

The Wake Review

2019



The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

Mission Statement: The *Wake Review* is a student-run creative journal at Wake Technical Community College which seeks to provide a forum for the students, faculty, and staff of Wake Tech to express themselves through literary and artistic means such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and visual or audio arts. At the *Wake Review*, we believe Wake Tech should always have a place for its creative voice.

Submission Policy: The *Wake Review* accepts content in the following categories: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, photography, and multimedia arts. Example submissions include short stories, essays, poems, screenplays, pictures, sketches, paintings, computer design images, videos, music, and more. If you are interested in submitting your work to be published, visit our website at tinyurl.com/wakereview.

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Only a small portion of the quality writing and art submitted by the students and faculty members of Wake Technical Community College can be selected for publication in the physical edition of the *Wake Review*.

The online version of the magazine allows us to display the works of students and faculty that were not chosen as finalists but still deserve exposure.

To view the online edition of the *Wake Review*, visit the following website: tinyurl.com/wakereview.

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FIRST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

"Sultan's Palace" by Sara Jamal



SECOND PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

"Band Practice" by Elizabeth Williams



THIRD PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

"Petra" by Sara Jamal



FIRST PLACE NON-FICTION

*"The Southern 'Poe-Spective': Edgar Allan Poe
as a Southern Gothic Influence"*

by Amber Lee

As a key figure in America's literary tradition, Edgar Allan Poe made an exceptional name for himself by writing works that delved into the human psyche and the darker depths of life, death, and various states in between. An examination of Poe's more famous works shows that he clearly possessed as much of a taste for the Gothic as his contemporary audience did, and one can find abundant evidence that Gothicism was his best-loved literary style. Although he dabbled in a number of different genres, including sci-fi and speculative fiction (Knight), his fascination with exploring the human mind drove him again and again to write tales of morbidity, melancholia, and monomanias. In doing so, he soon set himself apart as one of the foremost authors of Gothic fiction in America. It stands to reason, then, that traces of his influence can be found in the works of numerous other authors. Consciously or unconsciously, and regardless of whether they explicitly credited Poe, they drew upon the tropes and topics that he had mastered to serve their own explorations. Due to the widespread appeal of Poe's writing, his style of description and the particular horrific imagery he favored wormed its way into the fabric of American literature at large. In terms of setting, his works often conjure up images of crisp autumn evenings in dreary towns, cities, or decaying manses that just might be located somewhere in New England. But unlike his more modern fellow horror author, H.P. Lovecraft, Poe was not particularly enamored with the New England states, neither as a specific location for his stories nor as a place to live. Despite his Baltimore birthplace, Poe ardently viewed himself as a bona fide southern author (Knight), holding a particular fondness in his heart for Richmond, Virginia. He even called the city his "home."

Given Poe's love of the southern United States, perhaps it is only fitting that the south proved to be possibly the most fertile of fields for the seeds sown by his body of work. Political turmoil, class struggles, and deep-seated racial tensions were among the favored topics covered by southern authors who shared Poe's predilections for the more horrific and despairing aspects of life. The likes of William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor worked to weave a new, uniquely southern Gothic tradition from the threads of cultural traumas and dynastic dysfunctions that they were inspired by. But this blossoming flower of southern literature never would have seen the sunlight had it not been for the dark, tangled roots established by Poe. Newer authors who write Southern Gothic fiction also hold as much of a debt to him as they do to O'Connor and others of her literary school. The lasting influence that Poe bequeathed to Southern Gothic authors both past and present can best be seen in the genre's grotesque imagery, its focus on misfits and the mentally ill, and sensationalistic storylines.

Although one of Gothic fiction's hallmarks in general is grotesque and often disturbing imagery, Poe perfected a uniquely American approach to such an aesthetic. This was much in keeping with his desires to support "the health and prosperity of [America's] literature" (Gordon 6). No longer would decaying English castles and gloomy Germanic settings be the sole stages upon which Gothic dramas could play out. Instead, Gothic aesthetics and principles, a world-weary and cynical perspective among them, were limited only by an author's imagination as to where they could be set. American states, imaginary societies, and even the high seas were all fair game for this approach. Poe apparently believed that wherever mankind dwelt or ventured, Gothicism was sure to follow. Gothic literature's aesthetics often incorporated ruined architecture and unpleasant natural settings, which is what partially bridges the gap between Poe's stories and the work of future Southern Gothic authors. By setting foreboding introductory scenes that described environments and buildings where events would take place, Poe and these other authors constructed fitting narrative stages that would

heighten the horror yet to come. Quoting the antebellum journalist and humorist Thomas Bangs Thorpe, Rebecca C. McIntyre points out that Thorpe's travel writings aimed at residents of the northern states incorporated Gothic descriptions of the south, even down to its flora: "No imagination...can conceive the grotesque and weird forms...as the light partially illuminates the limbs of wrecked or half destroyed trees, which, covered with moss, or wrapped in decayed vegetation as a winding sheet, seem huge unburied monsters, which, though dead, still throw their arms in agony" (33). Considering this excerpt, one can see the early tendencies that would come to characterize the Southern Gothic genre's own turns of phrase. Poe himself used similar natural descriptions in his stories. A standout example of such a description is included in a dream sequence in his sole novel-length work *Narrative of A. Gordon Pym*: "And the strange trees seemed endowed with a human vitality, and waving to and fro their skeleton arms, were crying to the silent waters for mercy, in the shrill and piercing accents of the most acute agony and despair" (Poe 221).

Aside from grotesque descriptions of natural scenery, Poe and Southern Gothic authors share an inclination for equally grotesque backdrops, especially those involving a protagonist's family, in their stories. As Louis Palmer states in "Bourgeois Blues: Class, Whiteness, and Southern Gothic in Early Faulkner and Caldwell," William Faulkner favored "flawed and partial subjects who demonstrate their own inadequacy in the face of the impersonal forces of history..." (121) rather than obvious protagonists who triumph over similar impersonal forces; this was something he held in common with Poe. One of Poe's famous short stories featuring such a protagonist, "The Cask of Amontillado," took place in the vibrant setting of Italy's Carnival season in an unnamed city. The tale also contained classically Gothic descriptions of a revenge plot with an ambiguous motive: "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge...I must not only punish, but punish with impunity" (Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" 152). The

execution of this revenge was grisly, as was Poe's wont; Montresor chains Fortunato up and seals him within a crypt in the family catacombs, despite Fortunato's "loud and shrill screams..." (Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" 157). In the story, Poe seems to imply that although Montresor made a conscious decision to strike back against Fortunato for his alleged insults, he still was following an ancestral precept pressed into him by his upbringing as the scion of a vengeful noble line. The descriptive interlude about the Montresors' family crest makes this clear:

"'The Montresors,' I replied, 'were a great and numerous family.'"

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"Nemo me impune lacessit [No one attacks me with impunity]." (Poe, "The Cask of Amontillado" 155).

The translation of the Montresors' Latin motto suggests that retribution by any means necessary was enshrined as the family's philosophical pillar long before the latest Montresor ever plotted vengeance against Fortunato. In light of this, it is ambiguous whether Montresor was truly "righting a wrong" through his own force of will, or simply carrying on a cycle that had begun long before he was born. It also begs the question of whether or not there are other bodies besides the Montresors' and Fortunato's down in the catacombs, left there by other murderers in the Montresor dynasty. The trope of dysfunctional, sometimes also murderous families is also not an alien concept in Southern Gothic fiction. Perhaps this topic most clearly shows Poe's influence on the genre. For example, individuals being beholden to an irresistible familial destiny and the horrifying consequences it could entail was a favored theme of William Faulkner's; so intent was he on tracking

the rise and fall of his fictional families to the letter that he included a chronology, genealogy, and map relating to the Sutpen family in his novel *Absalom! Absalom!* (Howard 83). In Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, the Compson family dynasty is in the process of falling from aristocratic grace, courtesy of its current crop of troubled heirs and their neurotic parents (Palmer 123-124). Palmer postulates that a primary feature of the novel is "a sort of family apocalypse that implies not only that nothing worthwhile is saved, but that nothing is left worth saving" (124). Beyond this, Faulkner spares nothing in describing the gritty depths of the family's chaotic life. One of the family's heirs, Jason Compson, declares during a conversation "...I have all the women I can take care of now if I married a wife she'd probably turn out to be a hophead or something. That's all we lack in this family, I says" (Faulkner 247). A myriad of troubles hounds the Compson family, tearing them down from their previous high place in society and pushing them closer to their dissolution as a dynasty. In terms of Poe parallels, Palmer points out what could be seen as a similarity between the Compsons' struggles and the events in "The Fall of the House of Usher," namely the theme of a dwindling estate (or in the Ushers' case, a traditionally Gothic decaying house) representing the dynasty that had long dwelt in it (123-124). So too does Poe describe the melancholy that Roderick Usher has sunken into since the story's narrator last saw him: "For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminisces of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament" ("The Fall of the House of Usher" 114). Roderick and his sister Madeline are the last of their family, and Madeline is expected to soon die of an illness, leaving her brother alone as the final Usher (Poe 115). Just as the Compsons' estate is at last divided and sold off, according to an appendix Faulkner wrote (Palmer 124), so too does the Ushers' mansion fall and sink into the nearby tarn after the siblings' ultimate demise (Poe, "The Fall of the House of Usher" 128). It is these examples that demonstrate the wide range of applications for grotesque descriptions, as practiced both by Poe and by Southern Gothic authors.

Even a brief perusal of Poe's bibliography reveals that he tended to incorporate misfits and mentally ill characters as either protagonists or even bit players in his short stories; this is a trait his works share with what is often considered to be the "typical" Southern Gothic story model. Carson McCullers' works tended to focus on misfits and those who were not well-suited to the roles in life they were meant to play. Aside from toying with the malleability of gender and sexuality in her works, as seen through a focus on Frankie's wardrobe and in Berenice's anecdotes of the effeminate man, Lily Mae Jenkins, in *Member of the Wedding* (Adams 560-561), McCullers also looked at the concept of those who became misfits via rejection, whether by society or by family. In her short story "Sucker," McCullers focuses on the relationship between the teenager Pete and his younger cousin-turned-adopted-brother Richard, who earned his nickname "Sucker" due to his gullibility and willingness to do whatever his adoptive brother said (McCullers 1). When Pete takes out his frustrations on Sucker after he is rejected romantically by his classmate Maybelle Watts (7-8), Sucker undergoes a frightening metamorphosis. He begins to wear different clothes and associate with rougher boys, completely destroying his previous sweet and naïve image (9). By the end of Sucker's transformation, Pete is not only calling him by his real name most of the time, but he is also certain that "if Sucker could he would kill me" (10). As a result of being rejected himself, Sucker retaliates by drawing inward and exchanging his previous great love for Pete with hatred. In the wake of this development, Pete comes to realize the full weight of his words earlier in the story: "If a person admires you a lot you despise him and don't care – and it is the person who doesn't notice you that you are apt to admire" (2).

The rejection and ill-treatment of misfit characters having violent or unpleasant consequences is a theme also explored by modern Southern Gothic authors Jason Aaron and Jason Latour, creators of the comic series *Southern Bastards*. The story arc contained in the first trade paperback volume *Here Was a Man* follows aging Vietnam veteran Earl

Tubb. Earl Tubb left corrupt and violent Craw County some time ago, wanting to get away from his law-preserving sheriff father and make his own way in the world. However, circumstances centered on the covert criminal activities of local football coach Euless Boss force Tubb to take up his father's famous weapon and obtain answers, despite the fact that townspeople repeatedly tell him to "Go on back to Birmingham" (Aaron and Latour, *Here* 90). Ultimately, however, Tubb loses his life in a last stand with Boss (98). But the second trade paperback volume, *Gridiron*, elaborates on the fact that Boss was once as much of a misfit in Craw County as Tubb became. Despite the fact that it costs him a one-sided relationship with his shiftless, disinterested father (Aaron and Latour, *Gridiron* 65), Boss forges a bond with his mentor Big and claws closer to the top of the Craw County hierarchy through football and criminal involvement. Misfit identity and the disillusioned violence it may lead to characterize the world of *Southern Bastards*, establishing the series as a variation on the time-worn Southern Gothic theme. A Poe story that may have had an impact on this trope is "Hop-Frog." In that work, Poe depicts the jester Hop-Frog as both a physical and ethnic misfit in the court he was pressed into the service of; he is described as "being also a dwarf and a cripple...from some barbarous region" ("Hop-Frog"). His friendship with his countrywoman, Trippetta, who also has dwarfism, is his only consolation in a life filled with personal insults and injustices. Though she is more highly favored than he is, Trippetta still suffers at the hands of her captors. It is when the king "[pushes] her violently from him, and [throws] the contents of [a] brimming goblet [of wine] in her face" that the jester is inspired to take revenge on the court (Poe, "Hop-Frog"). During a grand masquerade that he was enlisted to plan, Hop-Frog is able to exact a fiery and cruel vengeance upon the king and his seven advisors before escaping with Trippetta to their shared homeland (Poe, "Hop-Frog"). Although Paul Christian Jones suggests the tale may have been a satire of the sympathetic abolitionist literature that Poe was familiar with during his day (249-250), "Hop-Frog" could also be seen as a precursor to Southern Gothic cautionary tales of the sometimes-steep price of rejecting those who are different.

Turning to mental illness, Southern Gothic authors are as comfortable with the topic as Poe is. A prominent mentally-ill protagonist in the Southern Gothic genre is Benjy Compson, one of the four Compson heirs in *The Sound and the Fury*. He is the narrator of the book's first section, and it is his view of the world that allows Faulkner to set the experimental tone for the rest of the novel. Faulkner's prose in the first section is interspersed with Benjy's various disjointed observations and feelings: "They held me. It was hot on my chin and on my shirt...They held my head. It was hot inside me, and I began again. I was crying now...and they held me until it stopped happening" (Faulkner 22). Through this writing style, Faulkner establishes the difference between Benjy's perspective, informed by his unnamed mental condition, and the points-of-view of the other characters in *The Sound and the Fury*. Poe's method of establishing mental illness in his characters, by contrast, is a touch more lurid than Faulkner's. In one of his famous short stories, "The Tell-Tale Heart," Poe makes it clear that the narrator is mentally ill from the start, through the narrator's insistent denial of it: "True! – nervous – very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses – not destroyed – not dulled them" (172). It is the narrator's obsessive tendencies, particularly his fixation on the old man's "Evil Eye" (Poe, "The Tell-Tale Heart" 173), that lead him to commit murder. Considering these examples, it could be argued that Poe and Southern Gothic writers share a flawed vision of mental illness. Rarely do they write a character as mentally-ill "just because," and rarer still do they allow such characters to exist solely as sympathetic, or even as unsympathetic actors. Instead, mentally-ill characters are doomed by their various neurological conditions to serve only a narrative function, commit a violent act, or play a plot device in another, "neuro-typical" character's arc. On the other hand, Poe and Southern Gothic authors do have an open willingness to depict such characters with depth and detail, rather than rendering them as essentially "objects" as authors in some genres have done. In conclusion, Poe and Southern Gothic authors share a pronounced, if at times problematic predilection for writing

stories that include misfits and mentally-ill characters; this is one important thematic aspect that unites their literary canons.

