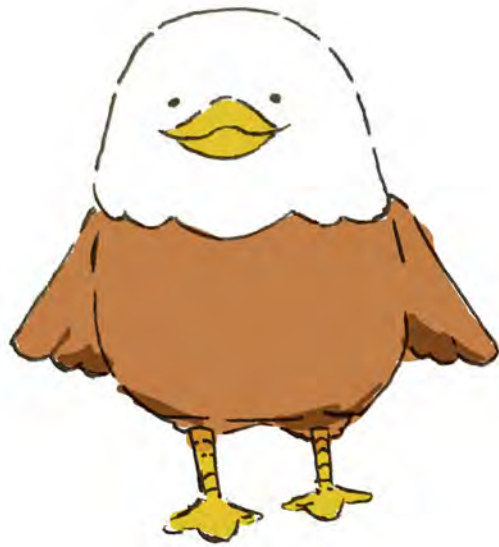




The Wake Review
2024



The Wake Review

Mission Statement: The Wake Review is a student-run creative journal at Wake Tech Community College which seeks to provide a forum of 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 <https://www.waketech.edu/divisions/liberal-arts/wake-review>.

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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 visit the online edition of the *Wake Review*, visit the following website:

<https://www.waketech.edu/divisions/liberal-arts/wake-review>

Cover photo: *I Am Not My Self-Esteem* by Anastasiia Kruglova
*Image altered to fit cover dimensions. See original artwork on pp. 79-80

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief



Throughout the conception of this year's edition of *The Wake Review*, one thing became clear: the works of the artists who make up this year's edition cover a great expanse of both light and deep topics and explore the depths of human expression. The power of art lies not only in its ability to please the senses and to remind us of the beauty held in the world but also to hold a mirror up to humanity, reflecting what it finds there back to us. It takes bravery and nuance to express the parts of ourselves that are difficult and obscured, but through this act we come

together and share in the human experience and find comfort in community. Art is not merely a luxury; it is a necessity, it has the power to give voices to others and to call for meaningful change in the world. The works that make up this year's edition encompass this idea perfectly.

To our readers, thank you for supporting and recognizing all the hard work that went forth to make this year's edition possible. Thank you to our editors, our faculty advisors, and to everyone who had a hand in making the 2024 edition of *The Wake Review* a success. As Editor-in-Chief, I am so honored that *The Wake Review* can be a platform for so many talented artists and writers who have shared their perspectives with us.

It has been my absolute pleasure collaborating with everyone involved, and I will always cherish the experience of working with all the wonderful creative people who put themselves into this volume and made it into what it is: a rich diverse celebration of the voices and people who make Wake Tech a community.

Now, it is my honor to present to you the 2024 edition of *The Wake Review* Literary Magazine.

Amelia Bond

Amelia Bond
Editor-in-Chief (2023-2024)

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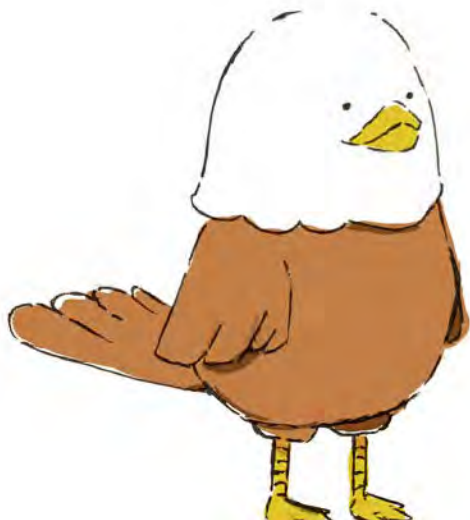
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The Wake Review

FIRST PLACE POETRY

The Kiss

Charli French

Recently, I've been thinking about Judas, Judas and his damn kiss,
Judas and his kiss of betrayal, and I
wonder what it was like for him and Christ

Was the sun of the Garden of Gethsemane hot? Did it scorch their tanned skins when
Atop well-worn paths, standing on beaten leather sandals, and under beckoning olive
trees,
Two men pressed close together, flesh meeting flesh? Probably

But the Holy books never describe the unseeable, the unknowable,
Was it the kiss of a jealous, cruel enemy? No,
For Judas loved Jesus, and Jesus, Judas, so
Maybe it was like Klimt's kiss, with
Judas craning over an uninterested Jesus, holding Christ
Tight, as if to shield him from the world? Better yet,
Perhaps the two were like Brancusi's carved kiss,
Adjoined, yet slowly separated by forces of a cruel world.

This kiss of a jealous, scorned, greedy, fiery, passionate, scared man was a kiss of death
For while Jesus lost his body, Judas lost his soul, all because of
A mark so evil yet so very intimate,
Perhaps it hurt Judas just as much as Christ's crucifixion, regret
driving nails deep, leaving only
Stigmata on a lonely heart.

A kiss so powerful, so world-changing, yet so worthless
A kiss worth 30 pieces of bloodied silver,
A kiss worth so much agony and suffering, yet
In another time, it could've not meant anything.

God-willing, they got another chance, another world,
Then, it may have just been a lazy, meaningless kiss,
Shared in a forgotten moment, one out of
A hundred, thousand, million, billion, so many
That they lost count long ago, a kiss lost in the infinite, but no
They just got the
one.

FIRST PLACE FICTION

Shine On You, Crazy Cowboy

Charli French

Sometime after the old man from the west died, as his children searched through his belongings, they found a journal. Inside the front cover of the old journal was a lone, scratched photograph. It had no color, but the faded image was still visible. Two men posed for their portrait, one sitting and the other standing with his hand on his companion's shoulder. Both were dressed in dusty, well-loved suits and hats and were smiling. In the corner, in shaky handwriting, an inscription read: "Myself with my dearest, August."

The summer of '68 was hot, but as the season reached its peak, I relished in that heat. The sun hung low, like a ripe orange hanging off the Californian sky. The leather of my boots and hat bent under my warm touch, further distressing the worn hide. The small spurs on the back of my boot's heels didn't look much better; like a bloody scab, a layer of rust coated the tiny spikes.

The fat sun had begun its descent back over the horizon. With a gift in hand, I trotted over to the horse pen, finding my girl quickly. Nora sniffed the air as I carefully split the apple into quarters with my knife. I looked over the horizon, spotting a man as he clumsily rode over the horizon. With his right hand, he held the reins too tightly, with his left, too loosely. His legs trembled and twitched against the chest of the beast, tired from holding on and squeezing too tightly.

"Hello!" the stranger shouted as he attempted to dismount his steed. Attempted – not succeeded. I watched and winced as he fell face-first into the dirt. He stood up quickly, dusted off his jeans, brushed off sand, and held his hand straight out, paired with a smile. It was the that I noticed his dimples.

"My name's August," he said, hand still outstretched.

"August Fisher." I looked at his hand and hesitated. I ran my hand against my jeans, wiping off horse slobber, and grasped his. He smiled again, the little valleys in his cheeks prominent.

"Are you the boss 'round here? I sent a letter saying I'd be here early, but," he paused for a small chuckle, proud of himself, "I think I arrived before the post officer."

"No, Bo is in his house, just right up that hill," I pointed past the horse corral towards the large ranch house where Beauford "Bo" Davis and the rest of his family lived. Beside the house was the glorified shack where I and the rest of the workers on the ranch slept. Behind was the cattle pen; the endless mooing was heard throughout the entire county, maybe the whole country.

"Ah, understood," August petted his horse softly as he awkwardly tied it to a post "Well, I guess I'll be seeing you around mister..." he trailed off expectantly.

"Jaime, just Jaime."

"Beautiful." Under the setting sun, the notes of honey in his eyes shined brightly.

"Thank you, Jaime." In a second, he was halfway up the hill, back to the sunset.

A full day and night of rest did nothing to soothe the engrained soreness from my weary bones to my tired muscles; my knees ached, head stung, and joints popped loudly. The pain kept me up most of the night; before the sun rose I was up, unable to slip back into a semblance of slumber.

While everyone else was asleep, I quietly knelt beside my bed and searched under it. My hand hit the hard, wooden box; I pulled it free. I paused before I opened it, making sure no one was awake, and then pulled the squeaky lid back. I counted the hidden bills and coins; one-thousand twenty dollars and fifty cents in little slips of silver and paper greeted me

like little soldiers. Dollars and coins I'd saved and pinched together for nearly a decade, waiting to be set free. To march for me, to buy my freedom from this hellhole. When the others started stirring, I stuffed my army back into the vault and re-hid it.

I sat on my bed, a goofy grin on my face, and looked over at Malcolm. "One more job," I mouthed silently.

Breakfast was served at six at the large table outside. We took turns cooking, though none of us were great cooks. Morning meals were simple. A slice or two of toasted bread, an egg, and a bitter cup of coffee would be enough until noon. I sat down with my plate and spotted August picking at his egg at the end of the table.

"New guy, huh?" Malcolm elbowed my side as he slid beside me, poking into my ribs. For all the years I'd been on the ranch, Malcolm Freedman had been my best – and truthfully only – friend. He'd come from one of the Carolinas a few years after the war ended and rarely spoke about his past.

"Yeah, really something," I replied as I lazily scooped up my eggs with my toast. "Where'd he sleep last night?"

"Outside," Malcolm grinned even more. He, like most of the other younger men on the ranch, grabbed tightly to the rare moments of gossip and drama that came our way.

"Stayed up all night trying to ride his horse."

"Weird," I cocked my eyebrow up in confusion. There were empty beds in the ranch, and the nights were growing cold.

"Are you going out this month?" Isaiah, a younger hand, asked.

"Yeah," I choked back some poorly brewed coffee. "Heading south with some of the herd – taking them to the Central Pacific."

"Oh wow. Be careful, I heard the animals get cranky there."

"We'll pack our loveliest suits of armor," Malcolm snorted sarcastically. Before I elbowed him back, little footsteps rumbled over to our corner of the table. Paige Davis, Bo's six-year-old daughter, scurried over to me.

She tugged on the back of my shirt, holding it tightly in her little fist as she looked at me with the wildest smile in the west.

"Hi-may!" her little lisp was cute, "Daddy wants you!" her chubby cheeks were pushed up higher as she smiled more.

"Alright, alright," my hand dwarfed her head as I patted her soft golden curls, "I'm going," my tone playful. Despite the disdain I had for her father, I adored Paige. Malcolm slapped my back teasingly as I trotted over to the house.

Both August and Bo were in Bo's office when I arrived. Seated across from the desk from our boss, August waved at me. If I were a poet, I'd say that little wave softened something in me. I sat beside him, staring daggers into Bo.

"Boys." Bo wasn't but a decade older than me, but always addressed me as boy. "I know you and Malcolm are working on the CA line delivery, but I'd like to propose a new project. You are one of the best cowpokes I've seen on this ranch –hell, maybe the best in the state–so I trust that you can handle some responsibility," beady, gray-blue eyes bore into my chest,

"You've already met our little August," Bo's sausage-like fingers gestured to him. "And who better to teach him than the finest vaquero?" Unlike Paige, I knew Bo's butchering of my mother tongue was an insult.

"I've thought about it long and hard, and I'd like you to take him instead of Malcolm."

"No," I blurted out, almost out of instinct.

"No, he's not going with me."

"This isn't a request," Bo's hand sat heavily on the table like a warning,

"You'll take him, show him the ropes, and we'll be on our merry ways."

"He can barely ride a horse!" I was shouting now, "I'm not letting him jeopardize my safety."

"Get out," he hissed at August. "Out, now." Alone, he grimaced harder at me. "You watch your mouth around me, *boy*." I bit my tongue.

“You may not like it, but I have to train your replacement, don’t I?”

My heart skipped a beat.

“How did you—” I hadn’t told another soul about my plan to leave.

“I know you, I know your people,” Bo interrupted, “And I’m offering you this: one last job: A few heads of cattle and your knowledge. Couldn’t be too hard for you,” his voice was like spoiled milk.

“Fine,” I relaxed my jaw with a deep breath, “Fine, you win.”

“Excellent!” he clapped his fat hands together loudly, “You’d best get on the road, now.”

As good as August was at falling off and climbing back onto his horse, staying on proved difficult. By the time the ranch was fully out of view, August’s body looked like a bruised and purple pear. But he kept getting back up. As I wrangled the herd closer as we passed between the trees, he asked,

“How can I help?”

