciful,” it did not mention how to “draw their cloaks” (Haleem 271). This verse was revealed to Muhammad, the religious leader and symbol of Islam, more than 1400 years ago. It is one of the most quoted verses in Islam which led to the adoption of hijab as a practice for Muslim women now days. Hijab is a common practice throughout the modern Muslim world, but it was not a Muslim practice at the advent of Islam. Hijab is unique to the culture it is practiced in today as a lot was left to the imagination of people who wanted to adopt hijab as a practice from Quran. The ambiguity of this verse led each culture and generation in the Muslim world to interpret it according to their own times, cultural perception, intellect, imagination, understanding and sometimes personal interest.

The hijab may be very multi-faceted outwardly, but as a cultural icon, it is a very single-faceted perception. Intertwined with the ideas of virginity, elitism, exclusiveness and piety, it creates an altered sense of space for people who practice it (Al-Guindi 74). It creates division, exclusion and seclusion at multiple levels. Moreover, it creates an atmosphere of secrecy and concealment. In the pursuit of becoming the perfect woman, not human but divine, the ideas mentioned previously have been used as a weapon against Muslim women, robbing them of their

basic birth rights like equality and humanness. Barricaded in this loneliness and trying to achieve the impossible, Muslim women are facing tons of emotional and psychological issues like Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety, and depression as mentioned in “Women and Human Rights”(Cooper 358). These issues need to stay under the rug as Allah’s Will is the last nail in the coffin of equality for Muslim women. If Muslim women want to be treated equally with men at a personal, familial, cultural and global level, they should look into the practice of hijab critically. It is time to abandon hijab and liberate women of Ummet e Muslimah, a nation of Islam, from the prison it has become. Hijab is a cultural practice not a religious requirement. How this symbol became the modern Muslim woman’s identity and the cause of her downfall at the same time is an important question. Before doing so, it will be helpful to explore the idea of hijab and what the hijab is to the followers of Islam.

Hijab is a word of the Arabic language that means barrier or partition when translated literally. According to Professor Gerry Mackie, Associate Professor at UC San Diego, traditionally hijab is a head covering that Muslim women wear or observe and differs according to the country, culture, and society they are living in. Women who observe hijab are called Hijabis. Hijab goes beyond the physical appearance; it is more than covering the human body. Hijab is a way of living; it is a mode of conduct. It is an intellectual concept of modesty that includes lowering one’s gaze in public places. It is a responsibility of all Muslim men and women without any exception according to Quran. The lack of a definite characterization of hijab, without a universally and clearly defined dress code, led diverse Muslim cultures all around the world to assume different meanings of hijab. There is a wide range of words used to characterize this modern Muslim phenomenon.

According to Minault the act of “drawing the cloak” is also called Purdah, Naqab, Hijab, Chador, and Burqa in different Muslim countries, and it now means veiling and secluding only Muslim women in the Islamic world at different levels (556). It might come in all shapes and sizes with distinctive names but with the same concept of division and female exclusion along with seclusion behind it. Before discussing the division which leads to exclusion and seclusion, it is very important for us to recognize what hijab symbolizes for women who observe hijab and how dependent this symbolism is on the cultural perception of people.

Hijab has been turned into this constant and lifelong quest of purity, piety, exclusiveness, virginity, youth and unattainability for Muslim women. These eternal human perceptions of “best ever” combined with cultural models of “greatest” have been used against Muslim women in Islam to surrender equality: a promise of equality made to women by the divine text of Quran. When in Quran it is stated at five different places that men and women are created equal, how could we allow something as simple as hijab to take away this basic birthright from Muslim women?

Hijab as a cultural Islamic icon has diverse symbolic interpretations among various Muslim cultures and nations. In my interview with a Muslim hijab observer named Zeenah, I asked this very question, and the answer I got from her was, “Hijab symbolizes modesty.” And yet, there was nothing modest about her appearance. She was wearing a very tight, body hugging, silk dress; she had a lot of makeup and jewelry on. She further informed me that as a child, she was told by her mother that Hijabi is like “a pearl in an oyster.” She needs to protect herself from the world as she is exclusive for one man. She is carrying the name and honor of her family. This expression “pearl in an oyster” actually denotes the notion of virginity in a highly patriarchal society. Virginity is holding cash value to the inhabitants of Hijabi culture. Virginity escorts hijabis to this amazingly fascinating concept of unattainability. Amazingly you don’t have to be pious to wear hijab. When

I asked her if she will ever give up hijab, her answer --although shocking-- did not stun me at all. She said, and I quote, “Only if I have a death wish hanging over my head or if I want to commit suicide.” She did not have the right to choose something as simple as hijab for herself. She told me that she will be ostracized, no one will marry her, and her parents will lose their face if she ever gives up on hijab. Of course, her parents want her to get an education, but not to the point that she gives up on hijab. Hijab alone is enough for her to be considered pious and sacred, and for her family, as long as she is wearing hijab, she is marriageable and acceptable in the society.

Mah Munir comes from a very religious Iranian Shiyaat family. She used to wear chador like me. Chador is a very long single sheet of fabric which women put on to cover their bodies from head to toe. She was told by her grandmother that chador means honor, honor for which we Muslims give or take life. A hijabi is for one special man; for the rest of the mankind, she is unachievable. Munir gave up hijab as she got sick and tired of the hypocrisy of Chador. She fled Iran, married out of her family and now is trying to get political asylum in the USA (Munir). If she decides to return to Iran or is forced to go back to Iran, she has to face her brother who will kill her for honor. She rebelled against the values of hijab. If she had a choice about hijab, her actions would have been different.

According to Professor Mackie, families who practice hijab make personal decisions and choices with one thing in their minds, keeping hijabi culture intact no matter how high the stakes are. I was born into a very religious family carrying a name very special for Muslims in Punjab. . . . This name required me to wear Chadur, I was not supposed to talk to Namahrum (any man I can get married to). My aunts wore Burqah (a full-body covering with a small opening for the eyes). I was spared this torturous tradition because my parents were educated people. This did not spare me from the hijabi mentality. I was conditioned to believe that I need to hide my faults from

the world or anyone I know, an attitude which I know in my bones is a result of my natal family's practice of hijab. At the age of five, Burqah became a symbol of hiding my flaws from everyone. It is no wonder that when I got married, I did what my hijabi upbringing taught me to do. In a world where my social status was dependent on my husband, I hid his abuse from my family and the phrase that I used to cling to was my naqabi grandma's axiom "Put hijab on it." No wonder when my ex-husband raped me, I wrapped hijab around it; when he beat me up, I covered it up with hijab; and when he left me and divorced me, my family in Pakistan placed – and continues to place -- hijab on it. When I fought back and asked my parents, "Why don't you tell people in Pakistan I am divorced?," my mom said it is not her family but my dad's family. So I asked him. My dad's response was "Don't worry. You don't live in Pakistan anymore." My mom is helpless in that culture. My dad and his family are not people she will ever pick a fight with. He is the protector, whereas my mom is the protected, a mentality mentioned by Cooke in her article "Deploying the Muslim Women" (91). My dad is never going to admit he made a mistake in choosing my ex-husband for me. So putting "purdah" on it is the solution. Hiding and not admitting faults as a mindset is so deeply embedded in cultural values of hijab. Tradition of hijab takes precedence on this important personal issue.

Hijab is a major cause of dividing people at personal, familial, and cultural levels. A divided nation or gender can never work together. To get rid of the division of hijab, we need to work together as hijab is a complete contradiction of unity. This division is causing a lot of issues for men, women and families at various levels. Hijab as a concept has been turned into something very tangible. It was decreed upon Muslim men and women both, and yet it has been distorted and established for one specific gender only which is, of course, women. It has instigated a huge barrier between Muslim men and women, as well as good and bad women, based on one and only one

thing, which is Hijab. Instead of values, hijab has become the tangible icon of goodness for women in Islam. If a woman wears a hijab, no matter who she is as a person, she is good. On the other hand, if a woman gives up on hijab, no matter how good she is, she is evil. I remember a year and a half ago talking to a hijabi girl outside the science building at my community college. I mentioned the name of a mutual friend who had recently given up hijab. This girl, who does not want her name to be mentioned, said, “Oh, you are talking about her. She used to be like us but not anymore. Do you know what she has done? She gave up hijab!” The disgust in her tone and voice was apparent. It took her all she had to restrain herself from calling our friend a whore just because she stopped wearing hijab (Anonymous). I found through her that a lot of people are not friends with this girl anymore since she gave up hijab, and she is not considered a “good girl”. As stated in “The Argument in Favor,” the face-covering Muslim girls are the good ones, and girls who don’t cover their faces are the bad ones (Chesler 33). For a patriarchal culture like Islam, a girl’s foremost job is marriage; the chief contribution a woman can make after her marriage is to bring good sons of pure blood into this world for her husband. It is a civilization that is exceedingly dependent on the virginity of their daughters, forcing parents to differentiate between hijabi and non-hijabi daughters, thus causing a huge division in the family and emotional hurt for kids. A marriageable Purdah-daar girl is the salvation of her parents, so why should she not be treated like a queen? And yet ironically, the hijabi queen is not taken seriously as no one wants to listen to a gender that is “sitting home” away from outside world. How could they know what is happening in the outside when they are barricaded inside the four walls of their houses? This is a question a lot of my Muslim male relatives and friends ask me all the time. Exactly what Eman told me, when she said that “if we wear hijab we are good but stupid, but if we give up hijab then we are bad and too liberal to be consulted on any important issue.” What the Islamic world is failing to see is that

something as simple as hijab is excluding men and women at levels unsigned to the world of Islam at this point, creating this atmosphere of misogyny. A culture which elevates Mother next to God is practicing hijab, a symbol of inequality. This division and discrimination is unworthy of any living thing, and yet as Muslims, we are proudly sporting veil as our salvation. This personal misogyny among men and women is profoundly affecting how they function inside and outside their culture.

Teitel writes about the fear of discrimination that adoption of hijab on public television in Egypt has caused women to talk about the mentality of supremacy and exclusion that come with this practice (54). Women are afraid that they will be ridiculed, harassed and forced to either adopt hijab or leave the workplace. Veiling is supposed to make people modest, but when did offending and attacking someone and forcing them to make a choice become a modest act? Embracing the practice of veiling to a point that it becomes a social norm does divide people into good and bad creating illusions of good when we are committing bad. After reading this article, I am wondering what to think about good and bad; are we redefining these words in Islam as well though hijab? This division of good and bad leads us into a hierarchy of genders that is simple to look at but very complex in practice and more difficult to understand. The first level of division that comes with Hijab is between men and women, and then it further divides women into good and bad. A man is superior to a woman in every sense of the word in a hijabi culture; he is the protector. A woman who is hijabi is better than a non-hijabi woman. This division causes a lot of exclusion and seclusion as a result. Hijab is the focal point of excluding non-hijabi women from mainstream Muslim culture and making them unholy in a seemingly holy war. In the world of hijab, it is a religious duty of Muslim women to wear hijab. What kind of progress can anyone expect from a society that makes division at every possible level a religious duty? If a woman is raised to believe

that she has nothing to offer but her piety and nothing to get except protection from her male relative in return for that piety, how can she contribute towards her life, let alone raise a family of confident, caring, independent children? When people are caught up into trivial issues like “hijabi is better than non-hijabi,” then they are bound to divide and exclude each other leading them to chaos as Egypt is facing these days. According to the article “Egypt Prepares for the Twenty-First Century,” Egypt is in rubble while women are preparing to make hijab legal there (Habeeb 78). People of Egypt are so caught up in issues like hijab and what kind of hijab one should wear that they have stopped thinking about problems like economic growth, education, jobs etc. This division paves the way for seclusion at a personal, cultural, and an economic level.