Sensationalistic storylines were Poe's bread and butter, and Southern Gothic authors have delighted in serving these to their readers since the genre's very beginnings. In fact, it was this sensationalism that caused some critics to reject the budding Southern Gothic style. Among these critics was Ellen Glasgow, who in her criticisms of the then-current work of authors William Faulkner and Erskine Caldwell declared their writing to be anathema to "true" Gothic fiction, claiming that the style they showcased was "irresponsible, crude, childishly morbid, and akin to fairy tales" (Palmer 120). Interestingly enough, this seems to echo the contemporary criticism that Poe received during his career as an author; a view among some of Poe's critics was that he had to be some sort of madman to write as he did, or at the very least a drunk, a drug addict, or some other type of person they would group with the miscreant class. This browbeating of Poe only served to make him more popular, as many avid readers of the time were thrilled by the thought of reading an evil man's works. As Poe's contemporary popularity shows, sensationalism often draws readers in instead of repulsing them, and early Southern Gothic authors undoubtedly took note of this. Flannery O'Connor in particular reveled in sensationalism. Her works often featured con men, ill-intentioned travelers, and even murderers, alongside self-satisfied and moralizing Christians. Greed and desperation characterize the respective motivations of the characters in her story "The Life You Save May Be Your Own." The old woman at the homestead that drifter Tom Shiftlet comes across is, according to O'Connor, "ravenous for a son-in-law" (53-54), so much so that she essentially pays Shiftlet to marry her deaf daughter Lucynell (57-58). However, he goes on to simply abandon Lucynell in a diner, coldly telling the boy behind the counter that she is only a hitchhiker (60). As this incident demonstrates, drifters were not heralds of good fortune in O'Connor's fictional world, typically leaving destruction behind them in their travels. Another of her stories focusing on a chaos-causing

drifter is "Good Country People." In this story, a supposed Bible salesman with a heart condition, Manley Pointer, wreaks havoc on the life of smug, disabled intellectual Hulga, nee Joy, Hopewell. He leads her to believe that she has seduced him, only to steal her prosthetic leg and flee the hayloft where they were trysting (O'Connor 190-194). Despite this depiction of sensationalistic violence and wrongdoing, Doreen Fowler describes various theories proposing that O'Connor's real intention here is to express the way such violence works to preserve social hierarchies (Fowler 128). However, though Pointer apparently dominates Hopewell, it would seem that this is a small, insignificant triumph; it is implied by Pointer's "panting" (188) from the minor exertion of climbing into the hayloft that his heart condition is a very real thing. His casual sociopathy and "[belief] in nothing ever since [he] was born" (O'Connor 194) and the actions this philosophy goads him into are pointless, due to the very real possibility that he "...may not live long" (178). It might also be suggested that the theft of Hopewell's leg and abandonment in the hayloft could be a form of divine retribution for her pride. With this view in mind, a parallel between "Good Country People" and Sophocles' *Antigone*, the source of the title of Poe's short story "Mellonta Tauta," can be observed. Dimitrios Tsokanos quotes Martinez Lopez's description of *Antigone*'s conclusion, which expresses that "although the gods punish the proud, punishment brings wisdom" (Tsokanos 49). Despite the trauma of the encounter, Hopewell is left with the newfound wisdom that Pointer's horrible, criminal behavior is the logical result of the nihilistic philosophy that she previously professed. This conclusion, of course, is influenced by O'Connor's devout worldview as a Catholic southerner. As a result, it may not ring true to all readers of all philosophies, though perhaps it was not meant to. O'Connor may have intended only to give an eloquent argument for her own philosophical perspective through the story. In sum, it would seem that both Poe and Southern Gothic authors do not indulge in sensationalism for its own sake. Rather, they attempt to simultaneously appeal to their audiences' sensibilities while expressing truths that they personally feel to be important.

As the various examples covered here will hopefully show, the Southern Gothic works of authors past and present owe an enormous debt to America's premier Gothic author Edgar Allan Poe. If it were not for Poe's unique approach to grotesque imagery, his depiction of societal misfits and mentally ill individuals, and use of sensationalistic storylines to engross and influence readers, Faulkner, McCullers, O'Connor, and the rest of the early Southern Gothic school would not have as vivid a tradition to draw from in concocting their tales of a decaying, despairing south. And without that Southern Gothic literary foundation, Aaron and Latour would not have been able to infuse as much menacing cultural, philosophical power into their depiction of corrupted Craw County and its sordid domestic dramas. More or less, America's Gothic fiction in general bears the legacy of Poe. But it is only fitting that some of the darkest pieces in American Gothic fiction took flight like a proverbial raven from the southern states, the region that Poe himself fondly called home. After all, history has left the south a number of dark events, deaths, and destruction to deal with in its wake. The Southern Gothic literary genre was produced by authors who felt the region's cultural demons were best revealed and perhaps more easily exorcised through writing's power. Just as Poe drew attention to the realities of mental illness and other often unpleasant subjects through his writing, so too did Southern Gothic writers seek to draw attention to the idiosyncrasies, flaws, and tensions within southern culture. Perhaps Poe would be proud to know that just as he never forgot the time he spent in Richmond, Virginia, authors in the southern United States never did forget him. The very existence of the Southern Gothic genre, if nothing else, proves this to be so.

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SECOND PLACE NON-FICTION

*"Blood-Stained Ivory Pendants:
An Apiculture Initiative to Save the Elephants"*

by Nicolle Lavertu

As a child, the elephant resembled a majestic presence of regal serenity, despite its legs continuously chained to pillars for profit. As years passed, my grandmother's heirloom piano became a reminder of the unnecessary thieving of ivory that we had unintentionally supported to uplift our own musical spirits. To kill an elephant for the mere purpose of molding its tusks or displaying its head may be similar to the infantile nature of seeking attention. One may boast about slicing off the mammal's tail while thrusting it victoriously into the air for photo opportunities; yet, the behavior only symbolizes our societal reinforcement of those who purge for personal gain. Perhaps, conflicted egos seduced by the zealous nature of power may not understand the profound depth of life. Blood-stained ivory pendants may not represent critical consequences when admired in the reflections of gold-plated mirrors. However, the plight of the elephant is critical. During their extensive time in the Zambia's Luangwa Valley, American zoologists, Delia and Mark Owens, documented the detrimental costs associated with the illegal ivory trade in their compelling best-seller *The Eye of the Elephant*: "All [had] their faces chopped off, their tusks hacked away... we were standing in the midst of a killing field, where gangs of poachers [had] slaughtered every grey beast they saw. It [was] an elephant's Auschwitz" (58). Possible solutions to saving the elephants include drawing awareness to the valuable authenticity of the species itself, the financial and self-serving variables motivating the black market demands for ivory, and the underlying reasons for Africa's economic dependency on the illegal ivory trade and trophy hunting. Some scholars stress the importance of establishing reliable

economic support for countries that invest in cost-effective illegal ivory identification and law enforcement measures. To protect the elephant from extinction, we need to encourage financial stakeholders to invest in beehive fence technology.

Before ivory was converted into an international commodity, many African nations revered the elephant and its pliable tusks. In her article “Ivory as Cultural Document: The Crushing Burden of Conservation,” associate professor and curator of African Art History at Cleveland State University Kathy Curnow stresses the cultural and historical importance of ivory relics. Currently, the world sees collections of ivory as the result of criminal actions. Yet, the use of sculpted and gifted ivory is rooted in respect for the elephant’s noble stature. For centuries, Curnow shares, the traditional people of the Congo adorned elders in ivory as “a demonstration of wisdom, social mastery, and psychological insight, as well as recognition of wealth and status” (63). A deceased elephant’s prestige was passed on to those considered the most influential tribal members while all individuals exuded gratitude for the sustenance its flesh provided. Nevertheless, the illegal trading of ivory erupted with the introduction of European human slave traders in Africa. The elephant populations plummeted due to the continent’s sudden economic reliance on the export of tusks to finance human trafficking. Eventually, international outrage grew for an end to human slavery; however, the global demand for billiard balls and piano keys continued unabated. Now, as the extensive confiscation of illegal ivory occurs to combat the loss of elephants, Bryna Freyer, a Smithsonian National Museum of African Art curator, notes that “the elephant is not the only thing that [is dying], it is also the artist’s legacy and culture.” (qtd. in Curnow 84). To preserve the history of African cultures, one may need to understand the value of curated ivory artifacts.

Over the last three decades, elephant conservationists have strived to pacify the ongoing ecological conflict between man and elephant. Christina Skarpe, an ecology professor at Norway’s Hedmark University, and colleagues discuss these challenges in their e-book

“Elephants and Savanna Woodland Ecosystems: A Study from Chobe National Park, Botswana.” Botswanan and Norwegian scientists found that the increased poaching of elephants and rerouted migration patterns have caused critical disturbances in the soils that provide nutrient-rich vegetation for both humans and animals. Unfortunately, the recovery of Botswana’s woodlands may come at an excessive cost to the elephant as some may say that maintaining low populations is beneficial to all species of vegetation and wildlife as well as local economies. The illegal ivory trade affects all who are dependent upon the land for natural sustenance; therefore, efforts to cultivate conservation areas for elephants is vital. In 2016, esteemed alumni of India’s Jindal Global Law School, Armin Rosencranz and Dhiren Sehgal analyzed the effectiveness of historical elephant conservation methods in their article “Elephants, Ivory and CITES.” After the global recognition of the devastating drop in African elephant populations, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), proposed a ban on the sale of ivory in 1989. As a result, the largest of all herbivores began to flourish in countries that recognized the critical need to repopulate. However, due to substantial economic losses created by the illegalization of the ivory trade, political pressure caused CITES to sanction two independent sales of ivory to the Chinese government. China’s acquisition of over 60 tons of raw ivory allowed the country to recover from earlier economic sanctions. Since then, annual dispersing of stockpiled ivory allows Asian factory outlets to continue producing and selling ivory carvings. Yet, the soaring demand for illegal ivory has created underground smuggling operations perpetuated by financial gain (Rosencranz and Sehgal 2-5). With countries regulating the ivory trade taking part in the funneling and stockpiling of illegal ivory, it seems impossible to prevent the extinction of the remaining elephants.

The critical need to protect wild elephant populations has caused mass conservation areas to develop across many African countries; despite this, research is finding that these efforts are not affecting the trafficking

of illegal ivory. In their 2014 journal article “Continent-Wide Survey Reveals Massive Decline in African Savannah Elephants,” director of the wildlife conservation organization Elephants Without Borders, Michael Chase et al. introduced the Great Elephant Census (GEC). The continental survey of 18 African countries focused on the populations of elephants with the hereditary traits considered most diverse and resilient to the overall survival of the species. Despite global efforts to further habitat protection and prevent illegal poaching, the number of savannah elephants has decreased by 30% over a seven-year period. Though, nearly 85% of wild elephants roam within the areas protected under conservation laws, the mortality rates within these boundaries were as high as those outside of protected lands. To combat the illegal ivory trade, wildlife conservationists stress the significant contributions that the species of African elephants offer developing countries. Not only do elephants drive ecological diversity through their natural migration patterns, they promote the preservation of ecotourism and cultural stability (Chase et al. 1-24).

Socioeconomic distress in rural areas across Africa is creating conflict between increasing human populations and the African elephant. South African National Biodiversity Institute member, Sarah-Anne Jeanetta Selier et al.’s study “The Influence of Socioeconomic Factors on the Densities of High-Value Cross-Border Species, the African Elephant” investigated the wild elephant population within the Greater Mapungubwe Transfrontier Conservation Area (GMTFCA) across three African countries that depend on ecotourism and hunting expeditions: Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa. They found several key correlation factors associated with elephant conservation efforts: vegetation accessibility to sustain mammal foraging, unindustrialized land available for agriculture and farming, government corruption of conservation efforts, increased rural population growth, and levels of sustainable ecological tourism. Poverty, political exploitation, and violence are also contributing to the inability to sustain thriving elephant populations. This has led to extreme conflict over land-use due to the

need to protect the elephant from poaching while preserving areas for farming, food cultivation, and mineral excavation. Global conservation efforts to combat the illegal ivory trade cost nearly \$7-billion every year. Yet, these well-intended efforts are failing due to the lack of education, financial stability, ethical governance, and accessible resources within Africa’s wildlife preservation areas (Selier, Slotow and Di Minin 1-16).

To understand the dangerous impact that the illegal ivory trade has on conservation measures within many African countries, one may need to understand the problem from an intimate perspective. *New York Times* journalist, Jeffrey Gettleman’s “Elephants Dying in Epic Frenzy as Ivory Fuels Wars and Profits” shares the tribulations related to local conservation efforts within Garamba National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo. After discovering 22 dead elephants killed by aerial bullets, chief park ranger, Paul Onyango, questioned the perpetrators’ motives: “They even shot the babies. Why? It was like they came here to destroy everything” (qtd. in Gettleman). Elephant conservationists are facing militarized poaching methods fueled by a dependency on the illegal ivory trade to fund Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army as well as the American-trained and financially supported Ugandan, Congolese, and Southern Sudan military regimes. Gettleman proposes that United States’ taxpayer dollars are contributing to the murder of elephants as ivory tusks are worth over “10 times the average annual income in many African countries.” Gabonian hunters in the Amazon rain forest may trade militia members two tusks for a simple bag of salt: fear and poverty are leading to the increased reliance on the illegal ivory trade for survival. Standing over a decomposing elephant carcass, Garamba park manager, Luis Arranz, admitted that the illegal ivory trade resembles “a [never-ending] drug war” (qtd. in Gettleman). This violent epidemic based on the trafficking of ivory has led many countries to choose an unprecedented solution to end the war between poachers and elephants.

Some may argue that raising the standard of living in African communities or developing more stringent economic sanctions and

penalties cannot halt the growing demand for illegal ivory; therefore, it is necessary for radical enforcement measures. The University of Botswana's legal officer, Geomeone E.J. Mogomotsi and research coordinator, Patricia K. Madigele's article "Live by the Gun, Die by the Gun: Botswana's 'Shoot-to-Kill' Policy" discusses the country's drastic approach to preserving the elephant and rhino species. In 2013, Botswana's government "implemented a controversial 'shoot-to-kill' policy, targeting suspected poachers" (Mogomotsi and Madigele 51) as prison sentences and fines were not solving the problem. Wildlife tourism contributes to Botswana's overall financial stability and a militarized method of protecting one-third of Africa's elephant population is making a significant difference. Since poaching is now recognized as a just declaration of war by the Botswanan judicial system under international humanitarian law, the country's conservation solutions include "the ultimate penalty" (Mogomotsi and Madigele 54) of death for those who are caught killing elephants for their tusks. As a result, Botswana has increased its elephant population by nearly 30% since the implementation of its shoot-to-kill policy. Mogomotsi and Madigele share that Botswanan officials have declared their country to be "the final haven for endangered species...without significant outcry from the international community" (54). To save the elephant, the extreme and efficient methods of militarized conservation efforts seem to be a solution. However, is the threat of the death penalty for those guilty of poaching or trafficking illegal ivory ethically justifiable?