“Just stay out of my way and watch,” I snapped and instantly saw his smile fall. This particular herd was generally agreeable: they walked at a consistent pace and only rarely did I have to pull a runaway back. Every mile or so we’d stop for a short rest for everyone. During one break, near dusk, August sat beside me and reached into his bag. “Here,” he said, as he held out a hunk of bread.

“What’s this?”

“Peace offering.”

I took it, split it in two, and handed the larger piece back.

“You don’t have to —”

“Look, I understand you don’t like me, but we’re in this together now. This is a two-man job, you can’t ignore me forever. Let me help you, Jaime. Teach me just enough and I’ll stay out of your way, fair?”

“Fine,” I nodded and chewed on the bread, “but don’t do any stupid shit, deal?”

“Deal,” he grinned.

“I’ll turn you into the greatest cowboy in the States,” I smiled back.

One day turned into two, four, a week, and August slowly progressed. He grew confident on his horse – with a few falls – and started working with his lariat. Rope burns lined his hands, leaving bloody messes everywhere. Once, after I finished bandaging his hands, I tossed him a pair of my gloves.

“Here, wear these.”

“Wow, they’re beautiful,” he admired the craftsmanship as he donned them.

“My mama made them, back when we lived in Mexico.”

“She’s a wonderful seamstress. What’s her name?”

“Xochitl. Her name was Xochitl.”

The further south we rode, the quieter the nights became. With only August, the cattle, and our horses beside me, I could nearly hear cicadas buzzing.

“I’m used to a little more noise,” August confessed sheepishly as he sat at our fire, “... grew up in a bigger town.”

“Oh?”

“Mhm, middle of Virginia. Can’t say I loved my neighbors, though.”

“I can’t imagine they were happy about the election in ‘60.”

“They were not,” he laughed, and I smiled back. “The consumption took my family; after they died, I moved between cities.”

“I understand. By then, I was working between ranches.” In the low firelight, as he listened intently, I marveled at how wonderful his eyes shined.

“We’ll be near Sacramento soon.”

“I’m excited. I’ve never seen a city this far west,” August sounded like an excited kid.

“It’s something. I think we’ve got enough cash for a hot meal, bath, bed, and maybe a girl.” August’s face was apple-red. “What? You have a girl back home or something?” I teased.

“Uh, yeah,” he blurted out quickly as if I were mugging him for details. “Yes, I do.” This time, he sounded more sheepish than surprised.

August fell asleep not too long after the fire burned out and I took the first watch. While the cinders of the campfire still smoldered in the sand, the air was eerily quiet. Deep inside the underbrush, the sound of pacing paws and panting were muffled. Beasts stalked around the camp, silently surrounding us. I looked in the brush and locked eyes with those of a starving wolf as it crept forward. My blood ran cold as I stared into those hungry, yellow eyes; at the same time, more appeared behind their leader. I'd seen that look—that ravenous, awful hunger—when the beasts took my sister.

But this time, I decided I wouldn't lose August. I stood and kicked my foot back, both to widen my stance and to nudge August, and I spread my arms wide. I felt like a bird as I flapped my wings in a show of bravado. With all of the air in my lungs, I roared without the chains of language. When the largest wolf took a calculated step forward, I lunged at him and shouted primally, puffing up my chest in scared warning.

"Huh- what-" August stirred awake behind me.

"Don't move," I hissed, eyes still locked with the biggest canine.

"Wolves."

"Oh God," he whispered fearfully.

"It's alright," I turned my head to look at him, to comfort him, "we'll be alright-"

Forty-two razor-sharp teeth sank into my forearm and clamped down. August screamed before I could register the pain, his eyes wide as the moon as he stared at the gray wolf attached to my arm. Adrenaline rocketed through my bloodstream as my body kicked and punched at the snarling canine. Its packmates descended on the cattle; cows screamed as they stomped on and injured the wolves. August lunged toward me, wielding his pocket knife, and began stabbing wildly at the wolf. Each stab was agonizingly painful as the beast clamped down harder. When the wolf conceded—riddled with stab wounds and bruises—he released me and retreated with the rest of his wounded pack.

"The herd, check the herd," I ordered weakly as I slumped to the ground.

"I'm not going anywhere," August wrapped his bandana tightly

around my forearm.

"The herd, check the herd," I ordered weakly as I slumped to the ground.

"I'm not going anywhere," August wrapped his bandana tightly around my forearm. "I'm not leaving you."

My arm pulsed with pain and gripped August's shoulder tightly as he poured cool water over the makeshift bandage. "You'll be alright, I've got you," he held my limp, fragile body close to his chest, cradling my head in his arms, "I've got you," he whispered over and over again.

That night and the morning after were awful; our dwindling supply of liquor warded off a fraction of the pain in my body. August took charge of the herd while I navigated from the front, too injured to use a rope. We moved slower than normal, but no cattle were missing as they were packed into the train cars. The ride to the city was short but quiet. Labor strikes at the newly completed railroad had done a number on the little city, but it was beautiful. Better yet, beds were cheap.

After our brush with death, we agreed to stay in the city for more than one night; just enough time to recuperate, but not drain our cash. We paid for our rooms when night came and headed off in separate directions. It was odd to not sleep beside him; I almost missed August's warmth.

Our last morning in the city came quickly, but we were gone before the sun was in the sky.

Bathed, rested, and full, the ride to the ranch was easier.

"You're getting good at this," I jabbed August's side as we rode side-by-side. He rode confidently now, the bruises on his arms and face having faded completely.

"Learned from the best."

"You're a real cowpoke now, congratulations. Crazy enough to be one, at least."

"Mhm, barely remember what it was like to be a doctor's boy."

"And your girl, you still remember her?"

"Oh," he blushed, "Joseph. Josephine. Fine girl, we meant to run

away together, go west, herd cattle, that stuff.”

“And?”

“That dream died when she got married.”

“And yet you went without her.”

“I did,” he looked down somberly, “Couldn’t bear to see her with someone else.”

I don’t know why, but as we rode close to each other, I reached out. I rested my hand atop his and squeezed lightly. He wrapped his own around mine and squeezed back.

Later, I spotted him beside the campfire clutching something. The book he hunched over was torn, yellowed, and fading. Long printed lines hung onto the pages awkwardly.

“You read?” I asked curiously as I sat beside him, our knees touching.

“What, surprised I can?”

“What if I was,” I grinned teasingly, “C’mon, show me.”

“Whitman,” he held up the broken cover. “Leaves of Grass.”

“Any good?”

“Very. Some of his poems remind me of you.”

After dinner, when the campfire burned out and we settled for bed, we slept beside each other under a large quilt. Bugs hummed sonorous declarations of love, filling the chilly air. Silent hours passed, but I knew he was still awake from the sound of his heartbeat alone.

“You know,” I whispered, “My mother used to say that the night sky was like a blanket from heaven protecting the earth. The stars are little windows where our loved ones watch us.” I rolled onto my back to face the sky. “That gives me comfort. I feel safe knowing she’s watching me, I guess.”

I paused, then ventured softly, “I hope that you feel that same comfort in me.”

Moments, minutes, maybe hours passed before he sighed.

“There’s no Josephine,” he confessed in a whisper. “He was

Joseph.”

“It wasn’t exactly the greatest lie,” I smiled. “But I know how you feel. There have been women...and men, who I’ve longed for and lost. But out here, under these stars, I forget them.”

“Will you forget me, too?”

“Never, August, never,” I swore to him with my whole heart; not an ounce of mistruth in my words.

I still remember the pale pink blush of his dimpled cheeks as I held them under the moonlight.

I think about that night often. Even after I left the ranch and met my Cleo, I still think about him.

When he died in 1901, a part of me went with him. But in those years that I outlived him, every night when I looked up at the stars, I saw him looking back at me.

FIRST PLACE NON-FICTION

Silenced Tears: The Unseen Suffering of Palestinian Genocide

Jenna Atway

Gathering with loved ones to celebrate the Fourth of July with fireworks is an enduring American tradition, cherished for its companionship and joy. Remarkably, in some aspects of the Palestine-Israel conflict, a distressing parallel emerges. Israelis often gather on elevated points, not to admire fireworks, but to witness bombs falling on areas inhabited by innocent Palestinian civilians. This haunting scene, eerily reminiscent of a Fourth of July display, tragically diverges from the celebratory spirit to one marked by the grim reality of human suffering. The ongoing conflict in Palestine is not an abrupt occurrence, but rather a longstanding issue that has persisted over several decades. Gaza is being demolished and transforming into an island of annihilation due to the relentless bombing that has occurred since October 7. Hanna Duggal, a data journalist and producer for Al Jazeera News, and her colleagues shockingly reveal that “Israel has dropped more than 25,000 tons of explosives on the Gaza Strip since October 7, equivalent to two nuclear bombs.” The aftermath of these extensive bombings has left hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced, with no shelter or safe haven. Israel’s actions are reprehensible for two undeniable reasons: the decades-long oppression that has plagued Palestinians is now gaining global acceptance, and the ongoing genocide is perpetrated against innocent Palestinian civilians. Opponents argue they are targeting the terrorist group Hamas, but their actions extend beyond this claim, as they indiscriminately attack not only Gaza, but also the West Bank, where Hamas

doesn’t exist, resulting in widespread destruction and devastation.

The first reason Israel’s actions are reprehensible is because they have been oppressing Palestinians for the past 75 years. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict is not just a recent dispute; it originally dates back to 1948 and earlier, as Jewish immigrants sought new land to claim as their own. The article “What Was Palestine Before 1948?” on the Palestine Children’s Relief Fund webpage spreads awareness of the historical background of Palestine, elucidating the origins of this conflict. PCRF, the primary humanitarian organization in Palestine offering free medical care to sick or injured children without access to the local healthcare system, clearly informs that a diverse community of Arabs, Jews, and Christians, with religious ties to the area, particularly Jerusalem, called Palestine home prior to 1948. Following World War I, Palestine had been granted to Britain by the League of Nations as part of a mandate to establish a “national home for the Jewish people,” while upholding the rights of Arabs. The United Nations proposed in 1947 partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem under international governance. While the Jewish community supported this proposal, the Arab community opposed it, triggering the outbreak of a civil war. British authority came to an end when Israel was founded on May 14, 1948, and many Palestinian Arabs were forced to flee their homes. Since then, Palestinians have been treated inhumanely by Israelis and have endured decades of apartheid and oppression. Israel has been annexing and occupying increasing quantities of Palestinian land since they never intended to share it with them, intensifying the longstanding genocide on the Palestinian people. Manuel Hassassian, a former professor at Bethlehem University and former Palestinian Ambassador to the United Kingdom, irrefutably describes the occupation of Palestine:

The occupation of Palestine registers as the longest modern occupation in history. Self-determination has been exercised by all nations throughout history except for the Palestinians, who to

this date suffer from a lack of basic human rights and a decent living as well as the inability to exercise their freedom of mobility, speech, and political independence [...] The Israeli Government has designed a system incorporating laws and policies specifically designed to alienate and oppress the Palestinian population, both in and outside of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). The methods include separate laws for Palestinians in the OPT, ensuring that their quality of life is significantly lower than those of Israel's Jewish citizens. These include restricting their right to freedom of movement and access to bypass roads and the prevention of family reunification.

The longest occupation in recorded history has been and remains upon the Palestinian people. Israelis have made it their objective to deny Palestinians their fundamental human rights and to ensure their suffering, aiming to make their lives as miserable as possible. Israel's 75-year-long oppression of the Palestinian people underscores the undeniable reprehensibility of Israel's actions.