Seclusion at personal level has its root in the notion that women who practice veiling are more pious, sacred and supreme than women who don't observe hijab. This notion of pure and polluted and how isolating this notion is for Muslim woman has been discussed by Cooke (91). She also discusses how Muslim women are conditioned to believe that they are not capable of keeping themselves pure, so they should look out for a protector. It is ironic that the men who were supposed to protect and help the woman need a woman's protection at multiple times. Eman, a former hijabi from Syria, explains this isolation like nothing she has ever experienced. I have personally experienced the isolation that comes with hijab. My grandfather blocked my admission into a college of my choice just because women in that college were not wearing hijab. My brother, on the other hand, had the choice to go to any school he wanted to go to. I was never to be trusted as a woman around a man, so I had a very limited choice of profession -- a teacher or a doctor and that was it. I fought like crazy, threatening my parents to leave school. I hated the college my parents chose for me, but nothing worked. My mom and dad made it very clear to me. I am not an individual; I am a daughter. I remember before I got married I was secluded to one room when

guests would come. The room where girls would wait and stay was called Zanan Khana (women's room). No male was allowed in that room except my dad, grandfather and brothers. I suffered at a personal level as I could not choose what I wanted to be, and I feel that I am living a life chosen by someone else for me.

During my interview with Professor Mackie, I asked him about his opinion on the seclusion that comes with hijab. He told me that the seclusion of hijab is not only at personal level for Muslim women; it comes at social, religious, and societal level. The act of dividing Muslim women into ranks of purity and piety is turning them against each other. Hijabi is secluded from non-hijabi and vice versa. A woman who wears hijab has to carry the traditions of the family and the culture. Carrying the traditions of a culture is a very isolating act in itself. Women who do not observe hijab are in worse situation as there is no support system for them. At personal level, they are carrying the burden of shame with no one to talk to. At familial level, it can be dangerous for a woman to stand up against the practice of hijab. If a woman chooses to give up hijab, she might face a lot of familial pressure to go back to hijab. It is the family's way to save face in the society. He also said that Muslims are collective societies, and they believe in sticking together. A parent would go to any extent to keep their face in the society, and hijab is the starting point. As my grandma used to say, "If a girl gives up hijab, then she will do anything except listening to elders." So women need to stay in the world as hijabi no matter what it takes to keep them hijabi. A woman who wants to go against all these cultural values has a lot to lose, sometimes even life. This dilemma can be very isolating for women who want to give up on hijab in that culture.

It is the idea of seclusion that is making hijab such a burden on Muslim women, directing them towards a life full of misery and melancholy. As mentioned in the article written by Cooper, women in Afghanistan are living under house arrest since espousing the custom of hijab; women

face dire consequences if they don't cover themselves (358). This seclusion is causing a lot of emotional distress to these women leading to mental disorders like depression and anxiety. The idea of seclusion makes it harder for women to lead a normal life, especially in countries like Afghanistan, particularly after Taliban took over the country; Taliban is by far the worst thing to happen to Muslim women. Taliban imposed this strict dress code and seclusion for Muslim women and then sealed doors to education on them gradually (Masci 251).

I know my daughter will never know the life I had to live as a hijabi woman in a Muslim country or as a hijabi immigrant in USA. I am aware of the fact that brave Muslim women like Eman and Mahmuniir, and maybe myself, are only stories for her, and I thank God for that every day. I am also conscious of the fact that millions of Muslim girls outside, and some inside the USA, are not lucky enough to live a life of their own choice. Hijab is not a choice for them like it would be for my daughter. For millions of daughters in Islam, life is becoming a prison. Hijab is the beginning of this life in prison, and it ends at drastic, heinous practices like female genital mutilation. According to Professor Mackie, there is a correlation in Indonesia between the rise in hijab and the rise in female genital cutting. So should we lose all hope or should we take a step towards the future and make hijab and the mentality of hijab a forbidden and forgotten history?

As a former hijabi, I understand the bias I have against this tradition. I have the firsthand experience of failing at a personal level because I could not understand people. How could I? I was never allowed to be around them. Outside in the society, I struggle every single day to understand the system and culture. I can comprehend the arguments made in "The Crusade Over the Bodies of Women" about the Western mentality of colonialism which is blamed for making hijab notorious (Fernandez 271). The author condemns the West for making hijab a symbol of oppression. Two negatives do not make one positive. Colonialist mentality is not an excuse to look

away from the coercion of hijab on Muslim women. Blaming colonist mentality and defending Muslim men is not going to help women who are mugged of their natural birth rights. Women in Islam are oppressed, even the author acknowledges that in her article, and hijab is a way of oppressing women. The only way out is educating and making these women strong enough to stand up to traditions that rob them of their selves.

In "The Pink Hijab: The Arab Revolts of 2011 Have Transformed the Image of the Islamic World. One Young Egyptian Woman's Struggle Reflects the Scope of Change--and Shows How Long it has been in Coming," Wright talks about Ziada, a very brave girl who made the difference in the life of her cousin, by saving her from female genital cutting. Ziada fought to save her sister and many others from this female circumcision but failed. She did not give up. She kept on fighting and changed her uncle's mind thus saving her cousin from female genital cutting (Wright 47).

What if Eman had not given up on hijab and the culture that comes with it? What if Mah Munir had not fled Iran and found refuge in USA? What if I, like a good daughter, started wearing hijab the day my mom asked me to and had not taken the stand and criticism from my own family members? We don't know for sure what might have happened, but I know that girls like my daughter would not have mothers and Khaltos (aunts) like Eman and Mahmunnir to look up to. They would not have this option of choosing. They would have been robbed of something as fundamental as personal choice. As my dad says, "One generation becomes a fertilizer for another one." We became fertilizers for girls like my daughter. I hope one day every girl born into Islam will be given the choice to be who she wants to be. It is my hope, my dream, my mission and my life. It is not easy; it never was. There is a long battle ahead for women like us, but it is so worth it. You see some battles are not won overnight. It takes decades and resistance of generations to

make the change, and sometimes you never win a battle; you just keep on fighting till the last moment of life, until you win the battle, as it is the right thing to do.

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“Summertime” by Kayla Hudson
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“Seasons” by Hannah Moyles
Honorable Mention, Poetry

I know you like a rose
knows the Sun
in the springtime of Eden.
Petals unfurling towards you
and dew dropping
like pearls pressed against
a soft linen dress.
You have taken root
within me.

My heart bursts in
a fireworks display.
Feel the starscream
burns sear into
muscles and bone.
You are a smoke infused
charcoal grill.

I can sip you as
warm apple cider.
I am used to the
prickled aftertaste
of crunching leaves.

You are powdery snow
and I hope I have left
you my footprints.

Ice melts, and spring comes again.

“The Wildwood’s Wife” by Catherine Bedwell
3rd Place Fiction

Grandmother's dry lips pressed against Agathe's cheek.

Father's hands stirred restlessly by his sides.

Brother's eyes darted away.

Sister sniffled.

The woods groaned in the misty morning as their rotting leaves dropped from dripping branches and coated the muddy trail with slimy skeletal remains. The family's boots slid against the carpet of autumn and Agathe's train picked up the colors of the earth. Grandmother tried to keep the veil from the mud, but in the end it was still splattered with water and specks of dead leaves. Sister clutched the bouquet of lavender tightly, their blooms wilting in the mist.

Father stopped, and the rest of the family followed. They stared ahead at the moss-covered trunks, shaking slightly in the chill.

Grandmother arranged the veil to make sure the golden thread pressed close to Agathe's clay-red hair was in place. Agathe smiled through the white gauze, and Grandmother returned the expression. Her wrinkled palms, as soft as worked leather, slid under Agathe's chin and held it as she whispered a few words of an ancient prayer over her.

Father shifted his weight and interrupted after a few moments, bringing his daughter around to stand in front of him. She could already look over his head without straining her neck, and her thin legs were far outgrowing his. His long fingers, the ones she coveted so much, wrapped around hers and he stared straight into her eyes.

“My child, may your angels watch you,” he said, leaning in to kiss her forehead through the veil. Sister handed her the small bundle of lavender.

Agathe nodded, hands shaking and throat tightening as her family gathered together and began to back away.

“Thank you,” Brother said, dipping his chin in her direction but never looking at her.

Sister bit back a few childish whimpers, her mind still too young to understand that all this could not be stopped now. Father and Grandmother were the only ones to keep her in sight as they edged down the path. Their eyes, the same murky blue as her own, took her in as if trying to memorize her every feature. She knew they must be doing exactly that. She did the same, noting each line on Grandmother's face, how Sister's knees stuck out from under her short dress, the leathery tan on her father that stood out against the mist, and the way Brother's hair stood up in the back. She would miss them more than air.

When they turned the corner and slid from her vision, a small gasp burst from her throat. She startled at the sound of it, quickly shaking her head and disposing of the tears that threatened to be known. She could not cry if she wanted to save them. She must be willing. No signs of sadness...

...No signs of fear.

Her shoulders straightened and she grew thankful for the thick blue wool of her gown. It looked silly and garish when she first put it on, but now she found it was more functional than it seemed. Even the lavender managed to ward off a bit of the chill on her fingers. She only wished her embroidered slippers of deep sapphire were not quite so prone to leaching in the damp. Her toes felt like stones, hard and frozen. She wiggled them, but didn't dare move from the place she had been left.

An hour slid by, though the sun did not burn away the mist. The half-light of dawn persisted even as morning birthed fully. She did not know how long she was to wait. To her, time passed

with no real meaning. She felt as if she stood there for years and yet seconds, all at the same time. No birds stirred the air with their cheerful song. No rabbits or squirrels dug for food. The woods hung silent. It must be near the time.

When the sound of footsteps broke through the mist, Agathe startled. She turned, heart hammering, to see a stranger dressed in a black tunic, carrying before him a leather-bound book. He smiled amiably when he saw her, and she breathed a little easier. It took a minute more before he reached her side, and when he did he reached out and placed his palm over her forehead.

“You are indeed a wild thing,” he said, his voice as lazy and slow-moving as a river in the heat of summer. “I can see why it would want you.”

“I am willing,” she stuttered.

“I know,” he said, “for there could be no other way.”