Some elephant conservationists believe change is coming in how countries view the illegal ivory trade. In the document "Hong Kong Bans Trade in Elephant Ivory by 2022" shared by *Environmental News Science*, leading elephant preservationists applauded the Chinese Legislative Council for declaring an end to its long economic dependency on the illegal ivory trade. China banned all commercial processing and selling of illegal ivory on December 31, 2017. Trophy imports and exports legally ceased; yet, the marketable trade of local stockpiled ivory will resume until 2021. The bill will

also end any financial compensation for current ivory dealers while instituting "maximum penalties for wildlife crimes of up to 10 years imprisonment" ("Hong Kong Bans" 1). The world has celebrated Hong Kong's decision while stating the continued need for global measures to combat the illegal laundering of ivory and promote ethical transparency of law enforcement. Unfortunately, the high economic costs and losses associated with this solution may deter a complete adherence to poaching and trading restrictions ("Hong Kong Bans" 2). In their 2017 article "Speculating a Fire Sale: Options for Chinese Authorities in Implementing a Domestic Ivory Trade Ban," South African Institute of International Affairs economist, Ross Harvey et al. confess that these trade regulations do not address the full ramifications of enforcing the ban of international sales. Despite a continuous fall in legal ivory prices within China, there is a concern that neighboring countries, such as Vietnam and Cambodia, will become underground dumping grounds for the current Chinese stockpiles of illegal ivory. Economic incentives to abide by this immeasurable ban may need to be extensive for those who still want to dominate the ivory market.

Though a complete termination of the global ivory trade may help to save the elephant, there are also serious biases within this fragmented solution in the United States. For example, in their article "Trump Wildlife Protection Board Has Many Trophy Hunters," Michael Biesecker and colleagues of the *Associated Press* disclose that members of the 2018 International Wildlife Conservation Council (IWCC) include Erica Rhoad, the director of the National Rifle Association's (NRA) hunting policy, Bill Brewster, a former NRA board member, and Steven Chancellor, who has credited himself with 500 trophy kills, including 6 elephants. If domestic authorities do not uncover and recognize the convenient loopholes that perpetuate the illegal trafficking of ivory, the strategic monopolization of market demands may include the extinction of the elephant for financial and psychosocial gain. Those who propose solutions to global conservation efforts need not have conflicts of interest when advocating on behalf of elephants.

Notably, field and cross-border intervention measures are increasing the efficiency of illegal ivory detection. Recognizing the need to overcome the challenges associated with identifying the origin of ivory samples seized by law enforcement officials, forensic scientist, Thitika Kitpipit et al.'s "A Novel Real Time PCR Assay Using Melt Curve Analysis for Ivory Identification" discuss a cost-effective approach using the scientific analysis of tusks. To file criminal charges or prosecute offenders, "species identification is necessary to discriminate local Asian [or stockpiled] ivory from illegal African ivory" (210). Their validated method of "real-time [polymerase chain reaction (PCR)...using melt curve analysis]" (211) can pinpoint elephant species from any "blood, confiscated ivory, and aged ivory sample" (215). Researchers and border officials may use this well-designed PCR identification method to target areas prone to contributing to the decline in the elephant population. This method of tusk analysis costs less than one-dollar per blood sample; therefore, residents in countries experiencing the excessive poaching of elephants for ivory could receive training in the field of forensic analysis, easing their socioeconomic distress (Kitpipit et al. 215-217). Sadly, this solution only focuses on tracking the death of an elephant and not its existence.

Despite an increase in global protective and legal enforcement measures, it is not enough to solve the sophisticated demands set forth by the illegal ivory trade markets. In her article, "Another Inconvenient Truth: The Failure of Enforcement Systems to Save Charismatic Species," Elizabeth L. Bennett of the Wildlife Conservation Society argues that insufficient financial and personnel resources, lack of criminal prosecution, and limited governmental and societal commitment are some of the core reasons for the rapid decline in many African species. She believes that corrupt business practices, wealthy influences of foreign markets, and the inability to decrease international demands for illegal ivory are contributing to the irresponsible purging of Africa's wildlife (Bennett 476-478). On the other hand, overcoming the corrupt practices associated with the illegal ivory trade hinges on

much more than the global implementation of systemic laws to protect endangered species.

While countries, such as the United Kingdom, are working towards a zero-tolerance policy against the laundering of illegal ivory, my solution focuses on developing a cohesive existence between humans and elephants using beehive fence technology. It is a resolution that is simplistic in design and based on scholarly evidence. Research has found that specific sounds automatically elicit instinctual fears in elephants. In 2007, University of Oxford zoologist, Lucy E. King, Iain Douglas-Hamilton, and Fritz Vollrath published the results of their study "African Elephants Run from Sound of Disturbed Bees," indicating that elephants may be classically or operantly conditioned to fear the buzzing sound of bees. King et al.'s research suggests that elephants may "remember or associate the sound of bees with a negative historical event, be it individual or collective, to which the correct response was rapid retreat." Elephants have learned to avoid and escape bee stings through a conditioned auditory response behavior and negative reinforcement (King, Douglas-Hamilton and Vollrath). In other words, individual or herds of elephants evade areas with active beehive fences, which is pertinent to developing boundaries between conservation and agricultural areas.

Those who are unfamiliar with behavioral psychology may consider apiculture, or beekeeping, fences an impractical and unwarranted solution. Yet, researchers have also delved deeper into the significance of auditory stimulation related to elephant conservation. Furthering the efforts to understand how specific stimuli affect the behavior of elephants, Disney's Animal Kingdom Education and Science Department member, Joseph Soltis et al.'s journal article "African Elephant Alarm Calls Distinguish Between Threats from Humans and Bee" revealed the various auditory warnings of elephants in Northern Kenya. Similar to the sound of bees, elephants have the same defensive reaction to the sensory cues of "Masaai pastoralists, who are known to kill elephants, ... [while] the animals reacted less to olfactory and

visual cues of Kamba agriculturalists, who pose less of a threat” (2). Elephants can distinguish between those who actively participate in the illegal ivory trade and those who compete with the species over natural resources (Soltis et al. 2). Consequently, conservationists need to realize that the elephant’s innate fear of bees can be used as a cost-effective way to preserve African’s growing dependency on agriculture and reduce the conflict between humans and animals.

Those who advocate for alternative methods to salvage the relationship between elephants and humans may trivialize the advantages of using beehives as a part of a realistic solution to the illegal ivory trade. Yet, the validity of intentionally reducing the elephant population to sustain local inhabitants may be based on ineffective human adaptation and alternative priorities. Global conservation efforts cannot control the underground trafficking of ivory, nor the poaching of elephants by greed-driven industries and individuals. In addition, plenty of activists have focused solely on moving elephants to restrictive areas that are far too small to sustain the world’s largest mammal; therefore, elephants foraging for food tend to face the challenge of migrating around new structural and agricultural developments. Beehive fence technology is the most pioneering, affordable solution to developing a social relationship between humans and elephants, and it is working. According to *Save The Elephants*, the charitable organization founded by Iain Douglas-Hamilton to create harmony between mammal and man, beehive fences in rural Kenya have a success rate of over 80% at keeping elephants away from local fields and plantations. African farmers who have turned to financial opportunities based on cattle-raising and agriculture are now able to increase their potential for monetary gain without injury to elephants. Pairing elephant conservation with the solution of beehive fences is reducing the animosity that exists amongst species trying to survive the harsh reality of ivory laundering. Robert Goodier, editor of *Engineering of Change* and author of “Bees v Elephants: From Chad to South Africa, Beehive Fences Deter African Elephants from Crops,” describes Lucy K. King’s approach to solving

the conflict between man and mammal as unprecedented. Throughout her award-winning Elephants and Bees Project, King reports that communities vulnerable to encroaching elephants have developed a greater “sense of empowerment” (qtd. in Goodier 41). This is critical in developing global and local support for this solution. Beehive fence technology may not end the illegal laundering of ivory; however, the economic prosperity from the cultivation of honey may reduce the adversity between elephant and humans. To be able to produce over 500 pounds of marketable honey and coexist where there was once a war between man and mammal is a remarkable feat.

Due to the rapidly declining population of the surviving forest and woodland elephants in Africa, it is necessary to recognize the comprehensive advantages for investing in beehive fence technology. *Save The Elephants* notes several benefits associated with this collaborative solution. Beehives hung on fences erected around the borders of local farms will encourage the active buzzing of bees to act as conditioned stimulus to deter elephants from raiding crops. This solution not only protects farmlands from foraging elephants, but also it reduces the urge to kill the mammal and sell its tusks to ivory traffickers. Instead, farmers can focus on supplementing their income with the sale of honey and other products made of beeswax. The Serengeti Development Research and Environmental Conservation Centre (SEDEREC) in Tanzania also supports the beehive fence initiative; however, others argue that this solution has its limitations. Wild elephants are mass herbivores with little woodlands left to consume (Skarpe et al.). Admittedly, beehive fence technology will not provide elephants with larger conservation areas. On the other hand, the introduction of apiculture fences to support the natural migrations patterns of elephants may lead to vast reforestation and fauna resurgence.

To reduce the conflict in war-torn areas and the dependency on illegal behaviors, resolutions may need to come in sustainable and successive approximations to long-term goals. According to *Save the Elephants*, beehive fence technology focuses on specific and measurable steps

towards decreasing the communal need to depend on the illegal ivory trade. Many African villagers are familiar with the art of apiculture; therefore, education, skills training, and supplies are minimal. Financial stakeholders only need to provide a small start-up investment as the construction of optimal beehive fences are cost-effective at a maximum of \$500 per 100 meters. Agriculturists, researchers, and law enforcement officials maintain the simple beehive designs created from local materials. Farmers across Africa have already reported an increased quality of life due to a significant reduction in elephant crop-raiding, thus increasing their tolerance level to coexist. Finally, bees and elephants are both natural pollinators whose populations may grow within an environment where humans encourage their ecological contributions (*Save The Elephants*). As a result, woodlands, local fauna, and other natural vegetation may also begin to flourish while reestablishing migration patterns for elephants.

Critics will argue that the socioeconomic distress that developing countries in Africa are facing is irreversible and dependent upon the illegal ivory trade. Granted, the economic stability achieved using beehive fence technology may take time. Yet, the possibilities of this collaborative solution involving fair wages and global conservation efforts are endless. According to *Save The Elephants*, the sales of King's Elephant-Friendly Honey have already increased the global demand for African honey products; beekeeping may become the driving force behind reestablishing ecotourism in countries such as Kenya and Tanzania. Profits derived from expanded ecotourism may lead to an increase in prosperity within local communities and decrease the rising conflict to survive between man and elephant. The need to engage in acts related to the illegal ivory trade may diminish when reasonable financial earnings motivate coexistence. Eliminating the trafficking of ivory will rely on international transparency and monetary support; however, the global protection of elephants depends on improving the socioeconomic autonomy of developing nations with beehive fence technology.

While wild elephants are nearing extinction, conservation efforts remain fragmented and reactive instead of consistently proactive. Some may believe that stricter penalties for those engaging in the illegal trade of ivory tusks will drive the demand for a prohibited product beyond its financial and historical value; therefore, we must continue to promote global education, accountability, and responsibility while creating realistic incentives to end the illegal ivory trade. The rapid decline in the elephant species shows that a solution must also focus on innovative measures that not only ensure the success of the mammal itself, but the economy of all nations as well. To reduce the reliance on the illegal ivory trade by the people of Africa, beekeeping fence technology is the most effective solution to encourage diverse species to coexist. Like all challenges with human ambivalence, a commitment to change comes when hope is foreseeable. Yet, we must endorse this solution quickly as “the ivory trade not only kills elephants but also leads to the deaths of people trying to protect them” (D. Owens and M. Owens 288). Financial investments in beehive fence technology could, conceivably, save the relationship that is necessary to end the senseless act of persecuting the elephant to fuel the illegal ivory trade.

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THIRD PLACE NON-FICTION

"How the Dead Turn Up More than You Do"

by Henry Vivar-Gomez

Día de los Muertos is a holiday that originated from Mexico, the center of the universe according to the Aztecs. It is a holiday that is full of food, dance, color, and life. Its origins date back to the 1500's during the Aztec era. Angelita Cervando, a writer for *La Voz*, wisely states, "For the Aztecs and other Indians, the distinction between life and death was not absolute. They believed that death was not the natural end of life but one phase of a natural cycle," a belief that is still very common nowadays. Día de los Muertos is a time that people celebrate the life of their loved ones who have passed away. This marvelous holiday is celebrated from October 31st to November 2nd. It is believed that on October 31st at midnight, the gates of the dead are opened, allowing them to visit their living family from November 1st to November 2nd. Originally, Día de los Muertos was a holiday only celebrated by the Aztecs. This all changed when the Spanish conquistadors came to Mexico, bringing their religion Catholicism. The introduction of Catholicism changed Día de los Muertos. Dr. Regina Marchi, an Associate Professor of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers University, carefully explains in chapter one of *Day of the Dead in the USA* that "the resulting celebrations were fusions of Indigenous customs, official catholic practices, and folk Catholicism" (12). One of the major changes that came from the fusion was the change in the figures that were worshiped. The Spaniards believed that no Catholic should take part in the holiday, so they decided to change the holiday to fit their beliefs and later forced the modified version onto the Mexican Natives. Día de los Muertos has three aspects: symbolism, art, and popularity.