The second reason Israel's actions are reprehensible is because they are currently committing genocide on innocent Palestinian civilians. Israelis are committing genocide and ethnically cleansing all Palestinians, using the recent attack on October 7th by Hamas as justification to declare war on a country with no military. Israel has been relentlessly dropping thousands of bombs on civilians in Gaza, the majority of whom are children. Yahya Abou-Ghazala, an Associate Producer with CNN's investigative unit, based in Washington, DC, insightfully informs, "The Israeli Defense Forces issued the guidance Friday, telling all civilians in north Gaza to evacuate to areas south of Wadi Gaza [...] However, some Palestinians who followed the evacuation warnings and fled their homes in search of safety suffered the very fate they were running from: Israeli airstrikes killed them outside of the evacuation zone." Israelis deliberately led Palestinians to believe they were evacuating for

safety, yet upon arriving at the evacuation zone, they were attacked. This cruel reality reveals the absence of a secure refuge for Palestinians in Gaza, even amidst warning alerts from the Israeli military. Additionally, Israel is utilizing white phosphorus, a chemical known to cause severe burns that can penetrate through bone and tragically lead to fatalities. White phosphorus stands as just one of the numerous international war crimes that Israel has blatantly committed against Palestinians. Israel is not only taking the lives of children in Gaza, but is also causing profound anguish in the West Bank, and in this case, without the use of weapons. Al Jazeera, one of the largest international news networks in the world, tragically discloses the story of a seven-year-old boy from the West Bank, Rayan Suleiman ("Palestinians Mourn"). Rayan was walking home from school with his brothers, aged eight and ten, when they were chased home by Israeli soldiers. The soldiers followed the boys to their home and banged on their door while shouting threats at them. Rayan's cousin, Mohammed Suleiman, explained that "The soldiers shouted at him that he's [a] stone thrower," he said. "He ran away from one side, and the soldier met him from the other side [of the house]. Rayan saw the soldier in front of him, and was shocked and dropped dead out of fear" ("Palestinians Mourn"). A seven-year-old boy, previously healthy with no medical conditions, tragically succumbed to cardiac arrest, a result of the overwhelming fear induced by the presence of Israeli soldiers. Israelis have perpetuated continuous inhumane treatment of Palestinians, affecting thousands of children, leading to the gradual eradication of the entire Palestinian population in Gaza and also the West Bank. Given that Israel is actively perpetrating genocide against innocent Palestinian civilians, its actions are reprehensible.

Opponents argue they are targeting the terrorist group Hamas, but their actions extend beyond this claim, as they indiscriminately attack not only Gaza but also the West Bank, where Hamas doesn't exist, resulting in widespread destruction and devastation. Israel is utilizing Hamas as an excuse for massacring the deaths of defenseless civilians in

Gaza. They claim they want to eliminate Hamas, yet they only seem to be able to accomplish this by murdering Gazan civilians, most of whom are children. Israel would not have been murdering and tormenting Palestinians since 1948 when Hamas didn't even exist if its sole objective had been to destroy Hamas, which didn't form until 1987. If Israel's only goal is to destroy Hamas, they would not be bombing hospitals, where it is nearly impossible to evacuate, and refugee camps, where people were living under tents. Al Jazeera clearly informs, "Israel has attacked four hospitals in Gaza, including the enclave's biggest medical complex" ("Israel Strikes"). Bombing hospitals that were providing thousands of patients with shelter, along with thousands of displaced civilians, is not a means of self-defense and has nothing to do with defeating Hamas. Israeli Defense Ministers would not have dehumanized all Palestinians by labeling them human animals and subjecting them to brutal mistreatment if Israel was exclusively after Hamas. Since the beginning of this current conflict, Israel's actions, such as pouring concrete into Gaza's water sources, have resulted in the total deprivation of electricity, fuel, food, and water to all Gaza's citizens. Additionally, Israel threatened to bomb neighboring countries in an attempt to prevent humanitarian aid from reaching Gaza's vulnerable residents. Israeli Defense Forces and settlers are also capturing, torturing, and killing hundreds of Palestinians in the West Bank, despite the fact that Hamas is nonexistent there. Israel's goal is not to destroy Hamas but to exterminate all Palestinian lives while claiming to be the victim and brainwashing the world to believe them. Israel is currently exploiting the October 7th attack by Hamas as justification to eradicate all Palestinians permanently, despite their claims that they merely want Hamas gone.

Facing relentless adversity, Palestinians have endured a harrowing history marked by apartheid, oppression, colonization, and indescribable cruelty. Shockingly, this reflects a distressing historical pattern where the world appears to be standing by as innocent individuals face systematic injustice. The haunting similarities to past atrocities,

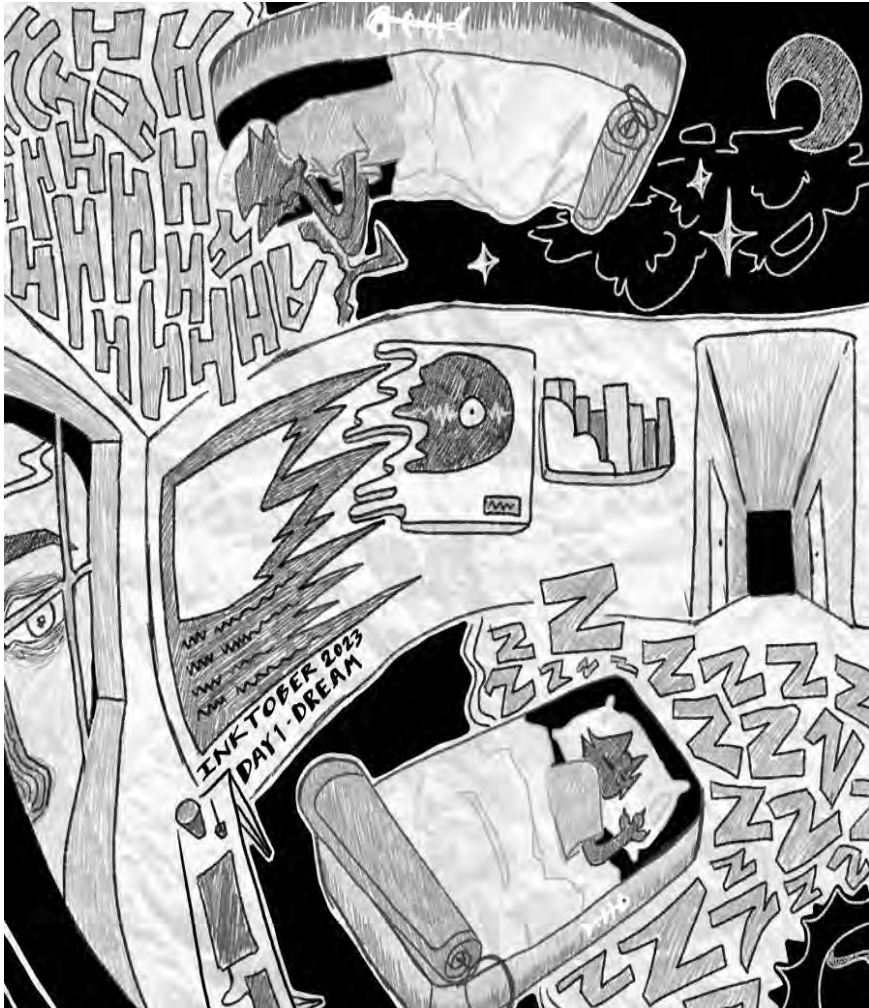
such as the Holocaust, slavery, and the brutalities of colonization, emphasize the urgency of the situation in Palestine.

This current situation demands a unified moral and global uprising, as individuals are siding with the oppressors and condoning a modern genocide against the Palestinian people. The children of Palestine aspire to live in a world where they don't have to constantly fear bombs dropping at any moment and where the anxieties of everyday life and routine activities do not encumber them. It is imperative upon the global community to rise above complacency, break the chains of decades-long oppression, and indisputably put an end to the suffering and senseless killing of innocent lives. Now is the time to decisively end this repeating history once and for all. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The ultimate tragedy is not the oppression and cruelty by the bad people, but the silence over that by the good people" (qtd. in Henderson).

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FIRST PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Depression

Jewel Nguyen

SECOND PLACE POETRY

Crimson (We Bleed)

Toni Knightstep

We bleed when our graduation gown starts to pull on the scabs already forming on last night's mistakes.

When the words
they call us,
beg to be burned,
itch to be hammered,
scream to be carved into
a photo album of regrets
we can never not carry.

When the lights get too loud,
the sounds too bright,
the feelings too numb and we wonder
if we remember how to feel at all.

When our vice whispers,
This is What You're Worth,
 from the jewelry box, the rolled up sock,
 under the mattress, the stereo.

~ * ~

We bleed on our aunt's hardwood
floor, mind beautifully quiet,
all that exists is this peaceful feeling,
the wetness on our fingers,
hysteria clotted;
silence makes time impertinent,
until we see the stain.

We bleed and we breathe
and then we remember;
the scarlet soaked washcloth,
the burning sting of the sleeve
brushing fresh cries for help,
the taste of rust in our mouths as we lie.

~ * ~

We bleed, and we secretly hope
someone will notice the artwork
we have made. Like Van Gogh
using his ear as a paintbrush;
Sometimes we hope someone
will call us crazy, shout our misdeeds,
ridicule our carefully crafted portfolio,
expose us for the fakes we are.

~ * ~

We bleed because his touch was poison,
because we didn't feel the gloved hands,
the cold tools of a courtroom reaching
where he did, or because we did;

Because, we didn't tell our mother
before she died, or because we did;

Because our friends told us
it must have been a dream,
or because they believed us,
but the "Sorrlys" dripping from their eyes
somehow felt like daggers in our spines.

~ * ~

We bleed because no one ever taught us
to feel. We were never allowed;
kicked out of our houses until dark to "find friends"
but we found nature and pulled birdsong
from our own throats instead.

We bleed to make sure
we are really here,
We just want to matter.
We just want to *matter*.

To settle our stomachs when we have to
close our mouths, swallow back the syllables,

We bleed because we are drowning; we hear the blood
pulsing in our ears, in our chest, in our throat.

We are just trying to stay afloat.

SECOND PLACE FICTION

She Does Not Receive a Reply

Amanda Den Dulk

Margerie loves to go on morning walks through her neighborhood. She passes the red brick houses and subtly smiles to herself. As the pavement fades to gravel and she turns onto the path, she spots small yellow flowers at the edge of the path and leans down to admire them. Her husband loves yellow flowers. He says that they remind him of Margerie. Honeybees swirl around the small yellow petals, sipping the sweet nectar and picking up the pollen on their furry legs like pixie dust on a fairy. For a moment, Margerie ponders the idea of picking some of the flowers for her husband but decides to leave them for the honeybees. Instead, she decides to go to the store and bring back some yellow flowers for her husband. With that, Margerie spins around and walks back home, off the gravel path and onto the pavement, past the red brick houses, and up her driveway to her red sedan.

Margerie is a small woman of almost sixty-four. Her hair is mostly grayed and almost always in a messy top bun. Her face has gone slack with age, and she is wearing denim jeans and a loose-fitting shirt today. Margerie and her husband eloped forty years ago, and they have been happy with no children or grandchildren. They were content with the couple of dogs they had, but after their third died, they couldn't handle the grief of losing another. They are happy with each other as company, and that's all that they need.

Browsing the aisles of the floral shop, Margerie decides on a couple of different sizes of yellow flowers, eucalyptus leaves, and baby's breath to make a bouquet. She pays at the front and gets back into her car. At home, she trims the stems, prunes the leaves, and arranges the

flowers to her satisfaction. She ties the ends together with twine and smiles to herself while taking in their aroma. When she was younger, she never had a favorite color. She thought all of the colors were lovely in their own sense and could not bring herself to choose just one she liked the best. Until she met her husband. Her husband's favorite color is yellow. After a while, yellow became Margerie's favorite color too. At first, she thought that it was pretty, but she realized that it reminded her of her husband. Her husband is the reason she likes the color yellow so much.

Bouquet in hand, Margerie set out to meet her husband at the park. Autumn had just started, and the trees were beginning to change colors around her. The breeze kisses her face and the smell of rain dances around her. The light pressure of the sun's heat warms the chill of the air around her, like a blanket on a cool winter night. The distant sounds of traffic and chatter play the music of Margerie and her husband's simple and serene life.

Margerie sits down on the grass at their usual meeting spot and admires the sea of orange, yellow, and pale green of the trees in front of her and the rich green of the grass below her. The grass blade's soft edges tickle her fingertips. Her husband's warmth beside her feels better than the sun, grass, breeze, and bouquet against her chest.

"Beautiful weather today, Otto," Margerie offers to her husband. She remembers the picnics and days out they would spend together when they were younger. She holds the bouquet a little closer to her chest. "How's the business going this time of year?" Otto works as a construction worker. Margerie always nags him that he is too old and fragile to work on the houses anymore. She urges him to retire, to spend more time with her at home. Otto protests, he always says he will retire when they are able to afford a house with a lakeside view, and a dog named Moose that would never die.

"I visited the animal shelter the other day. There's a chocolate Labrador puppy who looks like he'd love the name 'Moose.'"

Margerie does not receive a reply.

Margerie glances at the gazebo on her right. She remembers their dates to this park over a decade ago where they would feed the ducks in the pond and read stories to each other until the sun set and they couldn't see the words anymore.

"Do you remember the ducks in the pond over there?" Margerie tries again, "We should buy some bread from the corner store and feed them again sometime." She does not receive a reply.