His hand withdrew and he took a step back. He began to thumb through the book, showing for just a few moments a blur of brightly illuminated pages. She saw lions and birds and men with spears. There were flowers and rivers, every living thing. Power and life spilled from the bindings, warming her hands and sides like the breath of a child. She pulled back, uneasy. The man looked up.

“Do not be afraid. It will not harm you.” He stopped on a page that merely bore words. They ran like bugs along the page, thin and spindly, and written in haste. His voice lifted up as he began to read them.

“Vicious wind that tears, mighty tree that withstands centuries, dangerous beast which hunts. Thus is the wildwood, owner of them all and being of them all. The wildwood cannot be tamed, and its anger cannot be dissuaded.” He looked at her sideways and she swallowed slowly. “Woe to the one who draws its anger and insults its ancient magic. Death be to the man who steals

from its bounty.” He closed the book silently, and stood staring up at the dark branches above him. Agathe ducked her head, biting her lip and trying to keep her knees still.

The man did not speak for a stretch, and when he opened his mouth again, the tone of reverence and solemnity was replaced with one of almost cheeriness.

“But glad tidings to the maiden who may soothe the beast's anger. She that captures the heart of the woods is lucky indeed. May she be a willing and dutiful servant that her devotion may take the place of the price that is owed by another.”

He held out his hand and Agathe placed hers in it. He smiled up at the branches, as if there were an invisible audience in their depth. “Here is the hand of this maiden. I place upon it a binding, that she may forever be reminded of the vows she takes today.” From his pocket he retrieved a plain golden band, which he slid on her middle finger. It settled like a heavy weight, chilling Agathe's heart.

“And now, the wildwood comes forward to speak its love and the word-binding unto the maiden.”

The man stood back, and Agathe was left alone in the path. She forced her eyes to stay open as the wind gathered and whipped the veil from her hair. The lavender burst into a cloud, and Agathe struggled to stay upright. The scent of ancient trees and deep magic filled her nose.

The wildwood came to claim her.

“Global Implications of the Ivory Trade” by Ben Bryant
Honorable Mention, Non-Fiction

In 1800, approximately twenty-six million elephants grazed the plains of Africa. According to Elaine Larson’s *History of the Ivory Trade*, the elephant population is estimated to be below one million today. This sharp decline in the elephant population is due to poaching, a lucrative illegal business that has exponentially increased over the years. The ivory trade exploded throughout the 17th-19th centuries because Western countries were using ivory to produce luxury goods. Michele Hollow points out in his article “Tusks for Terrorists” that in 1989 the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES, banned all trade on ivory. According to Elaine Larson, however, in 1999 CITES allowed the sanctioned sale of ivory bringing about a lessening in restrictions that has brought a resurgence in illegal ivory poaching. The ivory trade is a global issue due to its ties to terrorist groups, international support, as well as a global movement to stop the trade.

Michele Hollow’s online article “Tusks for Terrorists” points out the biggest issue of the ivory trade is that it finances terrorist groups such as al-Shabaab and The Lord’s Resistance Army by providing them with resources to carry out acts of violence. The ivory trade is attractive to these terrorist groups because it generates a significant amount of money. Born Free America, a leader in animal rights studies, and C4ADS, a non-profit that collects data on world security issues, estimates that the ivory trade “generates as much as \$1 billion dollars a year” (Hollow). The declining population of elephants due to poaching increases the value of ivory because it is gradually becoming scarcer. In a sense, the ivory trade is a positive feedback loop: the more ivory poached, the fewer live elephants -- the supply decreases while price rises. Terrorist groups are so attracted to the ivory trade precisely due to this cycle. Additionally, terrorist groups find it easy to get away with poaching. Ivory poaching mostly occurs in countries that are politically unstable. In

some cases, the state government even supports the ivory trade. Varun Vira and Thomas Ewing state in *Ivory's Curse* that the Democratic Republic of Congo's "state security forces patronize the very rebels they are supposed to fight, providing weapons and support in exchange for ivory" (Vira). The government of the Democratic Republic of Congo is not the only country that supports the trade. Somalia, Sudan, and several other African countries profit from the killing of elephants (Hollow). The revenue raised from ivory also allows the rebel groups to be better equipped than the governments fighting them. Laurel Neme differentiates between government soldiers and poachers in her newspaper article "Terrorism and the Ivory Trade":

The money the Shabaab earns from the black market in ivory allows the group to recruit and pay its soldiers well and consistently. Because of the trade, Shabaab fighters are paid about \$300 a month, while those in Somalia's regular army have often earned far less.

The attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya is an example of how ivory money is used by terrorist groups. On September 21, 2013, a group of armed men attacked the north part of the mall in a four-day siege that killed sixty-seven people (Stewart). The terrorist group al-Shaabab claims responsibility for the attack, but this is a huge issue. The *Independent*, a United Kingdom newspaper, reports, "The illicit ivory trade funds 'up to 40 per cent of the cost [of al-Shabaab's] army of 5,000 people'" (Stewart). This is only one example of the ties between the ivory trade and the terrorist groups that are supported by it. Joseph Kony, the leader of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army, has also been reported to be active in the ivory trade. The number of beneficiaries of the ivory trade is alarming and many of the attacks these terrorist groups carry out are directly funded

from ivory. It is not only humans that needlessly suffer from terrorists but elephants are a major victim to. These creatures are slaughtered for a commodity that fuels suffering upon humans.

Terrorist groups are not the only factor perpetuating the international ivory trade; countries that actively purchase ivory propagate the business. Christina Russo's National Geographic article states that "at a 2013 meeting in Bangkok, CITES officials singled out eight countries as instrumental in fueling the illegal ivory trade, either as suppliers, transporters, or consumers: China, Kenya, Malaysia, the Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, and Vietnam" (Russo). Out of all of these countries, China is the biggest consumer of illegal and legal ivory. China is able to purchase ivory because of CITES' act in 1999, which allowed the sanctioned sale of ivory to be exported. There are many reasons for China being the biggest consumer of ivory. One reason is that China's economy is rapidly growing and, from that growth, stems a new wealthy class. Damian Grammaticas' BBC article "Uncovering China's Illegal Ivory Trade" explains that this wealthy class drives the demand for ivory because they believe buying ivory is a sign of wealth. Business people in China will gift ivory to other business people to secure deals, and others believe it brings luck (Grammaticas). Although China purchases ivory from other countries, the country has strict laws prohibiting the ivory trade within its borders. Recently, China publicly destroyed six tons of ivory in an attempt to curb the trade (Grammaticas). Rather than curbing the business, destroying ivory had the opposite effect. Destroying ivory reduces the availability of the resource, raising prices and thus making it more profitable for sellers and more attractive for investors.

China is not the only country playing a major role in the ivory trade; Thailand is a big component as well. While the eight countries accused of supporting the ivory trade are a big issue, they are also trying to combat the problem by implementing regulations. This is not the case in

Thailand. Thailand lacks any sizable evidence of governmental efforts to combat the ivory trade. “According to a report released July 2, 2014, the number of ivory items for sale has nearly tripled in the past 18 months. In January 2013, 61 retail outlets were found selling ivory in previously identified locations around Bangkok. But by May 2014, the same locations had 120 retail outlets selling ivory” (Russo). If Thailand does not create a plan to combat this problem, the country may be threatened with trade sanctions in the near future. The Philippines aid the global market for ivory trade as well. In a *National Geographic* story called “Ivory Worship,” Bryan Christy states that in the Philippines “5.4 tons of illegal ivory [were] seized by customs agents in Manila in 2009, 7.7 tons [were] seized there in 2005, and 6.1 tons bound for the Philippines [were] seized by Taiwan in 2006.” That amount of ivory approximately equals 1,745 elephants killed. The Philippines' soaring amount of ivory in the country is primarily because the country acts as a halfway stop for ivory going to China. The numbers support that countries that import ivory are major reasons for the rampant increase in elephant poaching.

Although the outlook for elephants is bleak, the global community is beginning to take steps to stop the illegal ivory trade. CITES's creation of the first international ban on the ivory trade is a major step towards eliminating elephant poaching. CITES it is not the only international treaty that pushes to help the elephant population, but local organizations as well. Michele Hollow states that Hillary Clinton announced she will commit eighty million dollars from the Clinton Foundation to try to combat the ivory trade (Hollow). It is a 3-year commitment that tries to solve this issue from the bottom up. Clinton claims that her “commitment will aim to reduce poaching to sustainable levels across 50 protected areas by bolstering the capacity of range countries to protect elephant populations currently experiencing high poaching levels” (Hollow). On top of this, President Obama signed into action the National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking

on February 11, 2014. The National Strategy for Combating Wildlife Trafficking is a plan to assist the United States' global allies in fighting wildlife trafficking via three key strategies: strengthening enforcement, reducing demand for ivory, and building international cooperation (Hollow).

Elephant populations sharply declined over the last few decades because of the ivory market. Terrorist groups and countries that profit from ivory poaching perpetuate the ivory trade, which makes it difficult to eliminate the trade completely. As the world's supply of ivory decreases, the demand increases, and the price rises. It is this feedback loop that is the biggest reason why the ivory trade continues today. However, there is hope for elephants as the global community begins to work together to enact stipulations and treaties to stop the ivory trade. With figures like Hillary Clinton and President Obama taking steps to get the ivory trade under control the outlook for the elephant population seems hopeful.

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“The Diary of Mental Illness: Bipolar Disorder” by Sally Bitar
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Who am I?
In February, I'll buy you lunch.
In July, I won't spend a dime.
In October, I'll take you shopping.

Who am I?
In January, I will love you.
In May, I'll block your number.
In November, I'll fall in love with someone else.

Who am I?
In March, I'll take all my meds.
In June, I won't take any, at all.
In December, I'll fight you about it.

Who am I?
I'm running out of months to make you understand.
It does not work in that order, no –
But months, numbers and years are how we comprehend.

Twenty-fifteen could be the year
I might gain twenty pounds or lose some, in fear.
Paranoia, anxiety – constant battle of making peace.

Who am I?
Please, understand, that the answer to that question
Relies heavily on an ever-changing context,
But that it's who I am.

“The Diary of Mental Illness: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” by Sally Bitar

Honorable Mention, Poetry

These thoughts consume me,
“Did you lock the door?”
I reiterate as I ruminate in bed,
Biting into my pillow; challenging myself.

These thoughts devour me,
“Why aren’t those books in alphabetical order?”
“Who placed that table here?”
Please, make it all stop.

These thoughts are leeches,
Except they don’t numb any pain.
It’s three fifty-nine AM,
I’m trapped inside my own mind.

Every night, I get out of bed a dozen times,
To check the door, the lights, the laundry.
It’s torture in disguise;
Torture I can’t escape.

“Top of the World” by Kayla Hudson
1st Place Photography and Art



Excerpt from *Postcards from Space* by Christina Dietz
Honorable Mention, Fiction

I

Do I dare disturb their universes?

Yes.

What of yours, of my own? Do I dare disturb the universes at my fingertips?

Yes.