The first aspect of Día de los Muertos is symbolism. Symbolism is shown everywhere from the dancing to the ofrendas. Almost everything on this holiday has a significant meaning behind it. The ofrendas, or the altars, have several different components, each one having its own meaning. Most ofrendas will have Copal, a tree resin, which burns in a special ceramic cup. It was once believed that the Aztec gods loved the smell, and as thanks, the Aztecs would burn it. Today, it is believed that the smell from the copal helps lead loved ones from the land of the dead to the ofrendas. Along with having a smell to help lead them to the ofrenda, many families create a trail of marigolds from the graveyard to the ofrenda. These trails help guide their ancestors to the ofrenda. It is said that marigolds have a scent that the dead are infatuated with, but many also believe that the dead like marigolds because of how they represent them by blooming and withering away twice in a year. The journey from the land of the dead to the living land is a long and tiring one, so once they arrive, they will need something to drink. This is a reason why most ofrendas contain a big cup of water along with another refreshment like tequila or horchata. Andrea Valdez, a writer at *Texas Monthly*, explains how ofrendas differ from one another: “The Deceased’s favorite knickknacks, food or tools create a familiar setting for his return.” This is especially true when a child is on the ofrenda. It is common to see an array of toys set out for them. Along with placing the loved one’s favorite knickknacks out for them, a photo of them is set. Many believe that the photo should be of the person alone because if the photo includes someone else that is living, that living person will die. Symbolism is prevalent on the ofrenda, but it is also seen in figures that are placed throughout the city. La Calavera Catrina is a skeleton wearing an enormous hat that represents the whole essence of Día de los Muertos. It shows how the most cherished ones who have passed away are still full of life. Symbolism is embedded into the beating heart of Día de los Muertos, and it can be found in every corner of the holiday especially in the art.

The second aspect of Día de los Muertos is art. Throughout the years, the art of Día de los Muertos has changed. The figures from the 1500’s

are not the same that are known today. For example, La Caterina is a figure that depicts Día de los Muertos, but she did not appear until the early 1900’s in a newspaper. Natalie Howe, a writer at *University Wire*, adequately explains, “modern depictions, dressed elegantly in flowers and dresses, came from a painting from the early 20th century called La Calavera Catrina.” La Catrina is an elegant and beautifully dressed skeleton who wears a hat larger than life with feathers and flowers popping out. Her introduction in the early 20th century is a major reason why Día de los Muertos is a holiday depicted in flowers and color as seen in Disney’s *Coco*. During this holiday, she can be found all over the cities in Mexico and even on the ofrendas to ensure that the dead have a fun time when they visit. The ways performers dress are largely impacted by La Caterina. In most dances, called folkloricos, females will usually wear a colorful dress that is embroidered with very beautiful, colorful, vibrant flowers. Men will usually not be as colorful as the women. Instead, the men will wear all white or have a piece of clothing that is colorful. Their way of dressing is modeled after La Calavera Catrina, but it was not always like this. During the Aztec era, Mictlantecuhtli, the god of death who was celebrated for years, was often found on the ofrendas and around the village. Paintings of him were placed on his ofrenda, and figures of him were placed everywhere possible in the village. Mark Cartwright, the Publishing Director for *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, adequately explains how the Aztecs depicted Mictlantecuhtli: “Usually portrayed in art as a skeleton or covered in bones with red spots to represent blood. He may also wear a skull mask, bone ear plugs, a costume of owl feathers and even a necklace of eyeballs. He has curly black hair [...]. On occasion he can be wearing clothing and conical hat made from bark paper.” He influenced how the people would dress when dancing or celebrating. The outfits were modeled after him, and people would often wear giant feathers and pieces of clothing that resembled his. During this time, Día de los Muertos was a more traditional holiday and did not look like the one celebrated nowadays. This is not the case for modern day Día de los Muertos; this god has been reduced to a figure often forgotten about

in all of Mexico. Popular Artworks reflect the change in Día de los Muertos; Día de los Muertos introduces art to the popular masses.

The third aspect of Día de los Muertos is popularity. In recent years, Día de los Muertos has been pushed to the forefront of media, but it was not always like this. Even Mexico, the country which it hailed from, did not want to celebrate the holiday. Howe reports that Mexico and her citizens did not always celebrate Día de los Muertos:

While nowadays it is one of the most notable holidays, Día de los Muertos was not always embraced by everyone. For a while, most of Mexico did not celebrate it, and the communities that did were concentrated in the central and southern regions. It was not until recently that the Mexican government declared it a national holiday before it spread to the regions that previously condemned it for engaging in practices that they mistakenly believed “worshipped the dead.”

Mexicans who were once ashamed of having Aztec ancestry are now cheering and celebrating with pride down the streets of their cities, throwing candy to children and creating marigold paths for the dead to follow. This is not just the case in Mexico; Día de los Muertos has crossed many borders to other countries. In *Hybridity and Authenticity in US Day of the Dead Celebrations*, a San Diego resident describes how Puerto Rico celebrates Día de los Muertos: “In Puerto Rico, we do not celebrate Day of the Dead in the way that Mexicans do, but we do go to the cemetery and bring flowers. like a lot of people, my mother and grandmother always had a little altar in the house” (qtd. in Marchi 7). Now more than ever, American states with a heavy Hispanic/Latino population are creating festivals to celebrate Día de los Muertos. Now that the spotlight is placed on Día de los Muertos, a lot of attention is being given to the holiday. News stations, television talk shows, and other forms of media are spreading the holiday to the whole world. Target has even started to sell statues of la Catrina in their stores. Film production companies have come out with feature films like *Coco* and *The Book of Life*. Both films explore Día de los Muertos in Mexico, as

well as give a depiction of the afterlife. Día de los Muertos has grown significantly in popularity; this new attention to Día de los Muertos has raised concerns of the holiday being commercialized and being stripped of its significance.

Día de los Muertos has evolve throughout the years. No longer is it a holiday celebrating a god of death who allows the deceased to visit this land to see their living family. People do not have to travel to the center of the universe anymore to celebrate the lives that were lost. The bright colors and soulful dances are not only found in Mexico, but also in other parts of the world. The beauty of the art has made the world not only pay attention to Día de los Muertos, but fall in love with the holiday. This holiday has crossed many borders. It has passed borders to countries which may condemn foreign cultures, countries which may have built a ‘huge wall’ to ensure that these foreigners and their customs stay as far from their home. No wall is too huge to cross, and no wall can stop the dead. It may happen slowly, but one day the whole world will pick up their marigolds and lead their lost ones back home to the ofrenda to celebrate the life they lived.

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FIRST PLACE MULTIMEDIA ARTS

"Untitled" by Liliana Toufiles



SECOND PLACE MULTIMEDIA ARTS

"March" by Savannah Herrera



THIRD PLACE MULTIMEDIA ARTS

"Sight" by Atiya Batts



FIRST PLACE FICTION

"A Secret Wish"

by Dean Allen Jones

"Hurry, son, make a wish!"

I was so excited to see my first falling star, I could barely think. There were so many things I could wish for! A new house for my folks, a new tractor for Papa, a bicycle, straight A's in school, but there was only one that I wanted most dearly. I closed my eyes and wished a secret wish out of fear that my mouth might betray me.

Betsy, my two-year-old beagle, dashed off the porch where she had been laying at my feet, and bounded in the direction the star had fizzled out over the cornfield. Her rapid barks drifted out and away in the chill night air as she gave chase. Such a loyal scout, she was, and never turned down an opportunity to hunt, even if the sport disappeared into thin air.

I admit, for a shooting star, it was the most brilliant night spectacle I had ever seen: a big, bright, burning core so white that it lit up the cornfield and half the backyard, with a trail of sparkling dust that followed for miles.

Betsy disappeared into the darkness of the corn, her nose to the ground, tail wagging happily. I envied her and her carefree life.

My papa, dressed in his favorite dusty overalls, stood up from his rocking chair and placed a rough, well-calloused hand on my shoulder. He looked down at me in my rocking chair with a forlorn smile and said, "Time for bed. I'll need you extra special tomorrow since I'll be going to town."

"Yes, Papa," I answered and rose to turn in when Betsy's barking became loud and anxious through the stalks of corn. Papa had already gone inside to check on Mama and turn in himself.

I walked the short length of the porch where the rockers sat to the screen door, casting a glance back toward the cornfield, hesitant. Betsy's barking continued, drifting away as she ventured deeper into the cornfield.

"Papa, I'll be back. Something's wrong with Betsy," I called in from the back door. I jumped the two small, sagging steps that led up to the porch and sprinted across the yard to the edge of the cornfield and paused where the comforting circle of light emanating from within our three-room shack ended.

I couldn't hear Betsy's barking anymore. My heart jumped in my chest. I didn't want to lose Betsy, though the urge to obey Papa held me like an invisible hand. I hoped he heard me when I said I would be back. A choking darkness enveloped me as I crept through the first row of corn where the lamp's light ended. The moon was strangely absent this night, but the dotted stars against the velvet night sky aided me.

I pushed through the corn stalks blindly, casting aside stalks that were twice my height, using what little starlight fell through the cracks to help me see. The cloying, dusty, dry smell of corn made me want to sneeze. Betsy's barking resumed, closer now, just up ahead to my right. I bounded through the cornfield, swiping away the corn, being careful not to trip over broken stalks or uneven ground.

I followed Betsy's incessant barking into a small clearing in the field, where a faint, pulsating light caught my eye to the right. Betsy was there, her silhouette blocking the strange, pulsating light. Betsy had stopped barking, and now she whimpered as if lamenting a dead squirrel. I waited, unsure how to proceed, afraid for Betsy.

“Come on, girl!” I called from the edge of the clearing and gave a little whistle that seemed small underneath the blanket of night. When Betsy didn’t move, I crossed the clearing slowly toward her and the yellow, pulsating light.

Betsy crouched over this strange, glowing light, no bigger than a soup bowl, sniffing at it and trying to nudge it with her nose. She sat back on her haunches when I arrived and whined.

I knelt over the light, barely making out the shape that cast it. The object of light lay in a splattering trail of sparkling, incandescent dust. Between the pulsating beats of light, I saw that it was a butterfly, a quite large one at that, about the size of a small bat.

I bent down and scooped it up gently from the earth, cradling it in the palms of both hands. Betsy uttered a singular bark. She wanted us to rescue the butterfly, but it wasn’t a butterfly at all. Its weight was much too hefty for an insect but still light enough to be mistaken for a bird.

I turned, holding the “animal” carefully between cupped palms and headed back to the house. Betsy bounced and barked at my heels the whole way back, wagging her tail. When I reached the porch with my find, I could see that I was holding a tiny person with wings, its body limp as if sleeping, unconscious, or maybe even dead. It was a miniature girl, like a fairy from the books I read at school. She wore a bluish-green tunic, light yellow leggings and tiny, pointy blue shoes. Her wings, shaped like the points of a star, reflected the entire colors of the rainbow in them.

Betsy jumped onto the back porch, opened the screen door with her nose, and hurried inside, barking for me to follow, stopping every three feet to make sure I was close behind. She led me into my parent’s bedroom where my papa sat by the bed, gently blotting a damp cloth to my mother’s feverish forehead. Her skin glowed pale and sickly with only a blotch of pink in her sunken cheeks, her breathing soft and slow.

She had fallen ill three days prior, and we couldn’t afford a visit by Doc Stone from the nearest town. She’d been bedridden and resting since.

Betsy stopped by the foot of the bed and barked once in the direction of Mama.

Papa looked at me, disappointed but kind. “Son, what did I tell you? Mama needs her rest, and so do you. Take Betsy to her pen and turn in. I’m not going to tell you again.”

“But Papa, I’ve got the shooting star, and I think Betsy knows something we don’t.”

The fairy stirred in my hand. She wasn’t dead after all! At first, she cowered, looking at me in strange fascination and then around the bedroom. Her eyes rested on my mother lying on her back among the thick sheets and quilts. The fairy flew out of my hand and flitted around the room in a spiral, a sparkling contrail of dust raining down on the bed; Betsy barked twice quickly, and my father tried to swat her with the cloth.

“No, Papa, I think she’s here to grant my wish,” I said.

“She?” he replied not understanding.

The fairy landed on my mother’s sweat-stained pillow and motioned for me to come closer. I did and was about to wipe the dirt on my hands off on my own dirty overalls when I noticed some of the sparkling dust on them. Instead, I held my hands out to the fairy. The fairy twirled on the pillow like a dancer; the fairy dust on my hands separated from the dirt and rose on an invisible air current and into my mother’s nostrils as she breathed in.

Mama’s eyes opened slowly, and she smiled at me.

SECOND PLACE FICTION

"Here Today, Gone to Hell"

by Christopher Aiello

A pearl white Jaguar F-Type pulled into the parking lot of a business park in Santa Monica, California. The Jaguar originated from the upper crests of the Hollywood Hills but had ventured down from the clouds for the day. The driver, Casey Willow—a sharply dressed young man wearing Ray Bans—got out and observed the outdated concrete building bordered by palm trees. He stared at the building for a while, playing with a sapphire jewel hung around his neck that glimmered like an underwater treasure. He didn't want to go in. He dreaded being there; it felt like a snaring trap.

Casey finally released the necklace and proceeded into the building and found the psychiatric practice of Haim Levine. Separated by a glass table, the two men sat across from each other saying nothing for a long while. Haim was a middle-aged man wearing oval glasses who Casey judged to be of the self-important intellectual variety. Haim studied Casey, trying to get a bead on him; he couldn't decide whether his hair was messy on purpose or if he had rolled out of bed that way. Finally, Haim decided to break the ice.

"Why are you here?" Haim asked.

"Judge says I need to go to a psychiatrist and prove that I'm not crazy so I can get custody of my kid," Casey replied.

"You're in the middle of a custody battle?"

"Yeah, it's a pretty nasty one too," Casey said, disinterested. "I'm going to be honest though, I don't have much faith in psychiatry. From my

experience psychiatrists are usually trying to diagnose someone so the insurance money kicks in."

"Where do your preconceptions come from? Personal experience?"

Casey glanced around the room. There wasn't much to the leftover 90's office except for some medical journals on a shelf, some abstract modern art hung around the place, and a degree from Stanford on the wall. On Haim's desk there was a miniature Israeli flag.

"I practice spiritual medicine," Casey continued. "Past life regression is what some might call it. My guide Anita gives me a view into the other side."

"I'm aware of what past life regression is," Haim replied factually. "It relies on hypnosis to induce the client to recall fabricated memories and events. I saw an interview with you on 'Sixty Minutes' a few years back discussing your experiences. You said you believe your ex-wife is the devil and she is trying to kill you."

"The press tries to twist my words - It's more complicated than that. The therapy takes place at a sanctuary in the Mojave. Anita helps me uncover who I've been in past lives, repressed memories, and what spirits haunt me."

"Go on," Haim said, jotting down some notes. Casey looked annoyed by this but continued anyway.

"Our last session Anita uncovered a previous life during the 1850s. I was a chieftain in the Sioux Lakota. My name was Akecheta, a warrior's name. This demon embodied my wife during that life; she sold us out to the Americans during Wounded Knee and the 7th Calvary gunned us down."

"In another life, more recently, I lived in London during the air raids in World War 2, hiding in the basement of a row home. We spent so much

time down there she went crazy and stabbed our son and I to death in our sleep.”

“Why would this spirit be after you?”

“Spiritual attachment,” Casey explained, “Lost souls, evil and benign, wander the Earth looking for a host body. In each life a certain evil spirit leeches onto a woman, usually my wife. What I don’t know is in which life it started following me and why.”