Margerie sets down the bouquet on the clovered grass. She remembers the flower crowns that Otto would make for her out of the dandelions and clover flowers on their picnics and days out. Margerie remembers the sound of Otto's laugh and the fidgeting of his hands when he spoke. She remembers the way he played with the hairbands Margerie kept on her wrist and the robust, metallic smell of his hair when he came back from work.

"Otto, do you miss me the way I miss you?"

She does not receive a reply.

Otto died five months ago. The dirt over his body hasn't yet grown enough grass to lay flush with the rest of the field. The other bouquets that Margerie has brought lay wilted, or only the twine that held them together remains. Otto and Margerie did not have many friends, but they had each other, and that's all they needed. She visits him every day and always brings a fresh bouquet of flowers. Margerie does not feed the ducks or go on picnics anymore, but sometimes she brings a book to read to Otto when she feels like he needs something extra to get through the day.

"As long as I am alive, Otto, someone will always miss you."

She does not receive a reply.

SECOND PLACE NON-FICTION

Yankee Vampires: A Postmortem on America's Forgotten Epidemic

Charli French

From *Twilight* to *Trueblood*, *Blade* to *Buffy*, and *Carmilla* to *Dracula*, vampires have infested modern media. The image of the creepy, night-stalking, blood-sucking creature has cemented itself into our modern pop culture. The creepy creatures have become staples of both the macabre and Halloween horror. Few have evaded images of the night beasts featured on cereal boxes, costumes, or puppet show characters; for many, the painful sting of fake plastic teeth poking into juvenile gums is a hard memory to forget. But underneath littered candy wrappers and box-office hits lay real, tangible vampires. Exeter Rhode Island is home to one such vampire; in Chestnut Hill Cemetery, underneath a headstone surrounded by flowers, lies a girl named Mercy Brown. Mercy Lena Brown lived an incredibly short life—a mere nineteen years—but she was far more famous after her death. Mercy, like her sisters and her mother, died of a mysterious illness. Reminiscent of a biblical plague, the disease threatened to wipe out her brother Edwin next. But the town of Exeter knew what was causing the plague—a vampire. On a chilly afternoon, Mercy and her family were exhumed and examined. While her mother and sisters were decomposing, Mercy's body was miraculously intact. With this information, the townsfolk of Exeter determined that Mercy was both undead and rising in the night to feed off of her brother. Soon after her exhumation, Mercy's heart was

and prevent his death. To us in the twenty-first century, Mercy's story sounds like it was ripped straight from the pages of Bram Stoker, but in reality, Mercy died in 1892, shockingly modern for America. While we celebrate and love vampires in our modern age and media, vampires were once truly feared monsters by the citizens of rural New England. For over a century, vampirism—more importantly, the disease that caused it—terrorized New Englanders and deeply shaped our modern perception of the monster; the panic arose from the combination of older folklore, rising tuberculosis outbreaks, and local superstitions.

While the modern vampire is well known, their origins are a bit murky. The first instance of popular, fictional vampire literature traces back to the early 19th century with John Polidori's short story, "The Vampyre," published in 1819, but mentions of the creature trace back further. Vampires originate from Eastern European folklore, but these myths hold little in common with our modern vampires. Associate professor of history and horror author Coy Hall in his essay, "The Horrors of History: Vampires," asserted that early Eastern vampires, "were non-corporeal...having more in common with a poltergeist. The vampire wrought havoc, often as a spreader of disease in a village, but the vampire did not create other vampires with its bite, and it didn't consume blood." In isolated Slavic communities, vampirism was a disease associated with macabre mythology much like the bubonic plague was in Western Europe. The association between vampires and disease is especially important as it is a running theme within vampire folklore; vampires more importantly drained the life force of a victim, not their blood.

But as Eastern Europe was conquered by larger empires and had their folklore spread, the mythology and image of the vampire gradually changed. Vampires shed their similarities to poltergeists by gaining physical bodies and an unquenchable thirst for blood; vampirism evolved from a spooky tale to a scientific phenomenon. Hall continues, "Blood consumption made the vampire more believable, more corporeal

than incorporeal, more scientific than supernatural. Westerners were moving past the age of superstition...so intellectuals of the time...conceived vampirism as a disease rather than supernatural occurrence.” Progressive scientific movements of the 18th century in Europe and the burgeoning American colonies associated blood with life; blood became the vessel of the human soul (Hall). Therefore, it is only logical that people who believe their blood to be deeply necessary to not only their physical but spiritual health would be terrified of blood-sucking vampires. Through centuries of cultural exchange, vampires evolved and came to America.

The history of humanity is the history of people fighting infection and disease, but one bacteria has been our deadliest enemy for millennia: *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, archeologists have found evidence of human tuberculosis infection dating back to 9,000 years; furthermore, writings from ancient India and China dating back more than 2,000 years have also been discovered. Those infected by TB suffer a diverse array of awful symptoms, including but not limited to a dry, bloody cough, weakness and fatigue, and fever. The CDC further estimates that between the 17th and 19th centuries, TB caused a quarter of all deaths in Europe (“History of World TB Day”). Tuberculosis deeply impacted and devastated these communities, only furthering fears and propagating superstitions. While TB had existed in American bison populations for millennia, it was European colonists and their descendants who caused and continued tuberculosis outbreaks. Without knowledge of the bacteria or preventative measures, tuberculosis spread like wildfire throughout New England. Tuberculosis was referred to as the consumption or wasting disease and its victims received little care; without vaccines or antibiotics, settlers relied on homeopathic remedies including— ironically— blood consumption (otherwise known as medicinal cannibalism).

Despite TB’s widespread destruction, European and American

society had an odd fascination with the disease for its romantic qualities; the romantic movement in art and literature was fascinated with TB and its effects on the wealthy in particular. Ashleigh Black, archive assistant for the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, in her essay, “Even in Death She is Beautiful: Confronting Tuberculosis in Art, Literature and Medicine,” writes that “a romantic aesthetic was attached to the sufferer who was seemingly fading away, consumed from within by [tuberculosis]” (2). While Black does note the stigma surrounding tuberculosis and those in poverty, the larger point stands: tuberculosis was a morbid fascination of media and society. As vampiric folklore traveled into the American colonies—particularly to the states of Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island—through immigration from eastern European countries, vampires slowly became the scapegoats for tuberculosis outbreaks.

Throughout the late 18th century, life in America quickly and drastically changed for the majority of Americans. The demand for manufactured goods increased greatly and as jobs in factories opened up, workers left their rural family farms to live in cities. But while many seized opportunities for upward social mobility, the citizens of rural New England resisted change and isolated themselves from greater society. In these small, tight-knit communities, disease and superstition caught like wildfire. According to Mark Milligan, a writer for the archeological news network *Heritage Daily*, from 1786 to 1800, around two percent of the entire population of New England died from tuberculosis. Without a scientific explanation, locals turned to their folklore for both comfort and solutions to the epidemic. Those infected by tuberculosis were consumed by the disease, not dissimilar to how a mythological vampire slowly drains the blood from his victim. The vampires of New England were not counts and countesses from far-off lands, but rather deceased locals who rose at night to feed off the living. The only solution for ending the consumption outbreak was to find and prevent a vampire from feeding further. Vampire hunters, who were just regular

townsfolk armed with torches and shovels, looked for bodies that did not correctly decompose. Key characteristics included a corpse having longer nails, hair, and teeth than at death, a fresh facial appearance, and fresh— non-coagulated— blood in the heart. However, each of these phenomena can be explained by the process of natural decomposition. After death, water leaves the body quickly which causes the skin and gums to retract; the nails, hair, and teeth of a corpse do not grow, but rather their full length is revealed as the skin over them shrinks. Furthermore, most cases of vampirism occurred in cold climates where the ground or mausoleums that stored corpses would act as natural refrigeration. Just as modern coolers preserve the appearance of the dead in funeral homes and morgues, so did the freezing winters of New England.

Despite these natural processes, New Englanders sought ways to dispose of and prevent the reanimation of their vampires. In her video, “America’s Forgotten Vampire Panic,” mortician, author, and YouTuber Caitlin Doughty stated, “[New Englanders] relied on themselves, and their community...to treat highly contagious diseases, ritual, belief, and medicine were all one thing. Killing a vampire was medicine. Kill a vampire, save a life” (13:44-14:21). Vampire-killing methods varied from town to town, and state to state, but a few key elements are consistent across the region. Milligan further writes, “After a vampiric corpse was identified, the remains were either turned over in the grave, or in some cases the organs were burnt, and the affected family members would inhale the smoke to cure the consumption.” Not every single New Englander believed in the myth of the vampire nor did every town affected by consumption turn to vampire-burning. Still, a large enough population did. Without access to vaccines or antibiotics, New Englanders fought an uphill, brutal battle against the unstoppable force of TB; faced with insurmountable odds, many chose to use the folklore they had been raised with. Folklore is far more than random superstition, but rather stories that people use to understand the world

around them. In her essay, “A History of Vampires and their Transformation from Solely Monsters to Monstrous, Tragic, and Romantic Figures,” author Mary McFadden asserts, “folklore tales start with death and humankind’s desire to explain what they did not have the scientific understanding to explain” (4). When faced with an unbeatable epidemic, the people of New England utilized their version of the vampire to explain tuberculosis and create meaningful solutions. While real immortal vampires do not exist, exhumations brought closure and meaning to the lives of rural townsfolk.

The vampires of New England were the next step in the evolution of the modern vampire, but they remain largely unknown. Despite our media’s love of vampires and blood-suckers in general, few know Mercy Brown’s name and even fewer know the names of her less-famous (or rather, infamous) counterparts. Mercy’s legacy extends beyond her short life; her story was recounted in the newspaper the Boston Globe, spreading both her story and the myth of the vampire. This newspaper story led to Rhode Island, and by extension, all of New England, being dubbed the Vampire Capital of the world. Furthermore, Mercy, and tales of other New England vampires, are suspected to have influenced the genre-defining book on the vampire: *Dracula*.

While Bram Stoker drew influence for the character of *Dracula* from historical figures such as Vlad the Impaler and Elizabeth Bathory, Mercy Brown and her fellow American vampires certainly added to the character. . Among notes for the novel, newspaper clippings about New England vampires and Mercy were found after Stoker’s death. Inside the text of *Dracula*, further parallels between Mercy and Stoker’s characters can be drawn. Further on in her video, Doughty notes, , “It’s speculated that Stoker’s character of Lucy is based on Mercy Brown, Lucy being a portmanteau of Mercy and Lena ... Lucy is slowly fed upon by *Dracula*, wasting away in a ‘consumptive’ fashion...Eventually, Lucy dies and is buried, and...exhumed...Lucy, like Mercy, had been transformed into a vampire” (22:42-25:34). Vampires were no longer non-corporeal,

non-blood-feeding, Slavic-only myths, but rather elegant, beautiful, walking corpses who consumed their victims slowly. By the 1900s, vampires were now closer to their modern kin; while the myth was still evolving, tuberculosis and the Vampire Panic heavily influenced perceptions and images of vampires.

When looking at folklore and monsters like the vampire, environmental and societal factors almost always drive their creation; taking a step back to look at the origins and outside context behind our favorite tropes and media not only improves the media itself but also deepens understanding of culture and humanity as a whole. While modern movies, television, and books are inspired by a variety of vampiric sources (including Eastern European mythology), tuberculosis and consumption in New England have left a lasting legacy and had a significant impact.