Some eyes cannot be opened unless someone disturbs them. But who will disturb them, who will dare play the role of a lonely god?

I will.

After all, we were all lonely...isolated within ourselves. They were going to continue living in their loneliness, but I...I had to do something about it. We had been together our whole lives.

It was time we were together once again.

II

That fool.

I wanted to believe he was still alive. Out there, somewhere. But this postcard I held in my hand made me suspect otherwise. Vincent's only clue. It didn't make me feel very hopeful. It had a picture of the whole universe on one side. On the other, Vincent's handwriting. *The Known Universe. Location: Unknown.*

He had always wanted to float, to fly away. Falling was just like flying. Except it ended in death. Suicide was not below him. My best friend, that's what he had been. My best friend. Some friend. I didn't know whether he was alive or dead. I suspected the latter.

My legs dangled over the cliff I sat on. It was a mountain overlook, and it was also cold. He could have jumped off a cliff like this one. If he did, he probably expected to float away into

outer space, but instead fell to a different kind of void. There was a black sky above me. It was riddled with stars. Without them, it would have been just another void...one below, one above.

I wished the darkness was a fire lit by my anger. Vincent, my best friend. We had grown up together. I thought I knew him. I was wrong. All I knew was that he had a poet's heart, and burning bridges and committing suicide would have translated the same message. An end. An end. A violent, meaningless end. One had a beginning, if he wanted it. There was no hope for him, for me. I couldn't make myself believe he was out there. If I knew Vincent Cybele, I knew that he was gone. It didn't matter what kind of gone he was, but he wasn't coming back. I mourned for him. That made me angry. The idiot. He had always had his head in the clouds. Whenever I had told him to get his head out of them, he would say his head wasn't in the clouds, but further. I never knew what that meant, but I should have known better. I should have known that he didn't believe in gravity. His feet weren't tethered to the ground. He'd probably floated away. Too bad he wasn't a balloon. He wasn't going to pop and fall back to earth this time.

There was no hope this time. This wasn't one of his pranks. That made me angrier. I looked to the dark heavens above. The moon full. The stars formed shapes I could not discern. I wanted to shake my fist them, yell at them. If Vincent was out there, if he was listening, he should be ashamed of himself. He should be ashamed for making me angry over his absence. Because whether by death or leaving, he was gone. Never to return. And I was angry...I had done nothing to stop this.

And he left me to deal with this alone.

III

I spotted my namesake in the stars.

Seeing Orion in the stars always made me wonder if that lonely hunter had thought it was a strange name, too.

The moon was full. Her bright rays illuminated the postcard in my hand. On it, there was a picture of the Sombrero Galaxy. I didn't even like sombreros. Of all the places in the known universe, this galaxy had previously been unknown to me. On the other side, it said "you are not alone." Now, listen, I liked the thought of aliens. Sure. My parents had probably been high enough to have seen a few UFOs in their hippie days.

Whatever Vincent meant by this, it was probably a metaphor for something bigger. No matter what that was, though, it didn't make a difference. Whether he had been abducted by aliens, dropped off the grid, outright disappeared, or died—it all had the same meaning to me. He wasn't here. He still had a house, though, and to have a house he needed money. That house must not have been home to him, if he had gone and done this to me. Still, he didn't have a right to tell me I wasn't alone. Because I didn't see him living on practically nothing.

All I had was the Volkswagen van I had inherited from my parents. It was my little house on wheels. I had run away from my parents' past as hippies for so long that I spent all of my money on school and college, just in my effort to stay with my friends. My parents weren't poor gypsies. They were actually from rich families with successful companies. But I hadn't inherited those companies. But they were hippies, which, in all sarcasm, was a beautiful way of sticking it to the man. In this case, "the man" was "Mom and Dad" and becoming hippies and being vagabonds most of their lives was the best way of saying, *Look, I don't really want to run a company that operates illegally*. Their siblings who were next in line inherited the companies, and my parents were given fortunes to stay quiet. That left only the cash and the van for me...good thing, too, or else I would spend my time sleeping in a cardboard box instead of a cozy van.

I tried to run from their past. I wasn't a sellout. They were the posterchildren of smoking pot for peace, but what had that led them to? It led them to accepting a payout so they'd set aside what they supposedly protested for money. I was going to make something of myself. I used my inheritance for school, and I was going to work hard to have a life, but that didn't last very long.

I couldn't find help for my homelessness. Not in Vincent, not in anyone. They probably wouldn't believe me. They'd probably laugh at me. They wouldn't even understand how I could possibly be homeless after I had gone to all of the expensive schools with them, and they would believe that I should've had a substantial job by now.

I did everything right, too...graduated high school and college with top grades. I should've gotten a job. But I guess life wasn't as easy as the textbooks made it seem. The textbooks didn't even mention how to do what you love *and* make it a practical job. My parents never took enough interest in me to tell me, either. Make art and make money off of it? How's that even possible?

Life is so stifling, after all...so ordinary. Everyone's been made out of a cookie cutter—all doing the same thing, living in the same cookie cutter houses. But I never wanted to buy into any of that. I wanted to do what I loved. No one ever told me it would leave me like this.

Orion, up in the sky, you make this Orion, down on earth, feel less alone.

But just like sombreros, I didn't like my name, either. Who names their kid Orion? Just another thing to alienate me. Homeless, odd name, no job, no one to talk to about it. And I couldn't talk to the people I had grown up with. I was alone—no one would understand. They would pity me, and I would feel even more ashamed of myself. If being alone meant I could avoid that, I would take it.

I've watched people be successful. I've always watched them. I've always wondered how they could have their lives figured out, even when they're no older than nineteen. They've always

known what they wanted to do with their lives, and they've always had the means to do it. They start young, and they make it far. The farthest I've ever made it was not jumping off a building, which, for all I know, could be what Vincent's done.

My eyes kept looking at those stars. They wanted me to believe that I wasn't alone. But I couldn't. No matter what Vincent wanted to tell me, I was alone. There wasn't anyone I knew who had ended up homeless failures. At one time I fueled myself by saying my parents would've disappointed in me, so I had to keep fighting to make them proud. But they'd be proud of me either way. They may have cleaned up their acts all those years ago, so I could live up in a good environment and a nice house, but they always longed to go back to their nomadic, free spirited ways. Here I was living out of their old van, living wherever I could park without being towed or fined, or both. They'd be proud. And that made me feel even more ashamed.

I was alone. There were billions upon billions of stars out there, and galaxies I've never even heard of. I'm but one person on a planet of, what, seven billion? I am alone. There's no one to run to, no shoulders to cry on. And nothing, not even a mysterious postcard from out of the blue, could make me believe otherwise. Because it would have been make believe anyway.

IV

Oh my dear Vincent.

I wanted to tell you how worried I am. I didn't know whether you're alive, or if you had decided to end it all. You were a good friend of mine, or are you still? I would tell you that if this was your note, you didn't have to leave, because I'd been there too. Depress...ingly enough, it was easier to help someone with the problem than admit there was a problem in myself. I've been alone for quite some time. Alone with my thoughts, alone in a silent car with no escape. I've had

plenty of time to think it all through, time to think myself into it. Easy. Time to think myself out of it. Not easy.

The stars formed shapes. Constellations. Consolation prizes for not joining them. I still got to look up at them, just didn't get to know them. Be them. Why you had to do this was beyond me...wonder if it was beyond those stars you might've joined. This postcard couldn't have been a note. It wasn't. All it was: a picture of the Milky Way and on the back you wrote *I wish you were here*. Cruel joke, that's what it was. You couldn't be gone. Maybe you just needed space.

Innumerable. Those dots up there in the black sky, innumerable. There was a time they took my breath away, but now as I sighed in the piercing cold air, it seemed my breath had been taken away and never returned. That was what a gripping sadness had done to me—it took everything out of me and never returned it.

Were you out there? In space, or in the distance between wherever you were and where I was now? I wanted to hope against all hopes that you were out there somewhere, Vincent. Someday I'd join you, wherever you were, but today, I would stay here, wondering...hoping...and maybe one day, even believing. All I could do now was stare, with curiosity, at those stars above me.

It didn't make a difference, Vincent. If you were in the heavens dead, or on earth alive, I would still be alone. I had been alone, and I will be alone still. If there was such a thing as destiny, mine was to be alone. I could talk myself out of being lonely as much as I wanted. I could say that I had finally overcome it as much as I wanted to. Neither statements made it true. The ecstasy of company wouldn't permanently cure loneliness. It never had—never will...loneliness had a way of clinging so strongly that it would never let go. Ever. Just when I thought it had released its icy grip on me, it clasped onto me again. I talked big about not feeling alone anymore, but even in a crowded room, it came back to me. All of this longing for people, for someone, for anyone—it

would never be met. That was loneliness. There was no cure, and just when the pain lessened, it came back hard, merciless...and my pain lessened. It lessened when I saw those stars spanned across the sky above me. But then I remembered. I remembered why I came here in the first place. For you, Vincent. To find you. But what good is it when you're already gone?

Oh, I hoped you were out there. With loneliness clutching me once again, it was nice to think that maybe you were out there, somewhere. Maybe you were an alien, a spaceman. Maybe you were out there somewhere, just getting some room to breathe. Wherever you were, it didn't matter. You weren't here. You weren't where you should've been. I wanted to believe in something, anything. I used to have belief, I used to...but now it's gone away like autumn leaves floating away in the breeze. It was a colorful belief, too, with hues of red, and orange, and yellow, and my, oh my, how it fell in the breeze and drifted away. Now winter froze the world over with despair, and in these cold, isolated woods, I saw the stars, and with little belief left, I hoped you were somewhere out there, maybe even in the stars looking down on me.

Vincent, if you're out there, somewhere, then I wasn't alone as I felt.

V

Too much honesty, too much transparency, too much putting everything out there, hanging my heart on the line to be that only genuine friend—where did that get me? We were good friends—honest, genuine, transparent, like brothers...it was a different best friendship than what existed between Vincent and Logan. Between Vincent and I—we had put everything out there. We both knew when the other was lying, bluffing, but now—well, I get that was the ace up his sleeve. I couldn't tell if he was bluffing or not. The last bit of honesty I'll probably ever get from him was a postcard of the stars I was looking at now that said "I wish I weren't here."

He'd always been a dreamer. He had too much inside his head, saw too much behind closed eyes, but the last I saw of him, he had convinced himself that all of those dreams would never come true. I thought that with a graduation and a diploma in hand, and a job offer underway, he'd be able to either make his dreams come true or come back to reality. Vincent told me what those dreams were—something Logan never understood but criticized him for. Vincent only ever wanted to write words, and unlike Vincent Van Gogh who he'd been named after, he wanted to make a painting in the written form. He'd started to believe his words were in vain. All of the things swirling inside of his head—the storm of stories yet to be told, the fantasies inside of his head—these became the stories never to be told, the dreams never to take place. And I wish I had seen it sooner. I was something like a therapist, that person he trusted most, to talk to like a drunk man talks to a bartender. He confided in me, and I in him, because I understood. I understood it all. I understood how the words nagged at him until they were written down, how it was important to tell the stories because it wouldn't be fair to the characters he had created.