“So they’re just regular women afflicted by demons?”

“Some people’s resistance to attachment is higher than others, depends on the person. I’ve tried everything to get rid of the one following me: Spiritual Release Therapy, exorcisms, nothing works.”

“Are you aware of how notoriously unreliable these new age therapeutic methods are?”

“Unreliable? Who the hell are you to judge?” Casey said.

“I’m not judging anything,” Haim interjected coolly. “Do you know what confabulation is?”

Casey said nothing and looked out the window.

“Confabulation is when a suggestible person is convinced into believing elaborate memories that didn’t happen. This occurs with people who practice hypnosis and past life regression. Some people can even be induced into believing they can speak a language they have no knowledge of.”

“My memories are as vivid as this room,” Casey said.

“Wounded Knee didn’t happen during the 1850’s. It happened in 1890,” Haim stated, looking up from his notebook and resting his eyes on Casey.

Casey sat back, twisting his fingers between the metal chain of the sapphire necklace, his eyebrows furrowed. The jewel caught Haim’s eyes; it made even Casey’s gold watch seem dull in comparison. Casey had a freshness to him, a down home charisma that was cool like minty aftershave. There was a stark silence until Casey let the necklace drop on his chest. Haim quickly changed the subject.

“Tell me about your ex-wife.”

“Alyssa Guidano. You know, the model? We met at a mutual friend’s party in Malibu. Red hair, blue eyes. In each life every woman I’m with has blue eyes, I don’t know why. Anyway, we were married for less than a year, but when we met it felt like love at first sight. We got married after two weeks of knowing each other. Our impromptu wedding was on the beach and she was wearing a bikini,” Casey said humorously.

“We had a son, Michael. Really good kid, especially considering what he comes from.”

Casey pulled out his phone and showed Haim a picture.

“There’s nothing in the world I wouldn’t do for that kid,” Casey said, shaking his head. “The court won’t consider what a psychotic, self-absorbed mess she is but they won’t let me see my own son.”

“Tell me about your daily routine,” Haim said.

“I’ve taken a break from movies over the past couple years. I got my break when I was 20 in some indie film that hit it big and did a string of roles until I was around twenty-six, now I’m twenty-eight. I’ve just been working on myself, clocking in miles on my Indian bike, playing guitar, I’m also working on a screenplay—a drama.”

“Do you still do drugs? I know because—”

“Because of the tabloids,” Casey interjected. “No, not anymore. I sip on some tequila every now and then when I’m poolside, but I’ve been clean and serene for almost two years.”

“That’s good. How’s your social life?”

“I’m taking a break from people. Just me, my dog, and my house in the Hills. Oh yeah... and Nick.”

“Who’s Nick?” Haim asked.

“The bane of my existence. He’s a freeloading bum who lives in my ten-thousand square foot house, eats my food, smokes weed, parties with some crazy Armenians from Venice all night and sleeps all day. The guy wants to be a DJ, but he doesn’t have the work ethic. I tried to get him a union job at a production company—a union job—you could burn down the set and not get fired, but he still managed to screw that up.”

“I’m confused. Is Nick one of your kids?”

“He’s my friend.”

“He doesn’t sound like one.”

“It’s a long story. We used to be inseparable, but now he’s like a plant I never water. Actually, we just had a massive blowout before I came here.”

“What exactly do you do in your house all this time?” Haim asked, incredulous at how someone could have so much idle time on their hands.

“I just sit and think a lot. I sit on my deck or in my yard looking down the Hills with their Palm trees, Spanish villas, and the city sprawled out under me. It reminds me of when I was a kid and I saw an interview with Sylvester Stallone by his mansion. When I saw the way my idols were living, I had to have that same feeling.”

“What do you mean?”

“The first movie I saw was A New Hope, then Rocky, Predator, and so on. I had this feeling when I saw those movies I can’t describe, it’s what made me want to come out here. I used to watch those movies with my dad before him and my mom divorced. When I’m at my house, all those emotions come back; it gives me that same limitless feeling I had as a kid.”

“Tell me about your parents’ divorce.”

“Not much to tell,” Casey said. “Before that we were a normal family living in North Carolina, fishing, hunting, riding dirt bikes.”

“How did you react to the divorce?”

“I acted out big time. I got kicked off the football team for drinking, I got into fights, by senior year I was a mess. My grades had slipped so much I barely graduated high school. Actually, Nick was my only real friend.”

“So Nick’s an old friend.”

“Yeah, we grew up in the town of Apex together. We met on the first day of elementary school and were inseparable from then on. Two rebels growing up in the South, fishing at the Haw River, raising hell, especially when he got his Chevy pickup. Right after graduation we hauled all of our possessions into the back of that truck and left.”

Casey smirked, “Jesus, we were basically kids.”

“Since I divorced Alyssa and she took Michael, I’ll admit, it’s been nice having someone in the house.”

“Nick is something familiar to you, he is someone from a time in your life that was good- like a token- and you keep him around even though he’s changed,” Haim said.

Casey laughed and shook his head. “Here comes the psycho-babble-crap. How do you know what goes on in my head? You haven’t even known me a day. You can’t compare to the work Anita does.”

“How much does she charge you per session? Gurus can cost a lot, they can charge tens of thousands for exorcisms.”

“Let me tell you something,” Casey snapped at Haim, his mood souring. “I blew out of that town the day after I graduated. I took a chance unlike the rest of those idiots who went to college or got stuck working nine to five leading idiotic, pointless lives!”

“What makes you think they’re unhappy? Haim said, slightly defensively. “They may be very content people living their lives and going home to their families. What can you say for your own happiness?”

“When I came to LA with Nick, we lived like urchins, sleeping in the back of his truck until I landed a role. I’m someone who makes things happen. I made millions doing films, and now I can do whatever I want.”

“But are you happy?”

“I don’t regret my fame,” Casey said, delaying the question. “Things are a little rough right now. This woman, this devil, is plotting my demise. I’ll get back on top, everyone will see.”

“Why do you have such an inherent dislike of people?” Haim persisted. “You keep everyone out, taking memories from your childhood and regressing into it, creating a fantasy world.”

“Why would I do that?” Casey asked acidly.

“Because you’re inherently uncomfortable with who you are.”

Casey sat into the starchy fabric of his chair and didn’t say anything. Casey hated it, but he knew this self-assured psychiatrist was right.

Haim saw Casey needed to get something off his chest and was determined to keep pushing down his emotional wall.

“Tell me again why you decided to become an actor.”

Casey’s face became flustered as he balled his fists on the chair’s armrests.

“Its because you don’t know who you are and you’re searching for an identity.”

“I thought you said I was regressing back into my childhood. Which is it?”

“Both actually. Your childhood is the only part of your life that you’re fond of; you spent your teenage years searching for an identity but couldn’t find it. You came out here to find it and you thought you could re-create the feeling of watching those movies as a kid, but that didn’t repair what was broken; you keep your friend around because he’s your only link to your past. That’s why you keep trying on different roles, different skins, to see if one will fit.”

Casey sat back and tossed his arms. “So that’s it. You know me inside and out just like that. Where do you get off, man? You’re a joke just like everyone else in your profession.”

“Casey, I’m a prominent psychiatrist in Los Angeles. I see cases like yours all the time. Many people with identity problems become actors; they’re insecure and desperate for praise and approval. Why do you think so many actors end up addicts or dead? Your troubles didn’t start with your divorce. They have nothing to do with demons. They started at some point when you were a kid. Regardless of how much wealth you have enshrined yourself in, at the core of it you’re still inescapably yourself.”

Casey abruptly stood up, kicking the chair behind him. The jarring noise startled the office, cutting through the quiet. Casey’s tone frame seemed twice what it was while he was sitting.

“You want to know why I’m so locked up in my head?” Casey said speaking in a low, harsh growl. Haim shifted in his chair.

“It’s because everything seems to wilt and die in Hollywood, this inhospitable desert town. Everyone I’ve known I’ve turned my back on, the woman I thought I loved ripped my heart out and stole my son who the courts—and you—are holding hostage. My friend, Nick, the kid I used to play video games and eat pizza rolls with, became a heroin addict while I got famous. That’s right. While I starred in movies, my friend was living on Skid Row with a needle in his arm. He would be dead if I hadn’t taken him in.”

“I’m not holding you hostage. I’m trying to help you,” Haim said, imploring Casey.

“Help me with what? I don’t want to be here. I just want to get my son away from his psycho mother!”

“I want to show you that your delusions aren’t real,” Haim said. “Don’t you want to get better?”

Casey slumped into the chair and exhaled, the room falling silent. He looked out the window and saw the palms and happy, colorful buildings. Not far off he could see the top of the Ferris wheel on the Santa Monica pier in the distance. Sitting under an air vent in this overly cold office, Casey imagined the beach, the sun’s kiss, golden sand, the sparkling Pacific—all of which were so close yet so far.

At last Casey spoke in a calm voice, “Here’s something I’ll bet you can’t explain.”

Casey lowered his head and took off the necklace which he knew Haim had been dying to know about. It gave an ethereal glow in the light as he dangled it.

“Sapphire stone,” Casey said, his eyes following it.

“Someone I loved a long time ago gave this to me. She was my first love, actually. During all that darkness and angst, she stood by me no matter how bad I got.”

Haim leaned forward, drawn in.

“She lived a few doors down from me. We’d sneak out on cold October nights, dye our hair black and go to shows, talk on the swings at the park. Sometimes we’d take turns sneaking into each other’s rooms and we’d listen to Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge or watch horror movies all night,” Casey said, creasing his lips in a bittersweet grin.

“She eventually moved away—we talked online for a bit, but lost touch. Time passed and now all I can remember is her first name, Kayla. I have no other trace of her. I always had this crazy idea that if I got famous, maybe she’d come back.”

“Anyway, she gave this to me before she left. We were huddled in some dark, sweet spot in my room among the posters and purple lava light. I held on to it for a long time, but I ended up losing it. Years later when I began my sessions with Anita she told me that in each life, my true love gives me a sapphire jewel. In each life, there isn’t just a demon, but also someone true, but I miss her every time. A week after that session, I find this laying in some place I know I never put it. What’s crazy is that I had completely forgotten about it until then.”

“She could be married now. Who knows? Maybe I’m crazy. Maybe all this past life regression stuff is just smoke and mirrors. All I know is that the one person I ever truly loved is somewhere out there, and I have to find her this time.”

THIRD PLACE FICTION

"Career Student"

by Michael Coombs

On Friday, it rained. The rain would dish around the edge of each curb like a finely-pointed spider until dripping down helplessly into the sewer grates. Sarah walked by and felt like someone was watching her in the reflection of each puddle.

"Sarah! Sarah!!" A voice was calling but she didn't know or really care who it was. She turned around, and up came running a big, white boy, burly and wearing flannel and jeans. He'd fit in back home in Johnston County, but not here in the city.

"Oh, hi," she said casually, like she knew him.

"Hey," he breathed heavy, exhausted. "Did you do the group work yet? For Geology?"

She blinked and tilted her head. She didn't remember anything about Geology class. She just went earlier today, and the most she remembered was that the igneous rocks were good or something. Something.

"I was just heading to the library to do it now," she giggled. Lies. Oh well.

"Good, good," he heaved. "You didn't respond to the group text yet, so y'know. I was worried."

They stood in awkward silence for five seconds. She was about to just come out and ask him to leave.

"Alright, I'll see you later!"

"See you."

Off she went walking, down down down, and the street kept unfurling around her and it wouldn't stop. People walked past and brushed her arms and it felt like two-feet pricking needles every time. Grandma's sewing lair. She was shaking a little and she wanted to get back to the apartment before she went crazy. Maybe this was withdrawal.

Soon she entered the library, but of course she was not going to do the group work because that shit was pointless. She went up the stairs, two flights (STEP STEP STEP), past two more burly guys and a girl who was a cheerleader who had purple eyes. She slipped past someone holding the door and just a few feet down on the right was Dr. Chopper's office.

"Hello? Dr. Chopper?" She leaned her head in. "We had a meeting scheduled at 2, so..."

"Oh, yes!" He smiled gently. When he smiled, his face shined and he looked like a polished caramel apple. She cringed a little. "Ms... Allens. Sarah Allens. In BIO-101? Section 1006?"

"Yeah."

"A pleasure! A pleasure. Sit down!"

She stepped forward and sat down in the rickety wooden chair across the desk from him. It felt about twenty years old but more like thirty because of how many high sweaty freshmen had sat down in it. She set her bookbag on the floor and rustled in her seat.

"You e-mailed me asking about... what was it?" He paused and tapped a pen to his chin. "The personal project, right?"

"Yeah. I don't have a topic yet, so..."

“Right! Right.” He pulled up his keyboard and began clacking at it so fast she thought the thing would erupt in a shower of sparks. Soon it would break. Soon this chair would break. She rustled.

“Well, it looks like there are still a few options on the table,” he said absentmindedly, perusing the list online. “How about... osmosis? Osmosis. That was my favorite topic when I was your age. Wrote a thesis paper on it! I did, I did, I did.”

“Um...” She looked at him closely and didn’t really know how to process this. Suddenly she didn’t like him. “No offense, professor, but I just can’t get interested in anything that’s left. I was, uh... I was hoping maybe you could give me a rundown of each one.”

“Oh! Well, of course I can do that. A quick rundown. As long as you call me 'Doctor!'” He looked at her sternly for a second before cutting himself off and laughing. “Kidding! Kidding.” She definitely didn’t like him.

“Well, with osmosis, the thing you have to consider is how the semi-permeable membrane is like a... bouncer. Yes. But water that gets into the cell through osmosis is like a substance that has an all-access pass past the bouncer’s grip. Water is like, uh, a VIP guest. But! Sometimes the club, or the cell, is just full to capacity with VIPs. Nobody in! Nobody! And in that case regardless of their pass the water, or that is the VIP guests, simply cannot come in under any circumstance, no. And when that happens it doesn’t really matter what the decision of the bouncer or I mean the semi-permeable cell wall is, or what decision they make, you know, because the water cells, or the VIP guests, will recognize that there’s just too many VIPs and they’ll refrain from going inside. Because the cell is full. With water. So because there is no lower concentration to move to the water will instead... Ms. Allens!”

“What?” she asked blankly. She gave him a dirty stare for the interruption.

“Well, you... you were dozing off,” he explained. He seemed a little embarrassed. “I... oh, I’m sorry. When I talk about osmosis sometimes

I just get carried away. It excites me! It does!” He cleared his throat. “Oh, but science isn’t the way for everybody. Really, Ms. Allens, just pick one and write 500 pages on it. It doesn’t have to be good. Just use—”

“500 pages?!” she blurted out.

“What? Yes, 5—oh! Words. 500 words. Wahahahaha!” he laughed fully and heartily. Sarah stared.

“500 words.”