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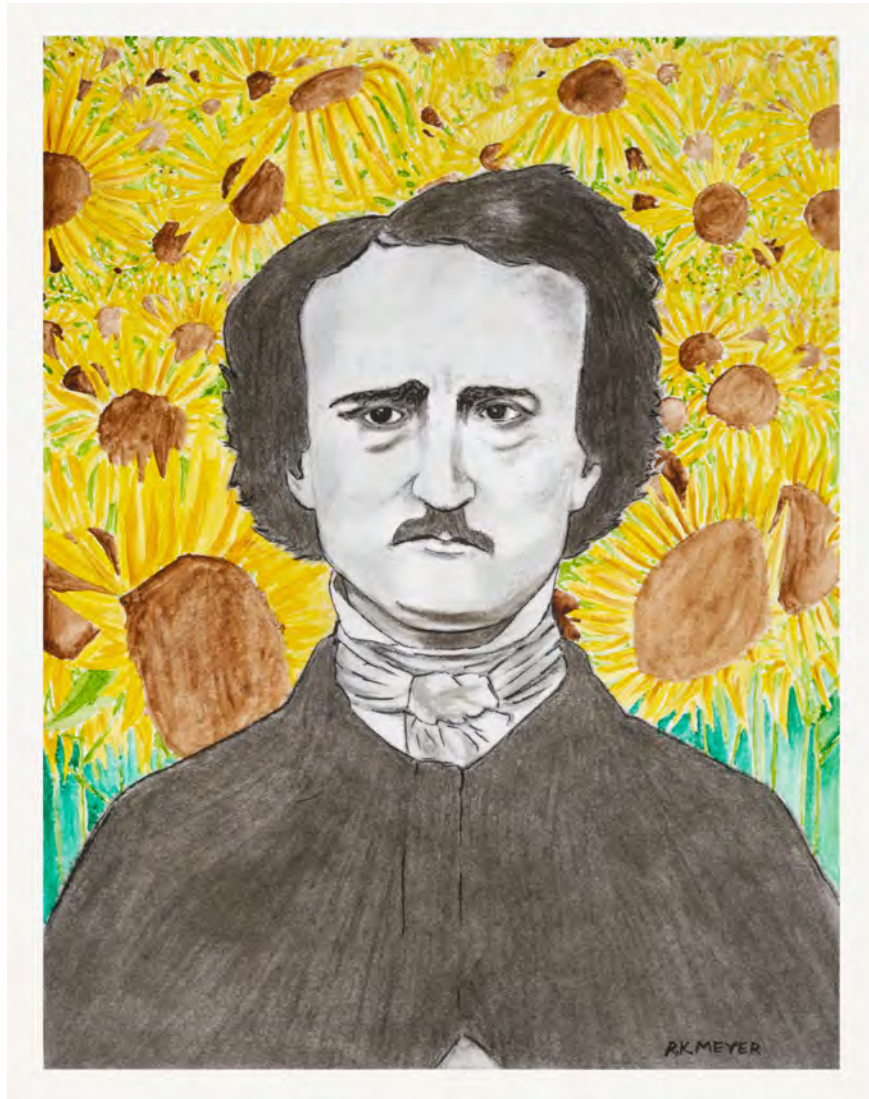
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SECOND PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Sunflower Man

Richard Kris Meyer

THIRD PLACE POETRY

Scapegoat

Hamideh Cole

Azazel, I was cast out towards thou
Irrational minds chose me to endow
Carrying the sins of many I arrive
A burden I carry so that they may thrive
I envy my brother slayed for our lord
Whilst I wonder this wilderness untoward

Towards the precipice they lead
So that I may fall to my death and bleed
The blood they'll take to cleanse their sin
They'll beat their women with my skin
As time passes, a tale you will tell
About the scapegoat destined for hell

THIRD PLACE FICTION

Silent Song

Annika Schmidt

The ocean can be a dangerous place. A very, very, dangerous place. Valeria knew that, but, within context, she didn't really care. Her father wouldn't be home from work for several hours. She had with her an entire backpack stuffed full of newspaper obituaries, and not quite enough fear to stay away from the water. When people think of beaches, they think of sand, but rocks often border the waves as well. Rocks are a lot sturdier than sand and allow you to carefully walk out to a deeper part of the water.

Valeria perched herself on a particularly large rock; it was large enough to have a picnic on but too small to build a house on. From there, she could see the rich blue-gray of the water where the shadows of slithering creatures were visible. A few were small, probably fish, but every here and there she could see something much larger just beneath the surface of the water. They were probably sirens. Sirens were the size of humans, but they lived and swam among fish.

The most dangerous part of the ocean was the water which could easily pull you under and drown you. The second most dangerous part were the victims of those drownings. Sirens could, and would, pull you under even faster than the waves. Valeria could see a lot of waves that day, but very few shadows of sirens.

The beach was cold and windy, forcing her to pull back her hair and zip up her coat before peering down closer to the water. It was about a three-foot drop to water from where she sat on her rock. The stone was cold beneath her, but it was good and solid and didn't budge for as long as she stared down into the rippling blue.

Eventually, a shadow emerged from the water in the form of a human face. His skin was pale and almost gray with blue scales dotted across his cheeks and neck, disappearing into the water. There was something which might have been gills just in front of his ears, but he otherwise appeared rather human.

"I brought you something," Valeria said, speaking over the sound of waves and wind and angling herself to where he could see her lips moving.

He sat up a little straighter and kept his eyes on her as she shuffled through her backpack to pull out a stack of papers. She'd scoured the library, the internet, the newspaper, anywhere she could find obituaries of drowning victims in the area over the past five years. She hoped that five years would be a wide enough net. It was a good start if nothing else.

Valeria passed him down the first piece of paper, feeling another slip from her fingers and into the wind.

"Well, I hope it wasn't that one." Valeria laughed at herself despite her annoyance.

The siren took one look at the paper she'd handed him and thrust it back up to her. It was soggy from his hands, so she crumbled it up and stuffed it back in her bag. He rejected the next one too, and the one after that, and the one after that.

Valeria repositioned herself to lie on her stomach and handed the siren yet another newspaper clipping. He had a different reaction to that particular paper, hastily passing it back to her and pointing to it urgently.

"This one?" Valeria questioned, examining the wet piece of paper. "Cassander Phillips?"

He nodded, then went under the water to swim in a few quick circles before popping back out again.

"Well, that's a very nice name, isn't it?" she remarked.

"Mine's Valeria. I'm not sure if you picked that one up yet."

Cassander blinked at her with no readable emotions. He generally seemed to understand what she was saying but he'd never taken the time to reply. In all the times she'd perched herself up on that rock, she'd

only ever heard wind and the songs of distant sirens. They would sing far out in the ocean, leaving echoes of sweet melodies along the shore. Their songs were alluring in the deadliest of ways. Beautiful to the point of temptation to hear them a little better and get just a little closer.

She had never heard Cassander sing. Maybe he didn't want to, maybe he couldn't, or maybe he did, and she'd just never been around to hear it.

"Was it a long time ago?" Valeria asked. "When you were taken by the ocean, I mean."

Cassander didn't reply, but he stayed. He hadn't swum away yet or even tried to pull her in. He wasn't quite like the other sirens; maybe she'd finally met a nice one.

If he wasn't going to answer her question, she'd have to figure it all out for herself. She had a name and a soggy, partially illegible newspaper clipping she'd cut from the collection her dad kept in his office.

"I can find out for myself, if you don't mind that is," Valeria said. She smiled and, to her surprise, he smiled back. His sickly skin tone and sunken eyes made the expression seem disingenuous, but she still appreciated it.

Valeria could hear someone singing faintly. She didn't recognize it as English, let alone words at all, but it was beautiful. It was the kind of music that was simply pleasing and made you feel like you'd just bitten into a ripe, juicy piece of fruit.

"Why does it have to sound so nice?" Valeria asked, letting her eyes wander up to the gray clouds rolling up above.

When she looked back again, Cassander had shifted to float on his back. He shrugged and then adjusted his position to where she could see the tip of his tail peeking out of the water. It was scaly and blue, nearly blending into the color of the ocean.

Valeria could see leaping creatures in the distance, skipping in and out of the water as the sound of voices grew closer and louder.

"I suppose I should be going now," she said, shifting from a sitting position to squatting on the rock and peering down at Cassander.

"I'll come back though. I can't seem to stay away." It was the third time she'd come down to the beach in the last week, but it was the first time she'd had what she would consider to be a decent conversation with one of the beach's residents.

Her curiosity was finally paying off, and she was finally making a friend. Others would say it was dangerous, and of course, it was, but Valeria didn't really mind. However, that didn't mean she was planning on telling her father anything about what she'd done with her day past getting out of school that afternoon.

She stood up and gave one last look to Cassander before making her way off the rocks, down the beach, and back to the road where she'd arrived. The waves were still crashing, and the rocks were still holding strong, and Valeria would still be back.

Unlike other beachgoers, the tempting songs weren't the reason she returned. She was more interested in the sirens who didn't sing. There was a silent song always drawing her back again, curiosity bursting through the defense of common sense.

She'd be back again, and she'd figure them all out. She'd find out more about Cassander Phillips and any other cooperative folks she could catch in conversation. Valeria would learn everything she could about the sirens, and maybe one day she'd be able to free them from their eternal watery grave and a life of forcing others to join them. This was a bit ambitious, but she didn't really care.

THIRD PLACE NON-FICTION

Those Who Dare to Dream

Soma Roufi

In the quest for a better life, many find themselves embarking on journeys of hope and opportunity. For those like me, hailing from Afghanistan, the decision to seek a new beginning in the United States is not merely a whim but a necessity born from the harsh realities of our homeland. I was a general dentist in my country when the Taliban took over. I could not work as a dentist there anymore, so I decided to leave my country for the United States. I was lucky to have a chance for the U.S. government to help me escape the danger of Afghanistan under Taliban control. This essay delves into the core reasons driving this migration: the longing for peace amidst perpetual turmoil caused by the Taliban, the yearning for economic freedom stifled by gender constraints, and the desperate hope for a brighter future for my family.

The first reason that I left my country, Afghanistan, was the lack of peace there. Afghanistan, a land marred by incessant political and social unrest, offers little solace to its inhabitants. The daily turmoil and violence have rendered life precarious, with each dawn bringing the uncertainty of survival. For example, if anyone is working with a non-Muslim organization and the Taliban knows, they will kill them. Because of that, people do not feel safe and comfortable living there. This instability not only undermines personal well-being but also shatters any semblance of quality of life, leaving us grasping for elusive moments of tranquility. In such chaos, the desire for peace transcends mere aspiration; it becomes a fundamental human need, propelling us

towards a land where stability is not a fleeting dream but a tangible reality.

The second reason for my departure from Afghanistan stems from the profound lack of economic freedom as a woman in my homeland. As a skilled professional, specifically a general dentist, I found my opportunities for growth and prosperity severely limited by pervasive gender constraints and the ever-present threat of violence perpetuated by extremist groups like the Taliban. For instance, despite my expertise and dedication to my craft, the prospect of treating individuals associated with the Taliban posed a constant risk to my life and livelihood. This reality created an environment of profound insecurity, where the mere pursuit of my profession became a perilous endeavor. Furthermore, systemic barriers and corruption within the economic framework of Afghanistan stifled any hopes of advancement, leaving individuals like me with little recourse but to seek refuge in lands where labor is valued and opportunities for women are not dictated by oppressive forces. Thus, the allure of economic freedom and the promise of a better future for myself and my family drove me to embark on the journey to the United States, where the ethos of work freedom and opportunity permeates every facet of society.

The third reason was diminished hope for future improvement in my country, Afghanistan. As each day dawns, Afghanistan presents a grim tableau of economic, social, and educational challenges, perpetuating a cycle of despair and stagnation. Observing the lack of progress, I cannot help but feel disheartened, as hopes for a better tomorrow wither amidst the harsh realities of today. Yet, in the face of adversity, the flame of optimism flickers, fueled by the belief that elsewhere lie opportunities for personal development and societal advancement, beckoning us towards a future ripe with promise.

When I arrived in the United States, it was the first discovery of peace. In the embrace of the United States, peace becomes a new steadfast companion rather than an elusive dream. Here, stability is not

a luxury but a cornerstone of society, offering respite from the tumultuous past we left behind. Personal anecdotes abound of newfound security, where the tranquility of daily life is cherished as a testament to the enduring promise of peace. For example, as a woman walking in the street, I do not have to worry if somebody will come to me and ask where my husband, my brother, and my father are.

In addition to that, embracing economic freedom in the United States was welcoming. The United States stands as a beacon of economic opportunity, where the fervor of entrepreneurship is met with boundless possibilities. Within its borders, stories of professional growth and success abound, a testament to the ethos of work freedom that permeates every facet of society. Here, labor is not merely a means to an end, but a pathway to personal fulfillment and prosperity. In the United States, commitment to progress and innovation is not just a mantra but a way of life. Opportunities for personal and societal advancement abound, fostering an environment where dreams are not only realized but exceeded. Here, the horizon of possibilities stretches far beyond the confines of our past, offering a glimpse of a future illuminated by the promise of prosperity and growth.

In traversing the arduous path from Afghanistan to the United States, I found solace in the positive changes and opportunities. Here, amidst the shores of a new homeland, I dare to dream of a future filled with fulfillment and prosperity. As immigrants step forward into the embrace of this new beginning, we do so with hearts brimming with hope, for in the United States, the promise of a brighter tomorrow beckons, ready to be embraced by those who dare to dream.