Funny how he could be honest with me and then turn around and say no one can ever understand, that no amount of empathy in the world will ever help would be enough to understand what he had been through. I believed him at the time—maybe my trials weren't as great as his, maybe my dreams of being a chef weren't as important as his dreams of being a writer. He had worlds inside of him. What did I have, he'd ask? I had copied recipes. I supposed that, right now, he'd turned around and walked away from our friendship because to have a successful restaurant, you needed passion and money. But to be a writer, you needed raw talent and luck. I wondered if that was what he'd shout in my face if he were here. I wondered if he'd get mad at me because he didn't have enough luck, but I had the money to buy the luck. It's not like he had gone into a career that he could buy. I had—bought the equipment, bought the building, bought the supplies, bought

the menus, bought the wine, bought the decorations, paid the employees. If he were lucky, he'd get published by the time he was fifty, but he wouldn't be able to buy that. I had a feeling that's what he would tell me—just how bitter and angry he was.

The different directions were astounding. I looked around. People were together. Then they walked away. Sometimes without saying a thing. Sometimes they promised to speak, but then they didn't. People didn't keep their promises. People didn't remain as honest as they once were. Sometimes they just...saw their loneliness as an excuse to walk away from something that would destroy the loneliness, but then they were just left alone with no cure.

“Force of Nature” by Brionka Judd
Honorable Mention, Poetry

If you ever encounter a player, know that these other women are merely swift breezes of wind;

They feel nice for a moment but in an instant, they're gone.

He may look at you and think that you're just another breeze, but you're not.

You're the earthquake that shook his very existence and the thunderstorm that caused his soul to rumble.

You are the **force of nature** that turned his umbrella inside out.

He wasn't ready for you.

Wait for the man who stands there firmly with his feet planted in the soil, ready to love you.

“Imaginary and Arbitrary” Lines by Cam Isaacs
Honorable Mention, Poetry

From birth, you are forced to join a side
in a reckless game that can only divide.

Imaginary lines that are drawn in the sand
make you think twice about giving a helping hand.

Along the course of life, when you see another
you pick out the differences and forsake your brother.

Pride in the piece of dirt you were born on
strips us of the love that has long since been gone.

Skin, accents, cultures and all that we are
should not divide us, it's time to raise the bar.

Our differences are merely a product of environment
there's no need to hate others on behalf of our government.

And remember that your piece of dirt is still the Earth
and that we are all humans at death and at birth.

“Morning Dew” by Samantha Velasco
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“The Radical Recruitment Phenomenon” by Andrew Needham

1st Place Non-Fiction

Hasna Aït Boulahcen was a typical Parisian girl. The daughter of Moroccan immigrants, Hasna was “a model kid” despite a sad childhood, according to friends who spoke with the BBC. She earned good grades in school and took dance lessons (BBC Europe). According to the Guardian, Hasna’s parents separated and she was placed in foster care at the age of 8. At 15 she left the foster family and struck out on her own. Khemissa, a close friend, described her as a “crazy girl...who smoked dope and danced all night on the street.” Other friends said, “She had lots of boyfriends, but nothing serious. She had no real friends, just people she hung out with.” “She wasn’t religious at all” (Willsher).

However, in mid-2015, something changed. She exchanged her jeans and sunglasses for a jilbab and niqab, her brash bantering turned into devout Muslim mantras, and Facebook posts began to be laced with references to jihad. A few months later, she moved with her cousin, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the leader of an Islamic State associated cell (Willsher). On November 13, 2015, the group killed 130 Parisians in a terror spree that shocked the world. Two days later, French Police raided the apartment where Hasna and Abdelhamid were staying.

What would make a girl, albeit a troubled one, abandon a life of carousing for a life of jihad? How does a hard partier become a hardliner? According to the Guardian, when questioned by police, Hasna’s mother claimed that her daughter had undergone a “metamorphosis ... a brainwashing” (Willsher). This phenomenon is not isolated to Hasna; it is the story of thousands of people, some of them our friends and neighbors. In order to better understand Hasna’s transformation, we will first examine who and what the Islamic State is.

On June 29, 2014, the leaders of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) declared a *Caliphate*, a very significant religious term meaning a state governed by a rightful successor of the prophet Mohamed (Wood). Citizens of the Islamic State believe that they are to live in complete

compliance with the literal, unadulterated writings of the Koran as set forward by Mohammed (Wood). According to ISIS supporters interviewed by Graeme Wood in a March 2015 article for the Atlantic, until the founding of the *khilafa* in 2014, 85% of Sharia was “in abeyance” (unenforceable). Now, with the Islamic state established, the entirety of the Sharia Canon comes to life. All “true Muslims” are adjured to leave their homes and journey to the caliphate so that they may live under the only legitimate authority, that of Allah. Under Sharia, any variation in word or deed from the direction of the canon, regardless of the degree of breach, is considered apostasy. If the individual is unrepentant after having been informed of his error, the compulsory punishment is death. Thus, if a citizen of IS shaves his beard, wears western clothing, or participates in any democratic process, they are executed (Wood).

One of the most troubling aspects of ISIS’ activities, however, has been the recruits that it has been able to procure from every corner of the globe. Ray Sanchez in a June 2015 article for CNN writes that, “ISIS has the most sophisticated propaganda machine of any terrorist organization, a global communications strategy that has stumped counterterrorism officials while making significant inroads among U.S. sympathizers.” According to John Carlin, of the U.S. Department of Justice national-security division, “There are thousands of messages being put out into the ethersphere and they're just hoping that they land on an individual who's susceptible to that type of terrorist propaganda” (Sanchez).

The Sofran Group has estimated that anywhere from 25,000 to 31,000 individuals from 81 countries have left their homes to become citizens of, and fighters for, the Islamic State (Barret). The New York Times states that these individuals “defy any single profile... [they] range from

hardened militants to teenage girls, petty criminals and college students” (Schmitt). When questioned regarding the number of people in the United States who were followers of ISIS, Michael Steinbach, assistant director of the FBI's counterterrorism division, replied, “There's hundreds, maybe thousands” (Sanchez).

In 2009, US forces in Afghanistan captured a pamphlet written by Al Qaeda in Iraq entitled “A Course in the Art of Recruiting.” The manual instructs the user to “start with the religious rituals and concentrate on them.” The manual further directs that recruiters should “[spend] as much time as possible with prospective recruits, keeping in regular touch...‘listen to his conversation carefully’ and ‘share his joys and sadness’ in order to draw closer...focus on instilling the basics of Islam, making sure not to mention jihad” (Wood).

In “ISIS and the Lonely Young American,” New York Times June 27, 2015, Rukmini Callimachi illustrates the recruitment process in lurid detail.

“Alex” is a friendly, 23-year-old girl, Sunday school teacher, and babysitter who lives with her grand-parents on a farm in rural Washington State. When reporter James Foley was killed in 2014, Alex was repelled and yet fascinated. She went on social media to see if she could find anyone who agreed with the killing so that she could understand why they did it. “It was actually really easy to find them,” she recalls, “Once they saw that I was sincere in my curiosity, they were very kind.” Friendships quickly developed despite her revulsion for the killing. Being lonely in her rural environment, Alex soon began spending many hours each day chatting with her new found friends, some of who openly identified as ISIS fighters and supporters. Conversations ranged

over everything from gardening and diets to jihad.

Although Alex questioned how beheadings were justified, her perspective on ISIS had already changed. The media's portrayal of brutal killers didn't make sense against the background of her new found friendships. "I knew that what people were saying about them wasn't true," she said. They also introduced her to the tenants of Islam and answered her many questions. Her new friends also began pressing her to reexamine Christianity, stressing that while Jesus was a prophet, and as such deserves reverence, he was not God. One named Hamad said, "What you do not know is that I am not inviting you to leave Christianity...Islam is the correction of Christianity" [sic].

Over the next several weeks as Alex wrestled with these questions, her faith was cast adrift. Her friends were encouraging, sending cards, chocolate, and gift cards to an online Islamic bookstore. One in particular named Faisal chatted with her on Skype, sometimes for seven hours a day. Each day he prepared a lesson in Islamic ritual. Finally, she made her decision and posted her Shahada (confession of Muslim faith) on Twitter. In just a few hours, she doubled her Twitter following. Gifts followed: a prayer rug, hijabs and books on the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Alex told no one of her conversion except a cousin who was herself considering converting. Having never met another Muslim in person, Alex began looking for a Mosque near her. Having found one, she suggested to Faisal that she would begin attending. He urged her to avoid contacting other Muslims. Muslims, he said, are persecuted in the U.S., and she could be labeled as a terrorist. Others in her virtual community began to pressure her to also sever ties with people who were

infidels on social media. When she did not unfollow some of her Christian friends, she was accused of being a spy and immediately blocked by a number of people she thought were her friends. Isolated and desperate, she pleaded with her “friends” to take her back. She even offered them her social media passwords so that they could monitor her messages. Faisal interceded on her behalf, and after a grueling interrogation via Skype, she was reaccepted. Almost immediately, Faisal urged that it was a sin to remain with the *kuffar*, and that she needed to travel to “a Muslim land” where she would marry a “nice Muslim” with whom he had made arrangements.

Alex’s grandmother had begun to notice the long, sleepless nights that Alex was experiencing and confronted her. Eventually, Alex’s family confiscated her computer and cell phone, told Faisal to never contact her again, turned over the transcripts of her interactions to the FBI, and shut down all of her social media accounts. However, Alex’s grandparents forgot her Skype account, and according to Callimachi, although Alex no longer trusts Faisal, she is still in contact with him (Callimachi).

This story reveals, in dramatic color, the lengths to which ISIS will go to attract potential recruits, and sheds light on a very disturbing reality: the Islamic State is a cult.

Colloquially, cult is used to refer to almost any religious group a speaker considers to be strange, fundamentalist, or radical. Clinically and academically, the word cult has very specific connotations and very serious consequences to those touched by them. Cults are defined by three distinct characteristics: 1) exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to a charismatic individual, ideal or object, 2) engaging in unethical manipulative techniques of persuasion and

control to advance the goals of the group's leaders, 3) to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families, or the community (Needham).

In an unpublished study, "Implications of Psychologically Manipulative Sect Subculture on Childhood Development" (2015), I explore the methodologies used by cults during recruitment. This process is well documented in a number of academic articles, and the similarities to Alex's story are striking.

First, a prospective member is engulfed in a "pink cloud" of "love bombing" and "focused attention" that quickly subverts the normal cognitive and critical thinking functioning of the individual, inducing a dependent, almost catatonic state (Needham).