“Yes. And use Grammarly! Most teachers say not to, but hey, this is biology. Who gives a flip?” He chuckled at his clever little censor.

“Any other questions? I can explain the others if you want to hear more analogies...”

“Uh, no, no,” she rose to her feet and grabbed her bag. “That’s good. Thank you, professor. Uh, doctor.”

“Good,” he said crossly, then laughed. “Kidding! Have a good day, Ms. Allens!”

She left the office and went back down the stairs (CLOMP CLOMP CLOMP), into the lobby, through the tables past the librarian, through rows of shelves, and sat down in the back and opened her computer. She took in a deep breath and brought her fists down with great force—SMAAAASH!

Shrieks erupted around her while she laughed at the sight. Bits of busted plastic, and above, showers of sparks. Just like she hoped.

FIRST PLACE POETRY

"Red Wine and Cigarettes"

by Kristina Ridder

In another universe we're in love.
But now we sit in wait for a time that won't come,
Drinking in the lonely and the sad
As if they are the finest merlot.
Loneliness takes us to a place love refuses.
Bottlenecks lifting towards puckered mouths
And rosy scorched cheeks.
Alabaster smiles pressed against humming necks.
Our sleep disturbed by quaking breath
Of Cupid's tiny brothers preparing their archers' aim.
We dare believe we are more than wolves,
Laughing like we are the world's sunlight
While our nocturnal brains gnaw at bones
And cartilage found in our petrified,
Comatose hearts, struck by
The Medusa of our past lovers.
Guilt sends torrential downpours
Of sleepless nights and smoke washed lungs,
Leaving the smell of petrichor
And the milky red glow of storm lights
Swinging on the ship mast of its lone survivor.

SECOND PLACE POETRY

"Give Me a Poem About the Human Condition"

by Brooke Hyatt

Give me a poem with meaning.
Give me a poem with words that pull at the heart.
That makes me feel, that makes me think.
Give me a poem that changes my life.
Give me a poem about yourself.
Give me a poem from experience.

Poetry, makes me want to dig into my soul
and unearth the pain that has webbed itself
into my veins. Makes me want to lick
at my wounds. To open and then re-apply
the stitches in my heart.

Poetry is for the injured. An elixir and reminder
all in one. For the ones who have suffered, the ones
who have recovered, they write to put their trauma
into structured stanzas.
Poetry, makes me depressed.

How do I write about
lying in bed
staring at the thin strip of light
sneaking under my bedroom door
wondering
if he would come in
tonight.

How can I consider
line breaks when
I think about
the beginning
when he asked me
to sit in his
lap
and I didn't want to.

How do I describe
the first time
I was so overwhelmed
with the pain in my heart
that the only relief
I could get
was slicing
the skin
of my arm
with a nail
I hid
in my
room.

It's too heavy
the ink isn't flowing
from my pen.
The imagery isn't right
the words are not good enough
the meaning, doesn't make sense.

With all of this inside me it's hard to write about
flowers.
Spring.
Love.
The comfort of a storm
lingering in the air
the smell before it comes
How the wind slightly
blows.

Poetry isn't weightless
it is saturated
in words, commas,
and lines.

I could write.
I just can't
put it
in to
words.

THIRD PLACE POETRY

"Apologetically, Us"

by Anonymous

I can remember the first time
I saw rivers and valleys imprinted in glass
Canyons at dusk and felt my hands clench
At how wrong it all was, how flawed and how broken.
We picked at scars and prayed to paper gods that
Something worth loving would crawl free from us
loathing ourselves for laughs a little too loud
In a chapel built of scraped knees and bottled pills
Bliss is brought to quiet hearts
Resigned to a soft and porcelain web
Pull fire from your chest and kept it softened for another day
There's no place for it here, not now.

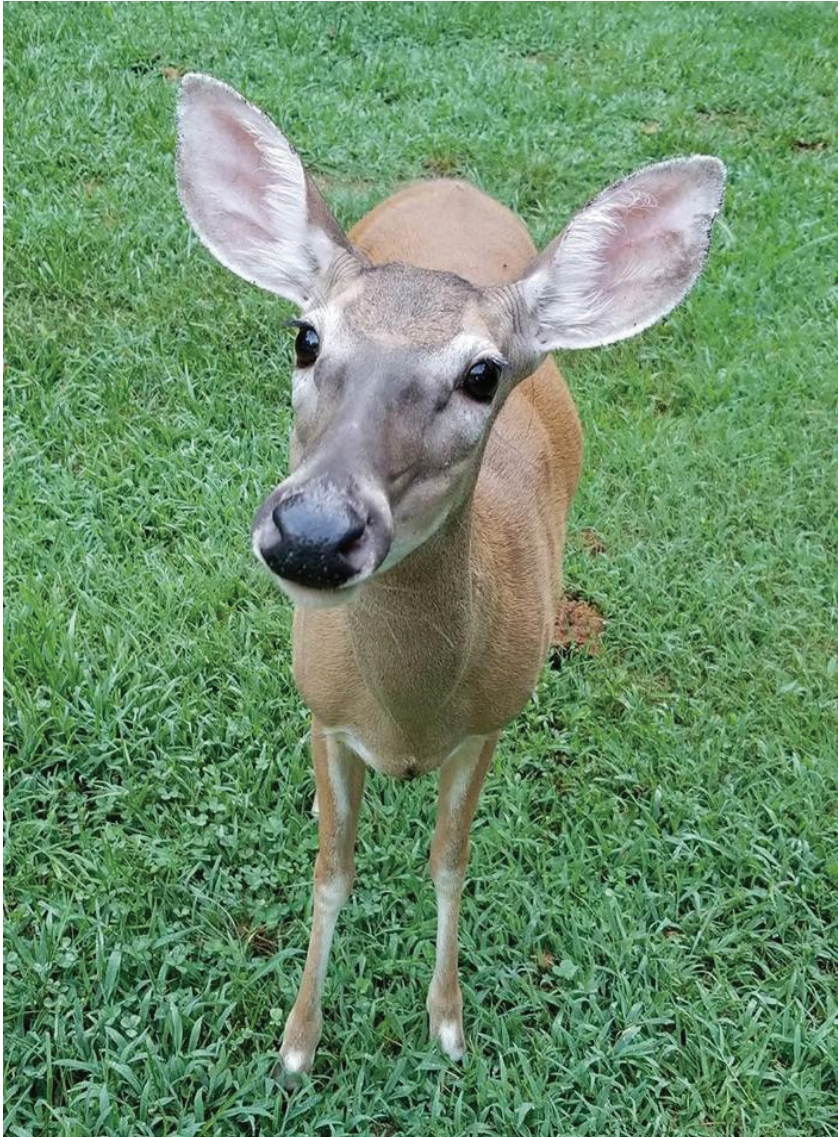
Any bravery I ever held in my hands for myself
Could be spread butter-thin on a slice of toast
We let ourselves be adored only with an asterisk at the end
For fear of the damages that could be done
In observance of holes where the ocean pours through
Balanced on ropes winding thin between all that is taken and asked

At least that's what we thought
Before we tore ourselves new from old skin
Too many have I seen tear at their wings for
Loving too brightly and too boldly for a world that holds still
For passionate speeches on snails, cars, on dice, on friends
For finding a small quiet place to nurture their dreams
For finding flowers blooming among the wreckage of themselves

In places where others still turn nervously away
And hide behind white picket fences locked up in chains

I know I ask too much and too loudly but I plead
Stop picking holes in yourself, finding new ways to bleed
When every mistake that you've made seems to cling inside your chest
Hold your joys close: give yourself time to rest

"Bootsie" by Christy Kinnion, English Professor



*"Paradise Valley, Arizona" by Carla Osborne,
Advertising and Graphic Design Instructor*



WAKE REVIEW STAFF SUBMISSIONS

"The Rise of Female Protagonists in Film: A Causal Analysis"

by Madysen Rufener

During the 16th and 17th centuries, women were rarely seen acting on stage, even in minor roles. Male actors would play female characters, and women were contained to the audience. This was the societal norm. However, over time, this inequality has decreased, and now America is experiencing what is considered a revolutionary period for female actors and characters. Due to the rise of the #MeToo movement, the normalization of modern feminism, and Hollywood's desire to capture the younger generation's attention, more big box office movies are featuring female protagonists. No longer are women reduced to merely onlookers. Rather, they are gradually becoming a major part of Hollywood and its films.

Arguably the most important cause of this trend is the #MeToo movement, which has eliminated several well-known influencers from Hollywood such as Harvey Weinstein (film producer), Louis C.K. (comedian, filmmaker, and actor), and Chris Savino (animator and writer). This eradication of male gatekeepers has caused a dearth of roles in Hollywood, which female producers and actresses are quickly replenishing. For example, *Wonder Woman*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Lady Bird* were all highly anticipated, female-centric films that were released in the midst of the #MeToo movement's peak. According to a study by Souha R. Ezzedeen, "[w]ith the exception of the romantic comedy genre (or 'chick flick'), mainstream films generally cater to men." However, since the surfacing of sexual assault accusations against several male Hollywood influencers, more mainstream films are featuring female casts, directors, producers, etc., regardless of the movies' genres.

Another major reason for the rise of feminine portrayal in films is the increasing normalization of modern feminism. Rather than be considered an abnormality, as it was during and prior to a majority of the twentieth century, feminism is now a widely accepted ideology. In fact, in America, it is the cultural norm. According to a 2015 poll by Vox, 85% of respondents support gender equality, the basis of feminist ideals (Kliff). While these respondents may choose not to label themselves as feminists, they are supportive of the movement's principles (Kliff). In other words, if one is a member of Western society, he or she is statistically more likely to think of women and men as equals. Because of this, the number of films that positively represent female protagonists is increasing. According to Dr. Martha Lauzen, 33 percent of the characters in the year 2011's top 100 movies were women, and only 11 percent were female protagonists (qtd. in Ezzedeen). This is significantly less than 2016's statistics, which is reported to be 18 percent higher in regards to the quantity of female protagonists (Lauzen). As shown by Lauzen, feminine representation has increased acutely throughout this century, along with the normalization of feminism. Due to this ideology's growing acceptance, it is natural to portray in film the main aspect of feminist belief: powerful women. As culture changes and gradually approaches gender equality, Hollywood does the same.

Aside from naturally mirroring the culture of Western society, Hollywood incorporates female characters into its films for another reason: its desire to maintain relevance. Throughout each generation, the normalization of the pro-woman ideals becomes increasingly pronounced; therefore, the youngest generation as a whole holds the most feminist beliefs in comparison to all previous generations. Due to these womanist values, the younger generations hold different interests than their ancestors, including an enthusiasm for seeing females in power and in greater quantity. Hollywood, therefore, has decided to implement more positively portrayed female characters in its films as a way to capture the attention of younger folks. As is stated in an

article for the *Huffington Post* by Julia Bruculieri, Hollywood has discovered that it is “actually beneficial for studios to feature women in roles beyond the love interest.” For example, *Bad Moms* features three women who desire to leave behind the responsibilities of parenting, and despite its unconventional representation of motherhood and women the film grossed a total of \$183.9 million worldwide (“Bad”). Similarly, *Hidden Figures* tells the story of the three intelligent women at NASA that were responsible for successfully launching the astronaut John Glenn into space (a major divergence from the traditional love interest role) and grossed a worldwide sum of \$235.9 million (“Hidden”). As shown by the success of these woman-centric movies, “female-driven projects are connecting with audiences,” reports Bret Lang in an article for *Variety*. Hollywood is beginning to learn what is popular and modern versus what is old fashioned, leading to the creation of more feminist films.

Due to these three major developments in Western culture, women are finally being recognized in Hollywood. While the industry certainly has not achieved gender equality (which will only occur once females make up 50 percent of the cast), it is gradually nearing a critical tipping point. With the help of more trends such as the #MeToo movement, the wider acceptance of feminism, and Hollywood’s desire to remain relevant, the quantity of women in the movie industry will continue to increase. In fact, these rates are already growing, as is proven by the creation of many female-centric movies in the past few years. However, the film business (in regards to the portrayal of men and women) is not equal yet. As Bruculieri so rightly phrases it, “Hollywood definitely seems to be moving in the right direction, but of course, there’s plenty of room for improvement.”

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"Castellum"

by Marlas Whitley

I don't believe in anything.

Santa Claus, leprechauns, good luck, bad luck, magic, miracles. I never thought there were monsters under my bed or hiding in my closet. I never made a wish on a shooting star, or tossed a coin into a fountain, or even blew dandelion seeds into the air. None of the bullshit that other kids were told made it into my ears. When you have a father who is adamant about God not existing and a mother who was killed in a car accident on her way to church, then nothing else is realer than the fact of life being a cold and sad reality we all have to endure, devoid of any whimsy or supernatural whatever to make it more interesting... tolerable, really. Sometimes, I don't understand how some people can be so happy. So...positive. I mean, I'm happy....sometimes. I'm positive... when there's something to be positive about. But these sometimes and somethings are becoming more and more scarce. I don't expect a resurgence anytime soon.

The hum of the floor cleaner roars over my music. I'd have it blasting from my phone, but a Goodway Grocer employee can't do that. No matter if the store is empty of customers and it's only four of us. Me, Alley, the butcher guy, and Stella. Stella hates all of us. At least, she says that on her bad days. But even on her good days she gets a sarcastic or low-key demeaning jab in. For an assistant manager she gets too much power. With that power she does nothing but enforce the policy time and time again, over every little detail. Everyone has expressed their disdain for her, even Forrest, our general manager. But they won't fire her, because, ironically she's great in customer service and keeping everyone on task. Yeah, she's great with the latter because she threatens to dock pay if we step out of line in anyway. I can't help but to think of her like a bulldog. All snout and jowls. Bark and bite, too.

It's my usual responsibility to clean the floor half an hour before closing. The machine used is ten years old and hums so loud it gives everyone a headache. Even the last few customers to trickle in and out the store are annoyed with how loud it is. Forrest said they ordered a new one. That was three months ago. I push the thing past its limits to get the job over with. It hums and hums. I blast XXXTenacion in my ears while pushing down the chip aisle. I come out to the bakery section of the store and look over to Alley by the registers. She was standing at number seven, scrolling up and down something on her phone. Impatiently tapping her toe to every second left until she gets to clock out. Stella comes out the main office behind the service desk with a wad of papers in her hand. She teeters a little on her heels, her chest heaves slightly. She does something behind the counter and looks up to see Alley on her phone. I see her yell and Alley startles, then puts her phone away in her pocket. Her back turned to the Stella, I see Alley form the word 'sorry' on her lips, but she rolls her eyes and begins to drum her fingers on the register counter. I shake my head and snicker. I love Alley's actions. I love to see her roll her eyes; the flare she does it with. Alley has always been a naturally bitchy person, but she uses it in a comedic kind of way. When I see her at school, she kills me when she talks about shit the teachers give her. "And Mr. Drake is a fucking pain in the ass. I mean, he always got to single me out over, what? My fucking gum chewing? Fuck outta here with that bullshit. I mean for real." I love how she cusses. She always gives each syllable a striking emphasis. A quality that's oddly lovely to hear.