THIRD PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Divine

Andrea Cano

HONORABLE MENTION

Untitled

Jesse Lamphear

there's a melody in my ears
and a musician in my eyes
a rhapsody in my years
and a song within my cries

there's a rhythm in my breath
and a voice in my throat
a story in my depth
and a tune within my note

there's hair between my brows
and a furl that grows above
a vibration in my vows
and a push that comes to shove

there's a medley on my lips
and a composition on my chin
a harmony on my hips
and a symphony on my skin

and the orchestra is terribly loud
as it sustains its thunderous roar
the instruments all have bowed
and it shakes me to my core

now the melody has left my ears
and the musician has left my sight
this rhapsody has betrayed my years
and my song has ignored my plight

my breath has abandoned its rhythm
and my voice now is course
this story has found its schism
this tune has saddles its horse

gray now strikes my head
and my furl has left its mark
my vows that once were wed
have now begun to hark

my medley misled my lips
and my chin is no longer composed
what harmony once was now drips
and my skin has lost its prose

the orchestra has now gone home
and this auditorium now fills with silence
the instruments all went to roam
and my body has turned to violence

and the bells they won't stop ringing
as their echo grows and grows
the voices they now are singing
great words i'll never know

there's a tragedy in my audience
and a comedy in my being
a theme in my resonance
and a soul within my seeing

there's a prayer in my shoes
and a psalm in my hat
a hymn in my blues
and a calm within my chat

there's a simpleness in my hands
and a complexity in my grasp
a concept in my plans
and a surmise in my clasp

and the intermission is awfully long
as the cast prepares act two
the assembly is strung along
and there's something i wish i knew

and the conversations turn to gossip
as the mass begins to wonder
the composer is not a prophet
and i now don't feel much younger

and the bells now ring so dissonant
their echos have traveled so far
the voices have now grown discordant
as they repeal their final bar

the tragedy was in my audience
and the comedy was in my being
i missed the theme in my resonance
and my soul has sought what it was seeing

the prayer's now in my hands
and the psalm's now on my heart
the hymns now read the scans
there's no calm reading that chart

there's a complexity in my hands
and a simpleness in my grasp
no concept to my plans
and a roughness to my rasp

the intermission has long been over
and the cast has heard their applause
the assembly has found their closure
and i've learned this final clause

we all conduct a symphony
and we all lead a choir
we all may think differently
but we all soon will tire

STAFF SUBMISSION

Imaginary Road Trip

Kendall Helfer

The sun is barely awake as we speed down the 55
bruised purples, pinks, and yellows blend
and sweep in a joyous dance. The night
before, you asked me what home was like,
and I asked if you wanted to see it for yourself.

Merging with the highway — baby we're soaring
you remark. The faces of prophets plastered
on billboards; the choir drives past.
Wind cutting through our skin like glass,
blisters blooming on our skin. Like James Dean
— my mind set on the open road
and running like hell.

We only stop to rest in the back of my Camry
drunk from the sun, cherry peppered kisses,
and secondhand smoke. Limbs climbing
on top of each other, if I hadn't memorized
your face. I would mistake you for me.

You asked me if I remember the places
we drove past — hazy images from yesteryear
— I only kiss your wrists.

in

I wanted to tell you about the humid sacred day
in New York where another world was tucked
in a corner of a wood-fired oven, or
reuniting with old friends from another time in Boston.
I want to tell you about the solace I found in Seattle.

I want to tell you about my first Albuquerque snow
that was light as a feather
— and how it melted away my home.

But I lost my train of thought when we got to
the Welcome Center. I wanted to tell you
that we would never find a home, and that
it was left behind when my family cried in the car,
how we reached full circle landing
in a familiar gas station — we could never go back.
I tried.

HONORABLE MENTION



Vivid Vision

Andrea Cano

HONORABLE MENTION

Satori's Dance

Teairra Spence

Moonlight dances on her skin.
The wind flows through her hair
And the rhythm sways her body.
Her pain moves from her soul, through her eyes, And her
feet cry out for help.
Her hips are her weapons to protect her against
The evil that is projected against her,
Her smile is her shield of protection. Her laugh,
And her shout.
When she tilts her head back with a grin, she pleads For
release. A release from something.
She just wants her heart back.
She wants her spirit to rest, but it will not.
It moves her from east to west, and north to south.
Insatiable is her appetite for freedom.
"Why you wanna fly blackbird?"
Her grandma asked her as she eased into a cha-cha.
"Cause I just wanna be free big mama."
"I wanna dance, and feel, and move, and hum."
"I wanna be mama. I just wanna be." Satori replied.
She kept dancing until she burned holes in the ground.
Her body resembled a tornado
As the group of men watched her. They acted as predators,
Preying and hunting as she fearlessly, yet somberly moved.

Their eyes gazing and fighting for dominance while
Her smile and laugh fought back. That same smile
And laugh that pushed them to the edge of bliss
Just from a simple grin.
Pretty black girl with the spirit of X, and the heart
Of Martin. With the resistance of Rosa,
And the intelligence of Marcus.
Dying to be a woman.
Her hair flowed for miles, running quicker than her feet.
She danced and danced as her pain seeped deeper
And deeper. She moved and moved
As her wounds opened and blossomed.
She felt her spirit rise, and as if it had arisen
Like a rooster on an early morning,
It had become free of its emotional barricades.
"Satori." The wind called her so gently
And she felt its calming whispers.
It brought a tear to her eye, a tear that weighed
As heavy as her past.
"You're free now. Don't dance because of your sorrow
But dance because you are free."
She danced and danced until it transformed
Into a dance of celebration.
A dance of her womanhood.

STAFF SUBMISSION

The Walgreens That Used to Be Rite Aid

Amelia Bond

It was a Kerr Drug before
My mother called it that
Sun times when I'd wait for her in the car.
Autumn days
Sitting backpack pressing into my shoulder blades.
Before I knew
What explicit pleasures might live
On disordered shelves
And in the silence between rows.

It was a Rite Aid
When I lived there
Every afternoon
After school time
Imperious swish of the doors
Opened me into the ungroomed silence,
It was my favorite wasteland.

Nail polish painted floor
Since dried and spilled again.
Sertraline
Receipts, dead leaves and the dirty ground.

I used to steal everything
My arms could carry into the bathroom.
Once bold enough to carry out a hairdryer,
Then I couldn't steal anymore.

Things began to disappear from shelves
By other hands.
Orange sticker closeout sale
Under destruction, the building sold
Walgreens
Moved into the basement.

Four years, I couldn't stand to visit.
To stand under the shadow
In the ruins of my shelf obsession.

But I can't see myself, unless encased
In aisles
Of a drugstore on an autumn evening.

They turned Kerr Drug into a gym, and
Standing in the basement
Comes the thunder
Of weights slammed down like rocks
To close the mouth of the tomb.
And the smell of sweat drips down the walls
To all things stolen and sold
It became a rite of hail and fire.

HONORABLE MENTION

My House Is Not a Home

Grace Abraham

White walls, shiny floors
A mighty build,
High ceilings, large windows
An architect's dream.
Magnificent enough to make the wind sing
My House is not what it might seem.

Elegant oak floors, marble island
A homemaker's pleasure.
Walk-in closets, full-length mirrors
Queen Grimhilde's treasure.
Beautiful enough to be named a wonder
My House is not a diamond.

The more you stare,
A lot more you see.
Cracks in the walls
Concealed with shiny plaster.
The blinding streaks of plasma drops
When the House is without chatter
My House is a trogglehumper.

The more you sniff,
The more you smell.
Rotting flesh
Masked with expensive candles.
A mating call for estrous vultures.
When the sun goes to sleep,
My House is an elephant's graveyard.

The more you listen,
Oh! the clearer you hear.
Weeping sounds
From unmoving shadows,
Enough to spook the ailing psycho
When no one is around,
My House is the devil's prison.

The more you touch,
The better you feel.
Broken bones
Disguised as Damascus steel
Enough inventory for The Skeleton Dance.
When parents are away,
My House is Dahmer's foreplay.

A trogglehumper, An elephant's graveyard, the devil's prison, Dahmer's foreplay.
My house is —
A place where happiness is unknown,
A place where death goes to conceive,
A place poorly judged by its cover,
A place where all souls are unwilling.
Run! For my House is not a Home.

HONORABLE MENTION



Shell Shock

Ava Castro

HONORABLE MENTION

My Teeth Are Yellow

Atari Elson

I used to hate the color pink but now
My hair is rosier than my grandmother's garden.
My teeth are yellow because I drink too much coffee.
I used to hate the taste of espresso and I said
I'd never fall in love with boys but now I do.

I've just been growing up lately, but I know
Underneath my skin I'm still the same person,
Inside of my bones I'll have the same marrow.
I've always just been me and that's okay.
I try to tell my mirror "I love myself" on the daily
And I will smile wide until my cheeks burn.
I want to be so happy I don't even know I am;
Peace could be so familiar, I don't call it by its name.
I brush my teeth twice a day yet they're yellow,
No matter how much I change I'm always the same.

STAFF SUBMISSION

Only A Monster

Aluzu Sukidi

Monsters come in all shapes and sizes. Ravi's dad told her that two months before she and her mom buried him underground at the Masondale Family Cemetery. Was it a strange thing to say, surrounded by hospital machines and cables, knowing death awaited the exact moment your body gave in to swoop you away forever? Sure—but then again, her dad was a strange man.

The opposite of her mother, Ravi's dad, Kadi, liked horror stories. The kind that'd keep you up a night guarding your room door with a pillow. He'd tell her a new one every night before bed and scare her half to death. But Ravi liked the stories. Liked seeing Kadi's arms flail as he turned her plain room into a hidden cave or a haunted mansion. But eventually, when his stories got too scary and her nightmares grew too much, Ravi's mom told him to stop.

Ravi had known that one already. She studied it in tenth grade English class with Mrs. Clayton, her English teacher at the time. But when Kadi told it, his feeble arms setting the scene once more, she pretended not to know.

"Do you understand, Ravi?" he asked her, after finishing the story. "Sometimes the most monstrous thing of all is being alone."

But that wasn't the monster Ravi knew. The monsters she knew had pointy ears and ugly faces. They made wretched noises and had plans to steal the moon or eat people for fun. Sometimes they were easy to spot, but a lot of the time, more than she liked to admit, they weren't. Those were the ones Kadi liked to talk about most. The ones that looked and sounded like humans were far from it. They could sneak up on you, posing

as a friend or a boss, and you'd never know it. But not all monsters were human and not all spoke. This one was surprisingly quiet.

Ravi fixed her eyes on the glass cage the monster was locked inside. Every now and then, her eyes would shift focus and all she could see was herself. Her face in the glass, a reflection of her usually ordered self but distorted. The main features were there: her dark brown skin, puffy hair, and almond eyes. But her usually glowing skin was sullen and her golden brown eyes were void of color, hidden behind too tight goggles that overtook her face. A stained lab coat rubbed uncomfortably against her skin and parted lips painted a frown on her face. She'd never been to the lab this early and fatigue warped her figure.

Ravi cracked her lips and shifted her gaze away from the creature.

"What did you do?"

Less than twenty-four hours ago, Franky, the American crested Guinea pig, was dead. Now he was alive and chewing on a bright green slab of lettuce.

"I believe it's called necromancy," Owen, in a similar lab getup, said.

Three months ago, Ravi was the only student intern working in her university's lab. Now she shared the tight space with Owen, a third-year chemistry student. Ravi studied him: his heavy eyes that drooped downward begging for sleep, the creases on his face from goggles worn for far too long.

"When was the last time you slept?" she asked.

"What?" Owen shook his head. "Yesterday, in English."

Ravi knew his schedule like the back of her hand. English for him was twenty-four hours ago. And far too long to go without sleep.

"Still doesn't explain why you texted me so early," she said.

On the phone, Owen had texted her a very frantic,

"EMERGENCY COM TK LAB NOW." Typos and all. And she rushed here, only stopping for a granola bar and to wave her roommate goodbye.

"Right." Owen scrambled for a metal rolling cart nearby and

grabbed a beat up notebook off it. Pages stuck out of the sides, one falling out as he flipped to the right page and nudged it in her face, too close for her to read the handwriting. “Remember that experiment I told you about?” He didn’t give her time to respond. “It worked but there were some... unexpected side effects.”

She raised an eyebrow. “Side effects?”

Owen lifted a finger and disappeared into the back room where they kept live insects. A moment later he returned with a cricket in a jar.

“Guinea pigs are usually herbivores, right?” He stretched his arm out so Franky, who was at the end of his lettuce slab, could see the cricket.