Second, the prospect is isolated and all information and communication is controlled. Further contact with former associates is prohibited, while an increasingly intense regimen of lectures and events consumes an ever increasing proportion of the individual's time and energy. This destroys the prospect's frame of reference and ability to critically evaluate the information. Religious exercises and restriction of normal freedoms promote passivity and a focus of attention on the directives of the leader. This subjection insures a constant focus on internal discipline and heightened suggestibility during indoctrination (Needham). Mr. Shaikh, a former recruiter for Islamic extremist groups, explained the recruitment process to the New York Times, "We look for people who are isolated...and if they are not isolated already, then we isolated them" (Callimachi).

Third, internal responses are conditioned. The new member further discovers that any

resistance or questioning of the groups dogma, practices or leadership results in a distinctively negative response from the other members (Needham).

Prolonged exposure to this intense programm disrupts the usual functions of personality, changing the identity of the individual and creating a “doubling” of the personality. However, unlike normal dissociative identity cases where the individual experiences distinct identities, the cult personality may “float” back and forth between the behavioral characteristics of two separate personalities superficially overlaying and controlling the existing identity (Needham).

The consequences of this manipulation are devastating. Christianne Boudreau didn’t even know that her son was radicalized until the Canadian Security Intelligence Service showed up at her door and told her of his involvement with the Islamic State (Newton). He had turned to Islam to escape depression and had been doing well, but then was approached by ISIS recruiters who told him that he could “help save women and children...stop the torture, [and] stop Bashar al-Assad” (Newton). He told his family that he was going to Egypt to study Arabic but then went to Syria, and in January 2014, died in battle (Newton).

In Billstedt, Germany, two girls, Merve (17) and Ece (18), disappeared from their homes and traveled to join ISIS. The fate of the girls is unclear at this time, but for Ece’s father, the loss of his daughter to ISIS was too much. He was found in his apartment building having committed suicide by hanging (Flade, George and Hinrichs). The families of a newly married Mississippi couple were stunned when, at the airport on the way to their “honeymoon,” the couple was arrested for attempting to join ISIS using their honeymoon as a ruse to get to Syria (CBS News).

But not all recruits journey to ISIS territory. On December 2, 2015, a health inspector-turned-terrorist and his wife fired on co-workers at a holiday party killing 14, in San Bernadino, CA (Schmidt and Pérez-Peña). A George Washington University study, by its program on extremism, identified 300 U.S. based ISIS sympathizers who “are using social media to connect and disseminate information” (Gore). The U.S. is not the only country with this problem. The attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo were carried out by brothers who had grown up in France (BBC Europe); while many of the shooters from the mass attack on Paris hailed from France and Belgium (BBC Europe).

The consequences, however, do not end with recruits’ families and their victims. There are dire consequences for themselves. Over the past year, multiple self-identified ISIS deserters have spoken with authorities and the media regarding their experiences. “It was totally different from what they said jihad would be like,” a man name Ghaith told the New York Post. He described a culture wherein wholesale killing was purposeless, women recruits were abused, and meals consisted of mainly bread, oil, and cheese (Associated Press). Another, Hammad, told the Boston Review that after joining ISIS he was placed in a training camp and spent four month studying Islamic Law under a variety of foreign fighters (Farooq). “They taught us how to pray correctly, how to be trustworthy Muslims, how other Muslims had a flawed belief in God...At the end, you were ready to blow yourself up for them” (Farooq).

Once control over the individual is established, the consequences are deadly. According to OZY, German intelligence estimates that of the 700 individuals who have left Germany to join

ISIS, 80 have already died in jihad attacks (Flade, George and Hinrichs). The Atlantic reported in October 2015 that 20,000 ISIS fighters have been killed, and while there is no way to know exactly how many of these were foreign fighters, they did report a disturbing statistic: the number of ISIS fighters remains about the same (Gilsinan). Thus, either there was an initial underestimation of ISIS's strength, or recruiting efforts are replacing those killed almost as quickly as they are dying.

In order to combat this growing problem, according to Fox News, the U.S. Department of State, Department of Homeland Security, and several corporate partners sponsored the "Peer to Peer [P2P]: Challenging Extremism" initiative in which various groups used social media and digital tools to counter extremism. Cadets at West Point developed websites to point those they termed "fence-sitters" toward more moderate Muslim voices (Johnson). Others, like Christianne Boudreau, spread the word about the dangers of recruitment and talk to those considering joining ISIS.

While these programs have had some success, often it is only the harsh reality of what the Islamic State does in practice that shakes a recruit free of the mental control. In a recent report by the International Center for the Study of Radicalization, most of those who leave ISIS do not have ideological differences with the group, rather it was disillusionment with the practices of the organization that cause the defection (Robins-Early).

Behind the façade of pious devotion, rigorous observance, and unwavering faith lies a culture fraught with cruelty, wanton brutality and senseless murder. And while recruits may find excuse for this when exercised against the *kuffar* (infidel) and *riddah* (apostate), justification evaporates

when the casualties are innocents, citizens, and friends. Hammad told the Boston Review that in the ISIS stronghold of Raqqa, rival fighters were beheaded “everyday;” he was jailed on multiple occasions for speaking to a girl he liked, not closing his shop quickly enough at a time of prayer, smoking, and on a false charge of plotting to bomb ISIS. Each time an uncle who was high in ISIS’ command structure got him off, but not before he had endured significant beatings and torture (Farooq).

It is my belief that the Islamic State’s recruitment phenomenon is not a novelty or an aberration of luck, nor is it the joyful flocking of the masses to a movement in which they believe passionately. It is the deliberate, calculated manipulation of individuals to buoy an otherwise untenable ideology.

Many initial reports said that Hasna Aït Boulahcen had become the first female suicide bomber in Europe. Later reports indicated that she died when someone near her detonated their vest. Neighbors reported hearing someone they thought was Hasna screaming for help. Some have speculated that this was to lure the cops closer so that her accomplice would cause maximum destruction. However, I have a different theory: I believe that in that moment of trauma, the dire nature of her situation broke through the cultic haze. She realized that she was about to die for a cause that she didn’t believe in, and she panicked. As the cops closed in behind a hail of bullets, and as her erstwhile “friend” grabbed her as a shield while he attempted to detonate his suicide vest, she screamed desperately, “Aide moi! Aide moi!”

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“A Tribute to Rural Life” by Samantha Velasco
3rd Place Photography and Art



“A Machine Gunner with Trembling Hands” by Caroline Kelly
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Your mother’s name was Anne, and the day you left for war
she hung a rosary around your little boy neck.
You never took it off,
not even crawling through the mud and filth in basic.
You thought, *if they kill me, I want to be buried with this.*

It beat against your chest through each day
of wind and rain and red sun
imprinting a cross of sweat and dirt each time it swung.
Some days it felt heavier than others,
and you winced as it slapped against the dried blood,
but you had three miles left to go
so you told yourself it was your mother’s hand over your heart.

On the days when your hands seized up,
in the barracks or in the field,
and you couldn’t crouch over and cradle them
and you couldn’t drop your rifle
you reached up a few stiff fingers and felt the cross
beating in time to the thumps of pain.

The first time you jumped,
you couldn’t feel it under all the other weight;
but you did hear her, asking for God to bless each of her children.
You were a child again, peering around the edge
of her bedroom doorway, seeing her knelt at the bedside
with her hands folded up and her forehead resting on them,
praying, *Almighty God, show me how to love each one:*
Joe and Jimmy and Jack and Babe and Anna.
Let me give them everything I have.

Your heart pounded in your throat as your feet
became a blur over the treacherous ground,
and your hands were always working some kind of weapon,
and your throat caught on the memories
of every buddy whose body was laid to rest by the falling snow.
The world became so much louder and you thought they

had ripped out your heart with their bare hands,
when Johnny's body bent and fell into the snowy road.
Maybe if you had been out there with him, he would be here now,
legs crossed and jamming his hands into his pockets as you laughed
to keep warm.

But you weren't, and he ain't,
and you're holding on to that rosary
like it's anchoring you to the bottom of the ocean,
and they're trying to tell you, "It ain't your fault,"
and your grip only relaxes when it hurts to hold on.

They sent you out here to kill and you do it without thinking,
but what you're really learning is how to love:
how to stay warm together in a foxhole when there ain't no warmth in the whole forest
and how to put a cork in the dam and make it last until you're home,
even when you're still choking down the wounds that there ain't no morphine for.

The Lord is with thee. The Lord is with thee.

You shut your eyes and hold your helmet on with one hand
and clutch the cross with the other every time the shelling starts,
and your mother's voice laces with the shells:

*Lend me unto your service, oh Lord, until Your will is done
and I am called home from the hands of Thine enemies.*

“Buddy” by Daniella Padilla Guerrero
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“The Saga Begins: A Conversation with Myself” by Philip Odom
Honorable Mention, Fiction

“It was a dark and stormy night...”

Wait, so that’s how we’re going to do it? I know it’s a short cut to set a mood, but come on. Why is it all the scary things happen on dark and stormy nights? If you’re a great writer you should be able to make things even scarier on a bright and sunny afternoon as children play in the distance and fluffy clouds waft gently by. That’s how you do it, you smack the reader upside the head with something out of left field, not spoon feed them clichéd images to prime the emotional pumps.

Are you quite done? I’m trying to write a story here.

Could’ve fooled me, but please continue flailing about on the keyboard. It amuses me.

If I might get this thing going... ahem. “It was a bright and sunny afternoon...”

Are you for seriously right now? You’ve not only completely ripped off my line, you think fixing it involves pretending it’s opposite day? I thought we could write better than this drivel. Maybe instead of setting mood we establish the mood through artful storytelling and well-developed characters? Can we do that?

Okay then. “John fished around in his bag for the wallet he knew would be there. It wasn’t. Even though he knew he had put it there just last night when he turned off *Leno*...”

Alright first of all, what is up with that sentence structure anyway? It’s all choppy and flows horribly, almost like you copied and pasted the crap that comes in spam email and put it into

what I'm increasingly generously calling a story. And Leno? What, is this story set like five years ago? Who watches Leno?

I'll have you know I'm using that as a device to set the time period.

Really? Be that as it may, it's a little ridiculous for an opening act on your magnum opus. Plus, I mean, you're in a class with a bunch of twenty-somethings that probably don't remember Leno much but as a punchline for jokes on Family Guy.

Okay, okay. We're losing focus. Back to the story; what would you suggest, oh knower of knower and seer of seers?

You forgot prognosticators of prognosticators since you're going to be quoting old movies and pretending you're being original. Well we know you suck at establishing setting, and also suck at diving right into the story, so what can we do that plays up to your talents? I know, terrible poetry! No, wait, that's so terrible that even hipsters won't enjoy it ironically.

Watch it, pal.

Pal? What are you, like 70? Anyway, we need to play up to strengths you don't have, so I guess we need to ask someone else to write it? Nah, we don't have the time for that. Why don't we see what you come up with for a different beginning?

"Call me..."

Stop! Oh my God stop! Herman Melville, you are not.