I get the bakery section floor clean and move toward the paper-products aisle. My playlist shuffles to a song I should have deleted a long time ago. Having no want to endure the song, I pull my phone out and attempt to change it, pushing the cleaner with my other hand as I scrolled through my playlist. I found an underground track I forgotten I had and looked up once I tapped on the song, and immediately swerved the cleaner with all my might when I saw her in my way. I save myself from bumping into the row of paper plates and cups, holding the cleaner in its place as it hums on.

“Jesus!” I exclaim. “Fuck.” I look over and see a girl in a cargo jacket and lace up boots. The hood was covering her head and obscuring her face, but black curls with silver-grey highlights fell down and around her shoulders. She clutched a magazine in both of her hands and hunched. She must have braced herself. Was I going that fast? I look down and see she has a carry-on basket by her boots that seem to be filled with small boxes and a bag of something. I turned the cleaner off and take my ear buds out.

“I’m so sorry, ma’am.” I start and walk over to her. “I wasn’t paying attention; I’m so sorry.” When I come closer, I notice that I tower over her. She relaxes her shoulders and stands up straighter. The magazine she’s holding fell to her side. She turns her head up towards me. I knew her right away.

“Wow....okay,” Castile says. Her deep, harmonic voice was pissed, but her steely eyes gleamed and said ‘hello.’ She grins small. I hear a giggle at the back of her throat.

“Oh! Um...hey.” I manage. Castile goes to the same school as Alley and I. We have the same class schedule. In all our classes except World History she sits in the back. Yet she’s vocal when the teacher calls on us or allows us to discuss. After school Castile is outside with a group of people that look like my typical slacker crowd, only they’ve done more than smoke some weed and drink a Bud Light. I’ve never seen her alone.

“Okay, that was something,” Castile says.

“Yeah....oh, fuck I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright. I’m just happy I wasn’t squashed by....whatever the hell that thing is.” Castile nods over to the floor cleaner.

“Right, right.” I say. “Don’t worry, I wasn’t trying to commit a floor-cleaner homicide or anything.” I joke, then cringe to death on the inside. But Castile lets out a dry laugh.

“Thank God. That would have been a weird way to go.” She tucks some of her silvery hair back into her hood.

“Heh, right?”

“Right.”

We stand here for a moment too long, unmoving. The lack of talk already added a layer to the uncomfortable air too thick and humid to handle. I’ve never spoken a lick of English to Castile since realizing her existence the beginning of junior year. She sways on her heels now, sniffs back some snot and moves to pick up her basket. I see clearer that the contents comprised of boxed mac and cheese, a bag of ginger snaps, and a few pears.

“Well, I should finish shopping. My uncle has me running errands for him and he’ll be here soon to pick me up.”

“Ye-yeah, certainly. Um...see you at school.” I say.

Castile’s small grin grows a little wider. “See you at school, Carter” She uses my name. How’d she remember a name that isn’t spoken too much in class, or is barely used in any other social sphere? As I ponder this Castile turns on her heels and walks down the aisle.

“Oh, sorry again, Castile,” I say as she walks on.

“No worries. Nobody died and nobody went to jail, that’s what matters,” She says cheerfully, still walking on. I watch her for a moment, observe her walk, the slight bounce in her gait. With my music out, I hear that it’s raining. The heavy base banged against the metal roof in a different, more thunderous hum. Castile; her grey eyes gleamed, glittered almost. I’ve never seen that in anyone before. Or a grin like hers. No matter what its size, it made an impact. I watch Castile round the corner to the next aisle as I put my ear buds back in and turned the floor cleaner back on. I proceed with my typical task, but every other aisle I go down, I catch a glimpse of Castile. She had

pulled her hood down, letting a mess of curls and silver fall around her face. She picks up what looks like cat food, soda, and a thing of bacon. I can't place how she's so intriguing to me all of a sudden. I never thought deeply of her at school. Why was now different? Is it because I actually talked to her, never mind how small the talk was? Her eyes.... her grin. I scold myself for thinking of the very thing that I don't believe in; magic. If I was a complete dumb fuck, I'd claim Castile was pure and utter magic because of her otherworldly eyes and grin. But I'm not a dumb fuck. She's just beautiful, I conclude. Nothing else to it. Hell, I must be attracted to her. But no way can there be anything beyond that. No way.

I finish with the produce section on the far side of the store. With the whole floor finally being clean, I push the cleaner back toward the supply closet. I pass the registers and see Castile at checkout with Alley. They seem to have gotten into a chat; Alley had initiated her rapid hand movements to embellish her story, and Castile stood with her hips swaying side to side, plastic bags in each hand. She has that small grin on her face again. I marvel. God...she really is beautiful, and her beauty is unlike any other I've seen. Models, Victoria Secret Angels, even the people who work at Hollister all pale in comparison to Castile. I laugh at myself. This whole night has turned weird. I've turned weird; I actually have genuine romantic interest in someone; at least I think I do. I keep thinking about her, and saying she's beautiful and all the extra sappy shit that I think is bull. But damn. Dammit all to hell damn. I didn't think I'd have the hots for someone until....never. I didn't really think about it, honestly. I sigh heavily, realizing and [reluctantly] accepting these feelings. I'll give it a night or two, see how strongly I feel at school the next few days.

I push the floor cleaner into its spot in the supply closet. I check my phone for the time; ten minutes until closing. Great. I go back out to the main floor and grab a bag of Cheetos and a Monster. I bring my stuff to Alley as she was counting the cash drawer. She looks up at me and rolls her eyes with that dramatic flair.

"You see I'm already tallying everything," Alley says. "You can ring yourself up."

"Yeah, in a perfect world," I say. "But Stella would have a field day if I did. You know that."

"I know how Stouty gets." Alley put all the cash back in their proper places within the drawer and began keying numbers into the register's keyboard. I put my stuff on the counter and looked over to see a *Vogue* magazine sitting on the bag carousel. Castile had a magazine.

"Hey, did Castile leave this?" I ask Alley.

"Oh! We both must have forgot. She only left a few moments before you came. Maybe she's still out there?" But before I could hear Alley finish her sentence, I grab the magazine and jog outside. I notice Stella giving me a look as she continued to tend to whatever business there was behind the service counter. Outside, the rain had subsided to a light mist, but the wind was fierce and jarring. Carrying fallen leaves and late autumn chill. I look around the dark parking lot, hoping to spot her springy step. Had her uncle already come? I give the parking lot another sweep of my eyes, looking intently under every lamp light.

No sign of her.

I really wanted to look into her eyes again. Really talk to her. Maybe tomorrow at school I can try, that is, if she's not already preoccupied with other friends and what not. I begin to saunter back into the store until I hear a voice from the side of the building. I almost ignore it, because we get loiterers all the time; but this voice was smooth and melodic.

"Yes...I understand. I'll be okay, Raye. No...I Will. Okay?" Castile. As I walk toward the side of the building her voice begins to fade away. I round the corner and see her standing in the middle of the field beside the store, illuminated by the residual light from the lamps. She places her shopping bags on the ground on either side of her and puts

her phone away in her jacket pocket. I start toward her, hugging the magazine to me so it wouldn't get ruined by the mist and wind.

"Castile!" I call. But she doesn't hear me. I call again, trotting to her, holding her magazine close. Feeling stupid for putting so much determination into this little bit. But I stop suddenly. The ground....it's, vibrating? Tiny reverberations like echoes underground. I look down slowly; there's no splitting in the earth, but rather the grass looks like it's freezing over. Rapidly, frost gathers at the tips of the grass blades. I step back and feel the firmness of the ground, the crunch sound from the ice. Then, the frost moves. It ripples and waves across the ground toward Castile, whose standing stiff with her arms lax at her sides. She has her head down.

"CASTILE!" I call at the top of my lungs. Before I could break out in a run for her, the frost ends at Castile's feet, and in an instant a white, harsh light engulfs her. All that's visible of Castile is her silhouette in bold, black lines. Her hood falls back from her head, and the curls whip and move about through the wind that had begun to swirl around. The temperature has dropped severely and the entire area was bombarded by a cold tempest. I feel a piercing dampness on my knees; I didn't even notice that I fell to them. Stunned, I watch Castile in the white light. She stood as still as a statue as the world around her crashed. As if things couldn't become more dangerously bizarre, a vortex begins to form of the wind, mist, and what looked to be ice pieces. Leaves and twigs join in the vortex. I cover my head as it closes in around me and Castile. She's still standing. It becomes more and more compact until it and the white light clash, and a whole new conundrum is conjured. Everything swirls and blurs. I imagine this was what the big bang was like; bright and striking. The wind suddenly stops, and so does the vibrating. The grass has thawed. The air has become dry. I'm swallowing and regurgitating air. Everything just switched off, like there's wiring to this fiasco. Everything became quiet and still, save for the faint glow.

I lift my head and uncover my eyes. Castile. She's surrounded by a pale-blue light. From her back, frost-bitten leaves and sticks and...rocks? Crystals? They're all floating; suspended in mid-air and glowing with varying hues of blue and grey. Everything fully registers in my mind; the formation of the leaves and twigs and stones make out a pair of wings. The leaves make the primary outline, and the rest of the matter fills in the span. I'd never seen anyone....anything so ethereal.

Castile moves. Her arms fall and she slumps her back as if she's tired. She turns around slowly. Her wings moving with her, gliding seamlessly through the air. She looks at me; her eyes, the one's that said 'hello' now say something entirely different. Her pupils are nonexistent. Her hair had also changed; the silver highlights covered all her curls now, and they moved as well; like she was underwater. Castile parts her lips like she's about to say something, but no words come. She just stares at me. I get up quickly. I wanted to run to her. Ask her if she was okay. What this was? And what is she? Without thinking, I take a step forward, and then another. Closer and closer, I feel more chilled with each step.

"Stop," Castile says calmly. Her dreamy drawl takes on an echo and is empty of any love or song she wants to sing. There's no giggle in her throat.

"Castile," I whisper. I have tears in my eyes. Not only is it incredibly cold, but this overwhelming sadness....It's painful....she is painful.

"Shhhhhhh," She whispers, her finger up to her lips, her eyelids drooping. Then she shoots up into the air, overturning the soil with her leap. The coldness and sadness is gone. All that's left are the groceries she bought spilled on the ground, a splotch where grass use to be, and tiny crystals in the dirt.

I walk back inside Goodway and toss the *Vogue* back on the rack. Alley, coming from the break room with her jacket and backpack, looks at me with worry.

“So.....did you give her the magazine?” She asks.

“Um...no. She had left already.”

“Oh. Well, I’ll give it to her tomorrow at school, then.

“Okay.”

Alley eyes me still. “You look clammy.”

“It’s cold out.”

“I know, but you look pale and kind of shaken. You seemed fine a moment ago.”

I shrug. “That was a moment ago. This is now.” With that, Alley shrugs and says, “Okay,” She nods me goodnight, and I nod her goodnight as well. I’m the last to leave before Stella. I throw my coat on and shove my hands in my pockets. Stella was finally finished with whatever work she was doing.

“You look like you’ve seen a ghost,” she says to me before I walked out the door. I stop, but I don’t turn around.

“Nah, just cold.”

“The Idea of Glamour”

by Steven Johnson

“Honestly, D, it’s about as far from resembling the Chateau Marmont as Billy Jean’s basement,” Margot proclaimed as the ticking of the door alarm vibrated off her counterfeit earrings.

“Ain’t no need to be bringing Jean into all this, sugar plum,” Denault responded with the slightest tinge of annoyance lingering on his tongue. He peered over the dashboard, staring through the fluorescent lights of shame, neatly arranged above the two-inch balconies of the motel. “It’ll have to do. Come on now.”

“It’s almost as if you’ve forgotten Venice all together, baby,” Margot said as Denault stepped outside to collect his luggage. “Do you not remember all the fun you and I used to have? The people, the music, the ice cream.”

“The dent you put in my leather,” Denault responded.

“Why must you always be so negative?” she asked him.

“Who was the one lifting your head ‘outta Pike’s loo, huh? The poor bastard who ain’t even got a word in the whole night cause’ your lily-white ass wouldn’t stop hammering ‘round lookin’ around for a brown bag, spilling your booze round like a goddamn hummingbird with a story to tell.”

“I never asked you to help me, Denault. I can handle my own business.”

“If the shoe fits, Margot.”

Stepping inside the burn out luxury motel, Margot couldn’t help but let the memories of better days seep into her head.

* * *

Meeting through the wine vines of friends alike, who rather preferred a glass of Jameson over a taste of Malbec any evening, Denault stumbled into the roaring of his partner Bonkowski's speakeasy, only to unravel the veil of his demise. The loudness of the place: men gambling their inheritance over bottles of scotch, women dancing and singing as if the great war had been a figment of everyone's imagination, schoolboys destroying their livers claiming the only vital source of life was the protein infused worm lingering at the bottom of Cuervo's unmistakable mistake. Nothing could go south in a place so cold.

Peering behind the chapped lips of a community joyride, he saw her: a porcelain centerpiece enclosed by fictitious guards, for no one dared get too close. None but one. The shimmering of her dress ricocheted off hair of a Russian flag, reflecting oceanic eyes too deep to lurk in the shallows, only to bounce back into the eyes of a man who had no interest in kaleidoscopes.

"Can I buy you a drink?" Denault asked the woman as a single hair purposefully fell into his face.

She gazed upon him, scanning him from head to toe without moving her eyes. "I'm not sure. Can you?"

The sarcasm made Denault's stomach turn. The woman knew her grammar. He let the feeling slide with a simple laugh.

"Well I'll be damned. Bonkowski finally hired some good lookin' ones to livin' up the joint. Tell me, how'd you wind up in the city of wind?"

"I haven't the slightest clue as to what you're referring to, Mr—"

"Denault Hayes," he spoke with a smirk as his hand stretched to an unwelcomed handshake.

"Mr. Hayes, but I can assure you that what you are looking for isn't at this table."

"And what is it you think I'm lookin' for?"

"The hole by the loo, of course. I'm sure it will suit you just fine."

The hastiness portrayed by her tone only made Denault hunger for more. She spoke with such an affluent tongue, as if her trailer park upbringing never had a chance to slip through her pearly whites into Denault's rustic, crimson molar.

"I think I found what I'm lookin' for right here."

She looked at him, mulling the question inside her head to which a choice would be born.

"The names Margot," she said as she slowly sipped on a drink that she knew she would no longer have to pay for. "If I were you, I'd either grab a pen or a camera. Either one of those would last a tab bit longer."

"I think I'll grab a cab instead."