A screeching sound wailed, sharper than the breaks of Ravi’s car. Franky dropped the slab of lettuce and flung himself forward, the force sending the small cage almost toppling over the counter. Owen yanked the jar back.

“Does that look like a herbivore to you?”

Before she could respond there was a *crash*, a *clang*, and finally — *bang*!

On the ground was the cage, and next to it, Franky who, previously small and frail, had grown sizably.

“Did he just...” her words trickled into a whisper as Franky skidded across the floor.

He ran circles around them, sending them bumping into carts and knocking the contents off. Glass shattered on the dirty vinyl floor. Pipettes scattered around the shards.

“Franky, stop!” Owen shouted.

The lab door swung open and out between Dr. Olson’s feet and out went Franky.

“Franky!”

Dr. Olson adjusted his glasses. “Pardon?”

Dr. Olson, their lab supervisor, was a tall man with caramel skin. He wore roud glasses with golden rims and had a light beard he sometimes scratched, like now. Most days he spent in his office, trusting

Ravi and Owen enough to leave them in the lab alone. After today, she wasn’t sure that would ever happen again.

“My god,” Dr. Olson said, breaching the room. “What happened?” Ravi looked down, suddenly interested in the sneakers on her feet.

“Um, science?” Owen twirled the ends of his hair the way he always did when he was nervous.

Dr. Olson pushed his glasses up his nose. “I’m excited to hear what you’ve discovered; however, the lab doesn’t open until nine. Discoveries can wait until then.” He grabbed the door frame and hesitated. “Now clean this up.”

“Right on that.” Owen attempted a salute he gave up on half-way through. Only, their biggest problem wasn’t the glass underneath their feet. Franky was missing.

Owen disposed of his gloves and removed his lab coat hurriedly, hanging it on the hook on the door. He glanced at Ravi, spotting the quizzical look on her face.

“After we find Franky, we can come back and clean this up.”

He gave her no time to respond before leaving the room. Ravi followed, peering around the hallway once she exited the lab.

They were on the fourth floor of the Davidson Science Building, which was filled with laboratories. All doors closed and inaccessible. There was no way for Franky to have gotten inside, unless of course, he had somehow managed to grow opposable thumbs, which Ravi couldn’t exactly put behind her.

She started for the southeast stairwell when a gutterall shriek sounded from the opposite direction.

“Think he got any bigger?” Owen said.

Her feet were glued to the ground, suddenly too heavy to lift.

Before, Franky was a little over ten inches, which was already sizable for a rodent. Now how big was he? Twenty inches? Thirty? She wasn’t sure.

Ravi drew a heavy breath, letting it escape through her lips in one swift exhale before lifting the first foot off the ground.

“Only one way to find out.”

After checking the second and third floor of Davidson and finding nothing, Ravi found herself on the first floor of the building surrounded by a crowd of students. They flocked to the lobby, circled tables and couches, and lounged just about anywhere there was room.

Owen was nowhere near but away searching another room for Franky. He'd tasked her with searching the lobby, but it'd only taken her five minutes of looking under counters and couches before she gave up and opted to decipher his lab journal instead, which she'd managed to swipe before leaving the lab.

In it was the key to necromancy. Countless pop culture films had warned against it and not once did Owen heed the warning, but Ravi understood why. Because if she could bring someone back to life, she already knew who she'd choose. Only you'd need a Rosetta stone to understand what he wrote. Most of it was written in hurried swipes of faded blue pen. And his O's looked a lot like A's.

Ravi felt a tap on her shoulder.

"What are you doing?" Owen asked.

"Is this *chlorite* or *chlorate*?"

He rolled his eyes, head disappearing behind a table. "Keep looking. Franky's got to be here somewhere."

But the likelihood of them finding him had plummeted since they first started their search. The lobby was a frenzy of students opening and closing doors, giving Franky the perfect escape. And even if he was inside, Davidson was one of the largest buildings on campus. It could be hours before they found him. And who knew how big he'd be by then?

Owen looked under more tables and chairs, past counters and in any cracks he could find.

Ravi pulled her eyes away from him and flipped a page in the lab notebook. All she needed was to work through the side effects, then she could replicate the experiment.

"Ravi!" Owen waved her over.

She found him standing next to a blonde boy in a corner, catching the middle of their conversation.

"... Yes, that's it! What did you see?" Owen asked.

"It was like a mole or something. But it was weird..." the boy said. "My parents own a farm, so I've seen a couple of moles, but I've never seen one that big. And inside?" He shook his head. "It just doesn't make sense."

"Did you see where it went?" Owen questioned further.

"Outside. It slipped out the door when I was coming inside."

Owen thanked him and left Davidson.

Outside, cool autumn air tickled Ravi as she entered the parking lot, an unexpected feeling that brought along a new memory: that day at Kadi's viewing. The last chance she ever got to see him. The one she didn't take. Because what did it matter? She knew what he looked like, remembered his smile and the sound of his laugh, a deep reverberating hum. She heard it every night when she slept, like a song on replay. She didn't want her last memory of her father to be him lying in a casket in a church she'd never been to before, so she never went up to the body. Never said goodbye. She still wasn't sure if she'd made the right decision or not. But if she could correct Owen's formula, it might not matter. She'd have another chance.

"Did you hear that?" Owen said, winding down the sidewalk.

"Franky was just here. He can't be far."

"He could be anywhere," Ravi sighed.

A *scream*, like the one in Davidson, but louder.

"Over there," Owen said, already running toward it.

When they got to the location — the center of The Pit, a small field in the heart of campus students lounge — a small crowd had formed around a short girl wearing a floral dress. Two other girls — one tall with glasses and the other dressed in almost all black — comforted her. As Ravi got closer, she could see a streak of bright red blood flowing down the short girl's leg.

"Meg, get some napkins," Glasses ordered. "Quickly!"

Meg abided, disappearing into a nearby building.

"What happened?" Owen asked. The girls gave him an estranged who are you look before Glasses replied.

"Damn rabid animals." She spared him only a glance.

“Is it bad?” the short girl asked, turning away from the wound. “It feels bad.”

Ravi looked away. Her mind focused on the indents in the dirt behind the wounded girl. They were almost the size of a human hand and way more than ten inches.

Footprints.

She tapped Owen’s shoulder. “Look.”

His mouth parted slightly.

The footprints made a trail that went up the Pit and disappeared when Ravi couldn’t see any further. There was no question about it:

Franky had gone in that direction.

“You should get that looked at,” Ravi said. “Could get infected.”

She quickly pushed past the crowd, ignoring the hushed swears directed at her, and followed the trail until it ended at a sidewalk. And there it was — their school’s greatest anomaly.

Right across the street, beyond the livelihood of The Pit, was a small patch of graveyard. And with no remaining footprints, Ravi could only assume Franky had run straight into it.

Owen began to cross the road. Ravi followed behind him, slowly. An eerie feeling overtook her as she maneuvered around the graves, sticking to the open grassway as much as possible. The sound of passing cars dissipated the farther into the graveyard they went. Until there was nothing but the quiet hum of wind.

“Look. More footprints,” she said.

Owen stumbled on a twig, grabbing onto a grave for balance. He grimaced and patted the grave before letting go.

“What if they’re watching us right now?” He was walking more carefully now, eyes darting around. “The ghosts.”

“I don’t believe in ghosts.” Ravi pushed past him.

“Are you kidding? Ghosts are real.”

“Said the chemistry student.”

He rolled his eyes. “What if they’re angry? You know, that they’re dead and we’re alive and walking on their graves, like it’s nothing.” He paused, thought about it for a second, then nodded.

“I’d be angry.”

But Ravi knew that wasn’t true. Dead people were too dead to feel. Too dead to do anything, really. Death was only a problem for the living.

Just then a bird squeaked, a dying sound. Wretched and twisted. A high *eee* that trickled into silent nothingness. Owen grabbed a nearby stick, held it to his chest like a sword.

“Over there,” he said.

Ravi went first, peeking over a worn grave. She could just barely read the name carved into the stone: Valentine.

Behind Valentine’s gravestone was Franky, maybe thirty inches now, lying next to a crow. The bird’s feathers were covered in a red that glistened in the sunlight. Franky’s mouth shone the same color.

“Franky!” Owen called.

But Ravi knew this part all too well. She’d lived it all those years ago. Franky was writhing on the ground and his breaths were hoarse and shallow, like a car struggling to start.

He was dying.

“What do we do?” asked Owen. His eyes met hers.

Except they weren’t his. They were her eyes, low and brown and glistening, staring back at her in the bathroom mirror of Masedale Family Church. The absent echo of her mom telling her to come on, the service was starting. That day she’d sat in the front pew, staring at a ceramic Jesus as people passed by, giving her sad looks and patting her shoulders, holding on tight like letting go would mean the end of the world. Like the end of the world hadn’t already happened.

Ravi didn’t know what to do back then. What were you supposed to do when something like that happened?

She knew now. She set the notebook on the ground and took the stick from Owen’s hand. Carefully, she positioned the sharp end over Franky’s chest, where she thought his heart was. And then—in one swift motion—she drew the stick down, cutting through skin and flesh.

Franky took one last breath and went still. Dead, his final resting place an unmarked grave.

Ravi pushed up on her knees and stood, letting her mind drift away from the death that surrounded her. When she turned back, Owen was cradling Franky, his breaths shaky.

Her eyes drifted back to the notebook, an arm's reach away. She stretched a hand out, hesitated, then placed it on Owen's shoulder instead, and she didn't let go. Because maybe it was the right thing to do. And fine, she still didn't understand the science of necromancy, but she was sure of one thing: the dead were gone. Never coming back. And maybe, just maybe, it was better that way.

HONORABLE MENTION

Zoning: The Silent Gatekeeper of Wealth Inequality in the United States

Ivan Vuksan

Zoning is the foundation of American urban planning, encompassing the laws largely responsible for requiring urban planners to segregate cities into residential and business areas. As a result, an incomprehensible number of roads and parking lots that spread out a city are required to support hundreds of millions of Americans traveling between home and work, thus creating the effect of suburban sprawl. To put the amount of land being taken up by sprawl in perspective, Robert L. Liberty, a lawyer in the state of Indiana, wonderfully illustrates that between the years 1950 and 1960, the amount of urbanized area in Buffalo, New York, increased by twenty-two times more in comparison to its relative increase in population (585). With zoning, an increase in population creates a disproportionate overuse of land as residents require land in the form of extensive road systems in order to go about their daily lives.

This phenomenon of zoning and sprawl is uniquely American, with many people outside the country, of varying economic statuses, thriving on public transportation and short-distance forms of transportation such as walking and biking. The ease of access to short-form transportation is in part thanks to mixed-use development, a norm across the rest of the world that allows businesses and residential areas to coexist, often allowing people of diverse standings to easily access a city's resources, such as jobs or education.

While zoning and the subsequent demand for cars it creates might fit into the schedule and finances of some, its shortcomings can set low-income Americans even further back in the pursuit of higher standards of living. The interesting aspects of zoning for low-income Americans are its role in the perpetuation of poverty, its impact on job stability and commutes, as well as its role in America's continual health decline.

America is a country of many extremes, ranging from politics to culture; however, its most disparaging extreme is that of wealth inequality and poverty perpetuated by zoning. America's urban planning plays a monumental role in the cycle of poverty, often deciding how low-income families approach their finances and professional lives. Unfortunately, low-income Americans are often not considered when it comes to implementing zoning laws, with many city planners often prioritizing powerful and wealthy car-owning individuals like themselves. For many low-income Americans, however, owning a car is an increasingly expensive endeavor, with insurance fees, maintenance, and gas prices surging exponentially due to global events and inflation over the past few years.

Without a car, low-income Americans have very few options with which to attend work or school. Nowadays, finding walkable or bikeable routes to commonly visited places, like grocery stores, is limited to wealthier areas with bustling populations, such as is the case in cities like New York City or even the neighborhoods that surround prestigious universities. Unfortunately, the high cost of housing in cities like New York or ones with short commute times actively drives poorer people who cannot afford it further out to places with infrastructure not designed for them, making it harder to obtain the economic opportunities and conveniences found in a place like New York City that could be used to escape poverty. Additionally, driving low-income Americans out of prosperous cities leads to vastly wealthy neighborhoods being built just outside of vastly poor ones.