Touché, touché. Well let's try this: "Darkness. A heavy, wet darkness clung to everything, making every breath a cloud of memories that wafted from the nose and dissipated into the ether. Footfalls reverberated from the surrounding walls and faded off into the distance as flashes of blue

light pierced the otherworldly smokiness. Detective John pulled the collar of his overcoat in tighter and cursed lightly under his breath. His gait slowed when the police tape materialized in front of him. He surveyed the scene with the grim sense of duty that being a front line grunt will give you. Bullet casings here, blood splatter there, and a body looking almost peaceful as it lay in the middle of the alley; it was all just another day on the job.”

Wait, so you write Noire fiction now? I'll bet next thing you'll be telling the reader that the cop is grizzled and somehow establish that it's 1949. Oh, wait, and in Los Angeles, right? You're totally ripping off that game LA Noire, aren't you?

Shut up! Well... I might have been a little bit.

I knew it! I don't know that Noire is your strong suit. I mean, it's not bad, but let's face it; you seem to be trying way too hard to shoot for something here... and you're kind of missing.

Jackass.

Hey! I'm just here to help! Switch gears. Write about what you know, right? Pick something you know a lot about and start writing. Let's do that, but let's do that well; shall we?

Well, let's see what I can come up with aside from a string of insults directed at you. Hmm... how about: “The alarm clock blared with nearly feigned urgency. John flipped onto his side with a grunt and opened one eye to glare at the clock that dared interrupt his sleep. Reaching a hand up into the air, he slammed it down on the snooze button to teach that particular miracle of modern technology a lesson. Satisfied that punishment had been swift and justice served, he rolled on his opposite side and drifted off to sleep...”

Just what the hell is “feigned urgency” for an alarm clock? How does an inanimate object feign anything? You do know what that word means, don’t you?

Of course I do. Feign: verb; pretend to be affected by (a feeling, state, or injury).

Oh look who figured out how to Google a word.

It’s a rough draft. You shaddup with that attitude about word choice. I’d have fixed it later.

Sure you would have, but it doesn’t matter. This story isn’t going anywhere, is it? It’s just the story of you getting ready for work in the morning, isn’t it? Why don’t we go back to the detective story, drop the Noire and dripping pretentiousness, and see what’s there?

Don’t make me drink you into a stupor.

Oh, you know I just get louder and more right. Or, well, more right, all the way up until I convince you that hitting on the impossibly-hot, straight bartender is a good idea.

You have done that from time to time.

Now who’s getting us off track? Back to this detective story; let’s take a different tack on that. Try again, but this time write, like, good or something.

Bite me. But anyway: “Fog hung in the air as Detective John walked to the end of the alley. The lights from police cruisers flashed blue and took turns with casting shadows. John pulled at his coat collar and shuddered. As he walked forward, he was unnerved by the sound of his own footsteps. Police tape appeared, and he walked slower. He shook his head. Two days from retirement and they give him a serial killer case. As someone once said in a movie, he was getting too old for this shit.”

Oh ye gods, the Noire was better. Where do I begin?

You could be helpful, you know.

I guess I could, the grade does belong to both of us. Well, let's go sentence by sentence, I guess, Mister "I Think I Can Write." The first one has serious issues. For one, it's not really helping set the mood, and for two, it just kind of states things like you would have written in fourth grade. You know, now that I think about it, I don't think Miss Castalow would have let you get away with that in the fourth grade, either.

Maybe...

How about this? We need to set the mood and time of day without just saying "it was a dark and stormy night at midnight" blah blah blah, so what time of day is it? Early morning? Late night? If it's a crime story, especially with a serial killer, as cliché as it is, it's probably better to set it at night. Also, we need to know something of John's mood about this whole thing. It needs to feel weighty and unnerving.

So more like this? "The air was heavy with late night fog as Detective John made his way towards the mouth of the alley."

Well, look who figured out a good opening hook! Or, well, as good as can be expected from the likes of you.

Bite me.

You wish. So, next we need to look at the police cruisers. It's all about setting mood at this point, so expand on that. Make me feel what the detective feels... but not like you write, do it, like, I don't know...like you know how to write in English or something.

One of these days I'll figure out how to get back at you, Inner Monologue. Well, how about this? "The strobing lights from police cruisers intermittently turned the world blue and took turns casting shadows onto the vapor that oozed around the crime scene."

I can't believe I'm saying this, but better. Now, this dude needs to inhabit this scene. You've told us how the weather is making him feel, now make us believe it, and do it without explicitly telling us how actions in the scene make him feel.

You forgot to insult me a second time. You're slipping.

Now you shaddup. Just write something good.

Alright. "John pulled the collar of his overcoat closer around his throat and shifted his hat forward slightly on his head. He shuddered. As he plodded forward, the sound of his footsteps echoed off the bricks around him and momentarily drowned out the distant police radio chatter."

Well there you go! John... and I'm groaning, literally, at that name choice... feels like he belongs there.

You know "John" is a placeholder name, right?

Sure it is, I believe you. I'll bet you were going to title this something like "Detective John Catches a Killer" or something.

It's a working title. You can bite me right now, you know.

Keep saying it and maybe it'll happen. You're weird, you know that?

Says the one that keeps insulting himself.

Says the one that's holding an argument with himself.

Touché.

So, back to this story. Keep setting the scene. Why is he walking slower because there's police tape? The way you worded that I would think he was startled by the tape because yellow offends him or something.

You're a piece of work. "He slowed down as he noticed the police tape appear in front of him, beyond which lie the victim."

There, that does work better. I can't believe I'm complimenting you on that.

You know you secretly want to.

Now you, sir, can bite me.

Now who wants some action?

Whatever. Let's get back to work on this or we won't ever finish. First, you do know that bodies "lay" there they don't "lie" there in the past tense, right? Second, shaking his head is fine, but I'm not sure that it should be a stand-alone sentence and... wait, holy hell, did you just reference Lethal Weapon?

Maybe... it works on *Family Guy*.

Yeah, well, it can get tedious and doesn't necessarily fit the mood you're building here. Let's reword the end of that paragraph some, and make it punch-y. Something for the ages and with a body laying there.

I'll fix the lay/lie nonsense in the final draft, and as for the rest... I don't know that I can do that.

That's my line! Stop stealing my thunder!

Sure, sure. "He shook his head in disbelief. Stopping short of the barrier, he dropped a cigarette onto the asphalt and snuffed it out with right his shoe. Cupping his left hand in his right and, moving his right thumb up and down, he massaged his left palm. Even though retirement was less than a week away, it felt further away than it ever had."

Better, but holy crap, is it important to know which side of his body these actions happened? And what's the deal with the wording of that third sentence? Do better.

Anything constructive you can contribute, or are you trolling today?

Hey, I've been pretty helpful so far.

That remains to be seen.

Stealing more of my lines! Plagiarism isn't a pretty color on you. At any rate, drop the reference to the right foot in the second sentence.

Like this? "Stopping short of the barrier, he dropped a cigarette onto the asphalt and watched as the damp surface snuffed it out."

Holy crap, that's pretty good. Wait, am I complementing you now? What has become of me?

You've regained some sanity.

Says the one that talks to himself. That next sentence needs to be better. The shape it's in makes it clunky and unappealing, and I don't think it's necessary. If that's an important plot point, you can introduce that in later paragraphs or chapters, but right now it just kind of breaks everything up in a stupid way. You're stupid for putting it in there.

Oh good. You've gone back to insulting me. The nice you was worrying me.

It was worrying me, too. That last line seems fine on its own. As long as you drop the hand job sentence, you've got something good at the end. So drop that sentence and put it all together. And for the love of God, Country music, and all that is Holy. change the detective's name before I quit us.

Fine. Here's the completed opening paragraph: "The air was heavy with late night fog as Detective Clark made his way towards the mouth of the alley. The strobing lights from police cruisers intermittently turned the world blue and took turns casting shadows onto the vapor that oozed around the crime scene. John pulled the collar of his overcoat closer around his throat and shifted his hat forward slightly on his head. He shuddered. As he plodded forward, the sound of his footsteps echoed off the bricks around him and momentarily drowned out the distant police radio chatter. He slowed down as he noticed the police tape appear in front of him, beyond which lay the victim. He shook his head in disbelief. Stopping short of the barrier, he dropped a cigarette onto the asphalt and watched as the damp surface snuffed it out. Even though retirement was less than a week away, it felt further away than it ever had."

There, that's much better. It almost sounds like you know what you're doing... almost. It sets the mood without beating the reader about the head with it, establishes a little about the main character without explicitly listing characteristics, and the end feels like a good lead in for dialogue between the detective and someone on the scene.

Wait, are you complementing me again? I'm askeered.

Bite me, and expand this into a story. I want to know what happens.

Okay, here goes nothing...

Untitled by Zain Goheer
Honorable Mention, Photography and Art



“Something Important” by Isaac Venditelli
Honorable Mention, Poetry

Today, when I parked my car at the store,
 and got out
I saw it under my tire.
A crisp twenty-dollar bill
 waiting to be spent on something important.
I tugged it, freed it
 and placed it in my pocket.
I had no need for the bill, and so
 I tucked it into the pocket of a
black winter coat
That was hanging on a rack alone, and would be
 bought, but not worn
For several months more.
And there the bill will wait
 to be found, to be used
To buy something important, perhaps.

•

This morning I put on my new winter coat
A bulky black thing, that I found
 on the sales rack, the rack for clothing
That no one else wants to buy.
As I walked down the street, I shoved my hands
 into my pockets, attempting to protect them
 from the chill of an unforgiving wind
And found a twenty.
Still pristine, unused
With its picture of some president,
 whose name I should probably know,
Looking up at me, as if waiting to be spent

on something important.
When I stepped into a coffee shop to get warm
And saw the waitress, the beautiful waitress
with the sad eyes
I wanted to be important to her, and so
I walked up to the counter, and
dropped the nameless president into the tip jar
The empty tip jar with the faded sharpie ink on its side.
As I walked through the door, back into the winter,
The waitress called out to me,
the beautiful waitress with the sad eyes,
and told me that the heat was free,
That no tip was required.
I turned around and told her
that she was someone important
Someone who should have twenty dollars
in her tip jar.
And as I blew her a kiss
I heard the horn of a car
A car more unforgiving than the winter.

•

At the beginning of my shift
A man in a black coat came in,
and stood for a while
Warming up, I suppose
Like the dozens of others who come in
and don't buy anything
And let the wretched wind inside
Every time they open the door.
But I watched him, and he was happy, the kind of happy that
doesn't care how cold it is outside.

Before he left, the man in the black coat
dropped a bill
Into the always-empty tip jar.
As he walked out, I called to him, I told him
he didn't need to leave a tip,
Not because I didn't want it
but because I wanted to speak to him.
He laughed, he said I was important,
and he blew me a kiss
Right as a car slid over the ice
and into him.
I screamed, I screamed so loud that
no sound was made
And I ran back inside, and flipped the
open sign around.
I got the money from the tip jar before I left,
and realized that his was the only bill in it.
I drove to a flower shop
the one that stood on the corner
And had so many flowers,
but no customers to buy them.
I bought seven daisies,
seven being my lucky number
For nine dollars and some change.
I gave the florist the twenty-dollar bill
and left before he could give me the difference
Because I wanted nothing to do
with the rest of that tip
The tip that I didn't work for, that I
didn't deserve.
Then I drove to the hospital,

the only one in our small city
And asked to see the man in the black coat.
But when I stepped into his room
He was no longer wearing his black coat
and he was no longer awake,
So I set the flowers down, and left
to finish my shift.