Chicago lightening could not have dimmed the sound of the two. Stepping out into the civil war of the streets, Denault lit up a smoke, and he kept lighting it, over and over again, until all that was left was a murky filter and a pile of ashes that once resembled beauty.

* * *

"Did you see the paper, D?"

"What 'bout it?" he asked.

A subtle thrill seeped its way through the walls of the motel into Margot's voice, as if her excitement had to be slightly diminished in order to not spook her lover. "That French boy we met back at Cipriani's last week, he's on page six."

"What's that flower doin' in the news?" he asked through the slits of his eyes.

“Denault Hayes! Don’t you dare call him that!”

Denault yanked the newspaper from Margot’s hands, her feeling the weightless crunch and him smelling the burning timber as his cigarette lingered too close to the printed words. “That’s what he is, love. Nothin’ but a Nancy boy.”

“Well, the other gentleman clutching his arm for dear life doesn’t seem to mind it at all.” Margot declared as she reclined to the far side of the lover’s nest. The sentence, formed from the same muscles she was born with, crept its way into her mind, knocking on a door that Margot always dreamed of opening, but never found the fitting key for. She imagined the French boy and the other soul, vaguely resembling the sickly appearance of the plague, nonetheless, wrapped into each other. A gleam could be spotted in the eyes of the two, even on the day-old black ink, if one knew where to look. Margot always knew where to look. The images that rushed through her mind were not that of happiness, but of jealousy. The kind of jealousy perfectly blended in a witches’ cauldron, sorrow and grief being the final ingredients, along with a tuft of cat fur. She wanted what the lovers possessed, whether she chose to believe it or not. She wanted love.

“Your roof is leaking, dear.” Denault shook her thigh as she was abducted from her fantasy.

“What was that?” she asked him.

The puzzled look upon his face was the last emotion to ever cross Margot’s eyes. The last emotion shown that was not anger. “I gotta’ meet Bonkowski by the harbor. Said he’s got a package waitin’ for me. Needs tendin’ to.”

“But it’s so late. I don’t even have time to put my face on.”

“You’re not comin’ with me.”

The tone of his voice planted Margot to the motel floor. Denault always

went out late. Sometimes she wandered if he would ever come back, destined to chase paper he never seemed to acquire. But for the strangest reason, a tear collided with the carpet just below Margot’s figure. An ocean for an ant, and an ocean for her.

“Why not?” she asked him without turning around.

“Can’t have you comin’ to this one, doll. No need for beauty at this place.”

“What’s life without beauty, D?” she turned to gaze into eyes fixed upon a gun.

“What’s death without beauty, Margot?”

A sense of panic blanketed Margot, one that made her far more cold had she been left without it. “Why’ve you got that out, Denault?”

“Bonkowski said someone’s been actin up at the still. Told me I gotta’ handle it. Take the little shit off our payroll.”

“Don’t speak to me as if I was born yesterday. I’m not a barstool tramp you can sway with words.”

Margot had stepped an inch too close to Denault, for the veins protruding from his head pulsed violently, second by second, growing larger with every breath withheld. “What do you think you are then?” he asked her, undoubtedly knowing the outcome of his question.

Rage was not the word to describe Margot’s expression. Defeat was more suiting. Somehow, whether it be through the ears of the left angel or the eyes of the right devil, Denault always won.

“I’m coming with you. And not another word about it.”

There weren’t many places to hide in Chicago, not like the valley, but if one was to look close enough, through the handcuffs of drunken men

weaving through florescent street signs, one may find a small sector of peace. Peace bleeding chaos.

“Stay in the car,” Denault demanded.

“How come?”

“Cause I told you before. If you come you stay put.” He slammed the door behind him.

Margot watched as he greeted his fellows with subtle head nods and piercing stares. The men surrounding the rat-infested harbor were planted to the ground in a half moon view. The most elite of Harvard’s alumni could not decipher the difference between the men and the statue of David. They stood still, icy breath escaping their mouths showing the only sign of life.

Resting in the center of these men was a piece of roadkill, or that was what Margot believed it to be at first. As a pool of blood reached for the gravel below, a man knelt, head resting the ground, trying to find comfort in his predicament. He could not have been older than twenty-five, his youth masked by the torment brought upon him. Margot watched as Bonkowski stepped up to Denault, whispering wiry words into his ear that made the hairs upon her neck stand and salute. Bonkowski handed him a slugger and stepped back for the showing.

No tears formed in Margot’s eyes, as they were all meant to be saved for the boy lying in the dust and a sole shimmer resting upon Denault’s face. Margot did have to look away, for the sound of colliding cars and mortar bombs could not hold a candle to that of breaking bones. Agony swarmed the air, making it difficult to breathe. Blood filled the lake bed, distracting the fish into bumping into each other. Pain had full control, the sixth sense that Margot knew too well, but could not bear to be submersed in.

She reached into the glove compartment of Denault’s car, having to wiggle the metallic latch in order to keep her hand steady. She knew

Denault always kept a Winston in his mouth and one by his side, but she also knew he enjoyed the boastfulness of slight preparation. Small talk for later dinner parties. Stepping out of the junker, she set aim for her course.

Denault looked up as the car door squeaked shut. Smearing blood across his beading face to remove the hairs from his eyes.

“Margot, I told you to stay in the car,” he spoke to her with refrained rage out of embarrassment from his peers. “Get back in!”

She inched closer and closer to the poor boy, nearly lifeless, aching from limb to limb. Margot stood over him, just as a mother bird does as her child falls out of the nest. The metal felt raw on her skin, but tender upon the forehead of the dying boy. No man nor woman could recall what was worse, the ringing of the eardrums or the shock pulsing through their veins. As soon as it had begun, it was over.

Margot felt the thick grip of Denault’s hand around her arm, pulling her from the scene and not caring that her head had befriended the dashboard as he shoved her back into his car. Through the aches, she felt relief. She had finally helped someone that was not her, for she had been a lost cause for some time now. She noticed the tomato like features upon Bonkowski’s face, growing redder by the second, bulgy fingers pointing in her direction. Watching the man fill with rage as Denault nodded frequently, eyes locked with the ground as if he had spotted a diamond amongst the rubble. Denault quickly turned and made his way back to the car. Not a moment later, all that was left of the scene were dust clouds and bird food slowly drifting down into Lake Michigan.

From Lake View all the way to Funks Grove, Denault drove. Not a word was spoken. There was nothing left to be said. Funny how three hours can feel like an eternity with the wrong crowd. Denault finally pulled the car over a mile off the street, out in the boonies of Illinois. Margot assumed the worn-down cabin resting in front of the car had

been a hiding place for when the coppers decided an early morning Tuesday raid seemed like a valuable waste of time.

“Are we going on vacation, D?”

Denault did not respond to her. He only stared through the windshield, trying to wrap his head around his next move, wanting an easy checkmate.

“Cause if we are this place simply won’t do. I’ll be picking splinters out of my nails for the next decade.”

“Get out of the car, Margot.”

Not a trace of surprise could be found within Margot. She simply looked at her lover, digesting his every emotion portrayed upon a blank expression. A part of her felt deceived. The man that she gave her entire life to was now the man treating her no differently than a client. The bigger part of her felt sympathy. Forgetting the anger that she should have been holding, she knew what she had done. She knew who Denault was and she knew what he would have to do on behalf of her actions. She knew this was the last time she would see her man’s cracked edges.

“From the bottom of my heart D, I truly did love you.”

“Get out the car, Margot—”

“I mean it, love. I’ve always—”

“I said get out of the car—”

“Denault, I don’t care—”

“For God’s sake, get out of the goddamn car, Margot!” he slammed his fists upon the dashboard, revealing the best friend he chose to carry wrapped within his fingers. The gun made Margot’s lips curl as she held back a tsunami of tears.

“Love you, D,” she said through wounded dialect as she stepped out into the frosty chill of trees making homage to mother nature. “Always.” Margot took the scenery to heart, for she knew she would become part of it.

Margot faintly heard the slamming of Denault’s door as she was reminiscing her past experiences, love upon her shoulders, the adventures that made her life worth telling and all the untamed scenes in-between. She didn’t want it to end, but for what it was worth, she had made sure it was nothing short of exciting while it lasted. It was all worth it to her.

The drawback of a pistol is but the faintest of sounds. The slight anticipation before the world goes into complete disarray until the sounds settle back into the air. Margot closed her eyes, content with herself but longing for one final wish.

Denault stood behind her, shaking more violently than ever before. His face resembled a sink where a child had left the faucet running. He watched as the woman he ensnared stood before him, as beautiful as the day he had first seen her.

Whether it be from the saltiness of human tears or the destruction of lungs, he choked upon his words. “I’m sorry, Margot...mean it.”

Still, through hell fire into more flames, Margot smiled.

“No, you’re not.”

It was supposed to snow later that week. Denault took an entire seven minutes to pull himself from the ground and back into his car, hoping that the white flakes falling from the sky would blanket the tracks he had left behind. As he drove back to the city, he peered into his rearview mirror. He could hear the cello playing. The radio wasn’t on and he was not humming. He looked forward and could hear the cello playing.

"Rise Up"

by Anonymous

Death and despair
Fuck that, I'll rise up.
I cannot care
So fill up my cup,
And let me rise up.

I've got what I need;
Beauty and brains,
Does not follow but leads.
Granted I'm insane,
But I'm what I need.

A rollercoaster ride,
Fun and scary.
I was at my side,
People had me wary.

They broke my heart,
Watched me fall.
It was only the start,
I couldn't stand tall.

Death and despair,
Suicide and sadness;
Fuck that, I do care.
I've got the determination,
And even the madness.

So don't hold me down
Let me rise up.
I sit on my throne and wear my crown.
Be the queen and really rise up.

"A Stooping River Willow"

translated from the Russian text by Dean Furbish

A stooping river willow
Rustles in the wind . . .
Or is it
An old village woman
Whispering
Her morning prayers? . . .

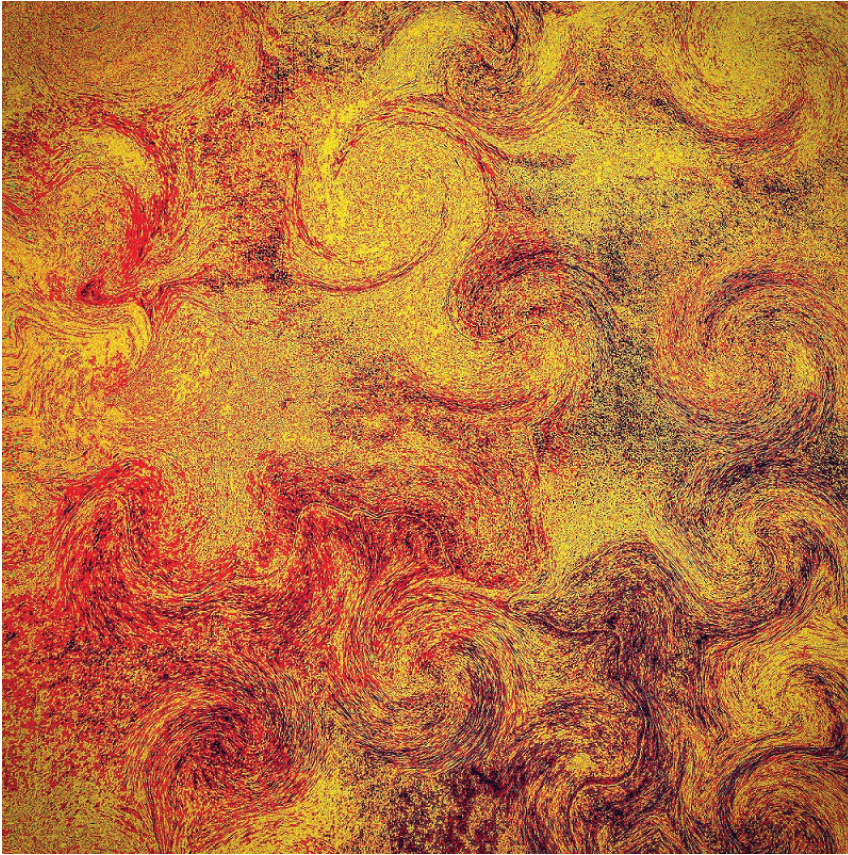
A woodpecker's faint patter
In a forest valley . . .
Or is it an old woman praying –
Prayer beads tapping
In her hands? . . .

Сутулая прибрежная ива
Kamil Tangalychev (Original Text)

Сутулая прибрежная ива
Шелестит на ветру...
Или шепчет
Свою утреннюю молитву
Доживающая век
Деревенская старуха?

Дятел стучит
В заречном лесу...
Или четки постукивают
В руках у молящейся
Старухи?..

"Goldlink" by Myles Brown



"4080" by Kareem Hilaire

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

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Marlas Whitley, *Non-fiction*

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Letter from the editor



Hard to believe I've been with this club for three years. I first heard about the *Wake Review* in spring 2016 when I attended the club's annual award ceremony at the suggestion of my English 111 professor, who then encouraged me to join the club later that fall. Looking back, I am so glad she did! From my first year as the editor of non-fiction to leading the club as the editor in chief, being part of this group has been

such a wonderful experience for me, and I've enjoyed every minute of it. The *Wake Review* has been a highlight of my time at Wake Tech, and I wouldn't trade the last three years for anything! I'm very grateful that my professor encouraged me to join. Thank you, Professor Welch!

Before I joined, I was a quiet, shy person just going through my classes. I was nervous and unsure of myself. I even had difficulty talking to people. Joining this club helped change all that. Thanks to the experiences I've had with this group and the support of the friends I made in the past few years, I've become more confident, more comfortable—not just with other people, but also with myself. I feel like I've broken out of my shell and become a better version of myself. I feel like a different person, and the *Wake Review* helped a lot with that. Overall, my time at Wake Tech would've been very different had I not joined this club.

I hope you enjoy this edition of the *Wake Review*! Thank you to all the students and faculty for sharing your work with us. We couldn't make this magazine without you, and we're happy to publish your talent.

Thank you to my *Wake Review* editors and staff for your hard work. I had a great time working with all of you this year. Whatever comes next for you, I wish you the best of luck. To my club advisors, Mandy, Liz, and Dean: You three are among the friendliest, most supportive people I've ever met. Thank you for always encouraging me and helping me get where I am. I couldn't ask for better advisors. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity!

Matt Coppedge, 2018-19 Editor in Chief

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club



The 2018-2019 Wake Review staff on Southern Wake campus.

From left to right: Steven Johnson, Myles Brown, Tatianna Vittoro, Madysen Rufener, Clay Levasseur, Lisa Drevenak, Dean Furbish, Elizabeth Welch, Matt Coppedge, Mandy Kelly, Kareem Hilaire, Marlas Whitley, and Elizabeth Torres.

*Front Cover Image
"Odd Angles," by Sophia Chunn*