•

I had only one customer today.
She was young, and sad
and did not speak.
She bought daisies and paid me
more than she should have,
Leaving before I could say anything.
I put the coins in the register,
and the extra ten dollars in my pocket
And forgot about it until I was walking home.
I took my gloves out of my pocket,
and as I did, the ten-dollar bill fell out
And was carried by the wind
into a parking lot.
I did not chase it
the night was too dark, too cold
And I hoped that maybe someone would
find it
And use it for something
important.

“Call It What You Want” by Cam Isaacs
1st Place Poetry

I heard my friend say the other day that Angela died.

“Tragic,” he said.

Angela? It’s funny, but I can barely picture her now.

All I can conjure up is some vague mass of a human with brown hair.

“Unexpected,” her family said.

Was that all? Was that everything about her?

It doesn’t matter, I guess.

She’s gone now.

“Sad,” her friends said.

The physical form is gone, and everyone will remember her differently.

I didn’t know her well, but someone said there
was a note. It said she couldn’t take it anymore.

“Uncharacteristic,” her teachers said.

What was there to take?

They said she had been abused.

“Pathetic,” those who hated her said.

Someone mentioned she had been depressed,

but no one thought it would get this bad.

“What a pity,” everyone else said.

She had scars on her arm, I remember now, but I bet
they were nothing compared to the scars on her mind.

“Understandable,” I said.

Faculty submissions

This is the first year that the *Wake Review* allowed Wake Tech faculty members to submit work. They were submitted to advisor Mrs. Mandy Kelly directly who then sent the submission into the *Wake Review* anonymously so that students could not possibly judge works with a bias. Faculty submissions are not eligible for cash prizes and can be found on the website along with our placing winners, honorable mentions, and staff works.

Faculty Submissions

- “Dandelions”—Dr. Dean Furbish
- “God’s Fool”—Dr. Dean Furbish
- “Stalingrad”—Dr. Dean Furbish
- “The Postwoman”—Dr. Dean Furbish
- “The Cow”—Dr. Dean Furbish
- “Along Fish Creek” by Barbara Coles
- “Cozy Night Fire” by Barbara Coles



<http://www.tinyurl.com/wakereview>

Author and Artist biographies

Brittany Astin, Photography and Art Honorable Mention

Tracy Arm

No biography was provided.

Catherine Bedwell, 3rd Place Fiction

The Wildwood's Wife, pages 26-29

Bedwell is twenty-three years old and has been writing for most of them. She loves all things gloomy and romantic. She adores ballet, squealing over cats, longs for England, and lives in the past. Jane Austen is her queen, and Daphne du Maurier is her home girl.

Sally Bitar, Poetry and Non-Fiction Honorable Mentions

The Diary of Mental Illness: Bipolar Disorder

The Diary of Mental Illness: Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

A Guide on How Not to Kill Yourself

Bitar was born and raised in Dubai, U.A.E. She is passionate about equality in every single form. Bitar is en route to getting her associates and hopes to finish her higher educational journey with a Bachelors in Broadcast Journalism—to further pursue her career in journalism.

Ben Bryant, Non-Fiction Honorable Mention

Global Implications of the Ivory Trade

Bryant is a boy from Winston Salem, North Carolina, who is staying in Raleigh to attend Wake Tech. He has an older brother and a twin who have helped shaped him to be the person he is today. He is an outdoors-loving person, and someone who hopes to see the world come together and save the environment. Bryant also loves cats.

Meghan Chung, Cover Photo

Snowflake

Chung is a seventeen-year-old freshman at Wake Tech. She plans to transfer to NC State University in the fall of 2017 to peruse her degree in Animal Science. Chung enjoys photography, horseback riding, singing, and reading.

Christina Dietz, Fiction Honorable Mention

Excerpt from Postcards from Space

Dietz loves creative writing, and it is something that she has been doing in her spare time for a few years now. She has written a trilogy which she hopes to publish someday. Dietz attended

Wake Tech in the Fall 2015 semester and began attending NC State in the Spring 2016 semester for their creative writing program. This excerpt from Postcards from Space was her honor's project for the fall semester.

Josh Fugate, Poetry Honorable Mention

How to Permanently Lower Your IQ

Fugate was born on an island.

Zain Goheer, Photography and Art Honorable Mentions

Untitled (Railroad)

Untitled (SAS)

This is Goheer's second year at Wake Tech. He uses a Canon T3i and mostly likes to photography scenes that convey a certain mood. When he finds a shot that he really likes, Goheer waits for a certain time of day or certain weather to go back and get the picture under just the right circumstances.

Kayla Hudson, 1st Place Photography and Art

Top of the World, page 30

Summertime

Wekiva Springs, Florida

Hudson is nineteen years old and is in her second semester at Wake Tech. She plans on getting an Associate's Degree in some type of business program. Hudson has a restaurant job and is currently interviewing for a second job in order to pay for her education. She loves photography and reading in her spare time.

Cam Isaacs, 1st Place Poetry and Poetry Honorable Mention

Call It What You Want, page 50

Imaginary and Arbitrary Lines,

Isaacs is an Associate in Arts student with hopes of transferring to NC State University for a Bachelors of Arts in English, Secondary Education. He was born near Orlando, Florida, but grew up in Johnston County, North Carolina. Isaacs has served and still serves in the U.S. Army Reserve. His favorite authors and influences are Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and John Irving.

Sharon Jacobs, Poetry Honorable Mention

Tender

One day, Jacobs decided that she needed to exercise her brain more fully, and decided that perhaps it was time to acquire her Bachelors, so she embarked on doing so. It has been proven to be one of the best ideas she has had to this date, especially since Jacobs in a product of a society that in order to be "bonafied," she must acquire this piece of paper—a.k.a., a degree.

Yoni Jeffries, 2nd Place Photography and Art

I Am My Hair, page 31

Jeffries is a singer/songwriter from Durham, North Carolina, who appreciates all facets of art. She is twenty-one and is looking into transferring to a university to study communication.

Brionka Judd, Poetry Honorable Mentions

Force of Nature

Bartender

Judd is an introvert who loves to read and write, and plans on transferring to NCSU to major in English.

Caroline Kelly, 1st and 2nd Place Fiction

Between Brothers

Bluebells,

A Machine Gunner with Trembling Hands

Kelly is in the Associate of Arts program at Wake Tech and will be transferring in fall 2016 to a university to study English and history. Reading is her idea of fun and hopes to one day be a published author in literary fiction and possibly biographies. Kelly has written four [unpublished] novels and is currently working on two World War Two-era historic novels.

Hannah Moyles, Poetry Honorable Mention

Seasons

Moyles is currently pursuing AAS degrees in Culinary Arts, Baking and Pastry Arts and Hospitality Management. While studying English, Creative Writing, and Visual Media Studies at Duke University, she realized her true passion lies in the pursuit of Culinary Arts and Baking and Pastry Arts. Outside of cooking, Moyles loves photography. She photographs anything that catches her eye and continues to express herself through her poetry.

Andrew Needham, 1st Place Fiction

The Radical Recruitment Phenomenon, pages 34-40

Needham is twenty-nine years old and is academically endeavoring in graphic design and marketing. His favorite author is Jacques Barzun and he writes personal essays.

Daniella Padilla Guerrero, Photography and Art Honorable Mention

Buddy

No biography was provided.

John Palmieri, Fiction Honorable Mention

Doppelganger

No biography was provided.

Philip Odom, 2nd Place Poetry and Fiction Honorable Mention

Sonnet Eleventy-Two Point Five

The Saga Begins: A Conversation with Myself

Odom was born in the far-flung past of 1977 and grew up without a plan for what to do with life. He struggled with this constantly—until he turned thirty and finally figured out what to be when he grew up: a video game writer. If Odom ever grows up, he'll let us know how it worked out for him.

Saadia Seyd, 3rd Place Poetry

What Makes Me a Woman, page 3

Seyd loves to write fiction and poetry. Her first language is Urdu and she has been writing in it since she was four. English is her adopted language.

Samantha Velasco, 2nd Place Photography and Art and Photography and Art Honorable Mention

A Tribute to Rural Life

Morning Dew, page 32; page 33

After the Storm

Velasco is a homeschooled senior living in Wake Forest, North Carolina. She has been fascinated with photography since she was ten and brings her camera everywhere she goes. She loves to try to capture subjects from different perspectives. Velasco also loves to travel and capture moments she experiences. For example, she has taken many photos in Africa, Costa Rica, Maine, Florida, and North Carolina.

Isaac Venditelli, Poetry Honorable Mention

Something Important

Venditelli is sixteen years old. He received his GED in the fall of 2016, and is in his first semester at Wake Tech. He has been writing poetry for several years, and is inspired by things he has experienced and the people closest to him.

Letter from the editor



Two years ago—almost to this date—I was taking time off from school. I was really struggling with my mental health and even though education had always been extremely important to me, it wasn't exactly helping the cause. So, I decided to withdraw from classes in the spring 2014 semester. The previous semester, however, my ENG 111 instructor had advised me to submit something to the *Wake Review*. Even though I had withdrawn, the magazine still wanted to publish my work. It's still in the archives from the 2014 edition.

I attended the reading and shared my fiction and photography. I went to the reading as a depressed, anxious drop-out with no knowledge of what I was doing with my life, and I left so excited to go back to school in the fall so that I could join the staff. This magazine is the sole reason I came back to school. This magazine is the reason I know that I want to go into editing books as a career. I credit this magazine, the three amazing advisors, the incredible staff members and editors I have had, and all of my fellow students who have submitted his or her writing and art, with everything. I truly do not know what I would be doing right now if I didn't have this magazine in my life. This magazine gave me the motivation and inspiration I needed; it still does to this day.

To my fellow students and to students to come, I hope you enjoyed the *Wake Review* over the past two years and that you will enjoy it in the years to come. To the remarkable, young writers and artists of whom I had the privilege of publishing, thank you for submitting your work and allowing the staff to read and applaud your work...don't be surprised when I'm still following you in the years to come because you guys are incredible. To my staff and editors over the past two years, thank you for being so amazing and hard-working, and being great people in general. To my advisors, thank you for never giving up on me. You three are the most supportive advisors ever.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Carey Shook, Editor in Chief from 2014-2016

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club



The 2015-2016 Wake Review staff after volunteering at the Downtown Raleigh Men's Shelter.

L-R: Mandy Kelly, Carey Shook, Dr. Dean Furbish, Abby Talmadge, Lauren Singer, Carmen Morris, Tiffany Wolf, Bryanna Coulter, Oliver Mejia.

Not Pictured: Dan Lampman, Elizabeth Welch.