How this phenomenon comes about is brilliantly articulated in an interview by *NPR* with Matt Desmond, a professor of sociology at Princeton University:

If you are a family of means, you have the incentive to rely less and less on the public sector. So we used to want to be free of bosses, but now we want to be free of bus drivers. We don't want to take the bus. We don't want to often enroll our kids in the public school system. We don't need to play in the public park or swim in the public pool. We have our own clubs, our own schools. We have our own cars. And as we withdraw into private opulence, we have less and less incentive to invest in public services. (qtd. in "Private Opulence, Public Squalor")

Unfortunately, the low-income families that do rely on institutions such as public transportation to meet their needs will never be recognized and supported by those with the power and money to influence the system, allowing poverty to continue its oppressive reign. Zoning encourages its residents to invest in what is visible to them, namely their personal and material belongings, while discouraging investing in public resources, such as transportation that benefits them alongside society.

Moreover, living in poor neighborhoods affected by zoning can further contribute to poverty in discriminatory ways, such as in the phenomenon of redlining, where insurance companies may deny providing home and car insurance to people in low-income areas. This prejudice can further trap low-income Americans in poverty by discouraging the use of cars to transport themselves to work or school, as many states require car insurance to legally drive. Ultimately, this disparity and lack of resources and opportunities can lead to homelessness, and for some, a resort to criminal and violent behavior in order to satisfy the needs the urban American environment could not provide them. Such a drastic last-resort pursuit out of poverty can often face people with long

prison sentences, which usually unfairly punish the minorities often found within the low-income population, making it even harder to rebuild their lives financially once they are released, often having the stigma of having been incarcerated linger over them, affecting their potential for finding employment. Zoning institutionally works to perpetuate the cycle of poverty for low-income Americans.

Naturally, the sprawl that zoning creates leads to consequences in commute times and job stability. Due to the looming poverty that zoning creates, low-income residents might opt to use public transportation provided in their city instead of paying for an expensive car. However, public transportation in the United States is overshadowed by the majority of Americans driving cars, leaving only those who cannot drive or those who cannot afford to drive to use public transportation. As a result, public transportation infrastructure remains underdeveloped in many areas of the country. Having subpar public transportation can have unintended consequences for low-income Americans' commutes. A bus might make many stops, either for driver's breaks or to pick up and drop off passengers. Having uncontrollable frequent stops can dramatically vary the commute times of each passenger, creating possibilities for its passengers to arrive late. Furthermore, there exists the possibility that a bus itself could be late or never arrive, leaving its passengers' days completely disrupted. In turn, in a society that values punctuality and consistency, arriving late to work or school could sour relationships between colleagues and mentors, potentially leading to job instability and poor educational success.

Alternatively, low-income Americans who opt to invest in their transportation, particularly cars, can still face additional delays. Nowadays, a common part of American life for many is to drive a car designed for an entire family all by themselves. While these few unused seats may not be much cause for concern for each individual, the combined wasted space among hundreds of cars on the roadways can lead to mile-long traffic congestion. Cities have to combat this

unfathomable pile of cars with huge high-rise parking lots which can create further delays through the time spent trying to find limited parking. These delays have negative repercussions on all drivers' schedules, but they disproportionately affect low-income individuals, as not being able to work one day may result in the difference of them not being able to afford a meal. Additionally, commuters often face additional financial burdens with the time they waste commuting, such as is the case with increased fuel consumption. David Shrank, a head research scientist at the Texas Transportation A&M Institute, alongside his colleague Tim Lomax, meticulously reveal in their study of over 75 urban areas in 2003 that an increase of 69.5 billion dollars was found to be spent on commuting, with 60 billion being a cause of increased commute times and the other 9.5 billion a result of increased fuel consumption related to traffic congestion, incurring an average of 520 dollars per person (Nechyba and Walsh 187). With commute times only increasing with the population's growing demand for more roads, the time that could be spent working or attending school, along with a sizable chunk of low-income Americans' budgets, is wasted. If urban planning instead worked towards creating easily traversable cities where cheap, space-efficient bikes and walking paths could practically eliminate traffic, those in the low-income neighborhoods could have a weight bearing down on their potential for success lifted off them. Zoning ultimately fails at creating efficient transportation, impacting low-income Americans' commute times and job stability.

With America isolated by roads, it becomes simple to understand America's health decline, both in physical and mental aspects. Without affordable and easy access to transportation across America's vast sprawl, low-income families might begin to feel isolated in their communities, losing the ability to visit friends and family who may live dozens of miles away. Additionally, low-income Americans may begin to feel alienated from the broader community, being seen as dangerous or untrustworthy, simply due to their economic status. This

This mental toll can heighten feelings of anxiety and depression, potentially having effects on one's ability to function in their work schedule. Conversely, the sprawl caused by zoning is aiding in Americans' physical decline as well. Outside of recreation, something that low-income workers may not have as much time to engage in while working to make ends meet, Americans do not have the regular opportunity to exercise as part of their daily commute.

America's road-dominated cities force people to sit, whether it be in their own car or on a bus or train. Walking or biking to work, for example, can provide valuable exercise; however, this incorporation of transportation and health has mostly been removed from the average American's routine, except for those living in rich and more effectively developed areas. This issue of a lack of exercise is further exacerbated by a lack of healthy food alternatives. Low-income neighborhoods are nowadays likely to be surrounded by gas stations, fast-food restaurants, and dollar stores, as corporations can capitalize off of the demand that low-income neighborhoods create for affordable meals. However, this lack of access to fresh produce markets results in the phenomenon of food deserts which discourage low-income Americans from pursuing the health benefits that come alongside higher-quality and more expensive food. As a result, low-income Americans are more likely to purchase food from fast-food locations, consuming increased levels of salty, sugary, and highly processed foods, leading to a subsequent increase in obesity and its related effects, such as heart disease. The effects of obesity can affect the daily lives of low-income Americans, making it difficult to function in school or work. Additionally, for some, obesity might tie back into a mental decline, with feelings of social rejection based on one's appearance, heightening feelings of hopelessness and depression. Researchers in a Harvard University seminar thoroughly acknowledge the effect zoning has on health: "Your zip code is a better predictor of your health than your genetic code" (qtd. in Tehrani et al. 1).

Regardless of one's lifestyle or condition, access to prestigious hospitals and doctors, often accessible in wealthy areas, can change the trajectory of a person's ability to function on a daily basis. Zoning creates neighborhoods that directly discourage a healthy lifestyle for low-income Americans, contributing to subsequent health decline.

Ironically, living in the United States of America might be a more physically disconnecting experience for those without ready access to a car than a group of people living on a remote island. With the world's population only growing, it becomes increasingly important to consider the sustainability and consequences of urban planning. American city planners might be able to add more lanes to highways temporarily; however, focusing America's limited resources on more cost-effective transportation accessible by everyone regardless of their income is key to utilizing the American population's potential to the fullest. By replacing zoning with more mixed-use development cities can become more densely inhabited with the resources people require close to their residences. Additionally, removing zoning lifts an institutional barrier for low-income Americans without access to cars, allowing them to have a fair shot at moving up the economic ladder. Zoning deserves more attention from the general public, as it influences everybody, despite how much effect it might have on people like its wealthy creators. By recognizing its consequences, Americans can work towards building a country inclusive of all its citizens, allowing equal opportunity to those who could benefit from it most.

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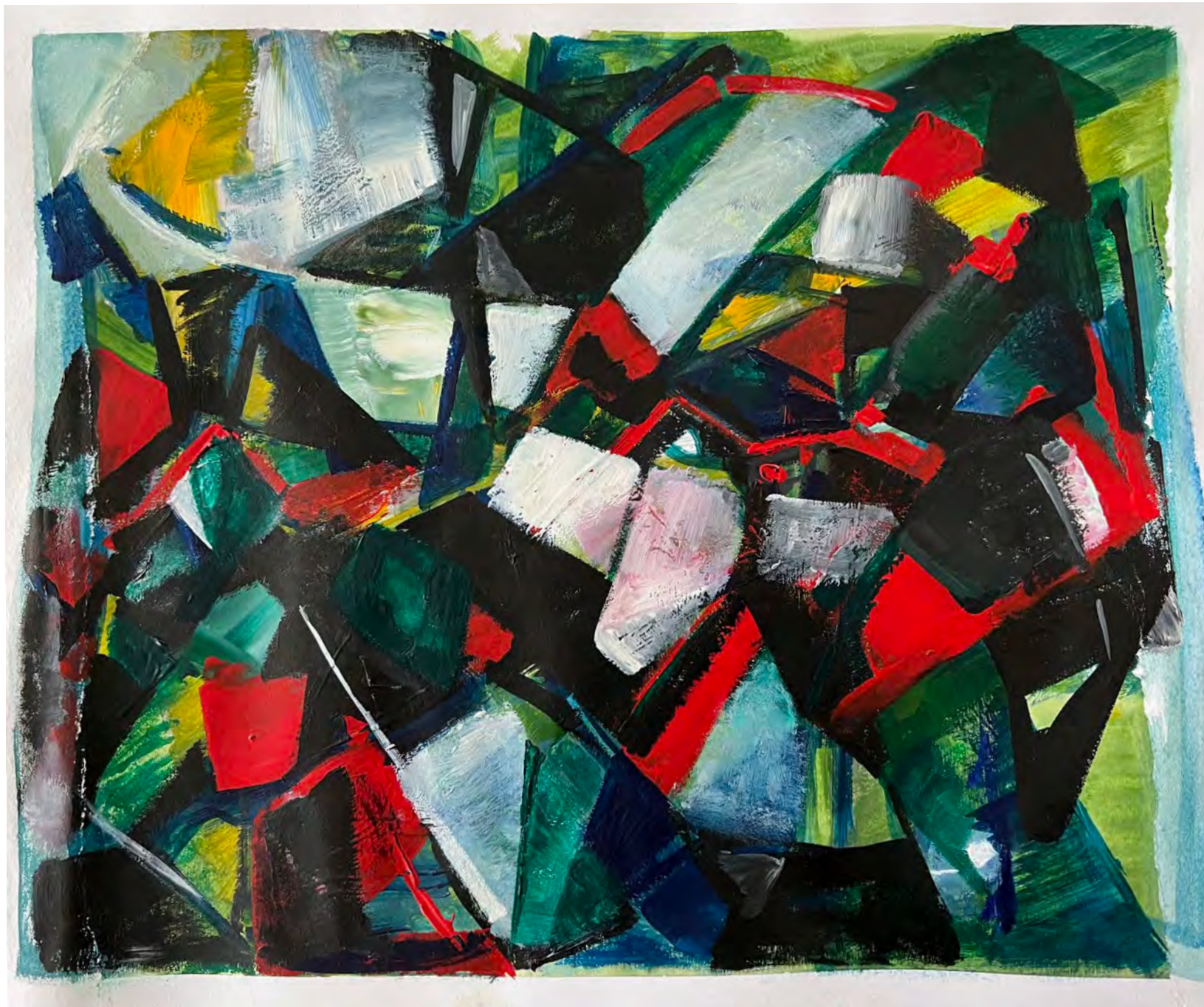
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HONORABLE MENTION



Galactic Idol

Jada Nuenke



COVER IMAGE

I Am Not My Self Esteem

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Daddy

Toni Knightstep

'You do not do, you do not do
Anymore, black shoe'
Said Sylvia Plath to
Her long lost 'Daddy.'

So, "Daddy,"
What should I say to you?

Loving you was like
trying to breathe in a Vacuum.
Losing her collapsed my chest.
I was ten when they
Buried
Her
 {me}
[you]

Gravity consumes
Me.
 {who?}

My lungs cave in
when I look in the mirror
and it's

You

are the roots that wrapped
around my arms, my legs,
soil heavy on my chest
as I sank into the earth
because I couldn't,
couldn't carry

You,

I lost long before I lost

Her,
 {my life water}
 [my mana]
 {my blood}

Nine months of syncing
my beating heart with hers,

Ten years of trying
to hold onto it,
Eleven minutes of lying
on her chest,
bargaining for its beat.
Almost thought it would,

Almost

Thought we would
be okay,
the two of us;
Thought I could
take care of you.
It was so new,

Then

she

came along and

moved

in-

to your heart,
into Our Home,
but not Mom's clothes
No,
she

cleaned

out

Her

closet

Cleaned

out

the threats:

The headbands

She

tied Her hair up

with when she

was

cleaning

The big sweaters

She wore

When She was

freezing,

The sunflower

dress she

wore to match
mine
In that picture
I have from
when

S/she

Was

Breathing

into every orifice
of the Life that was ours
only months before,
Painting over walls
of memories

I prayed to recover

Her,

{me}

You,

I never could talk to.
she slithered
into your bed,
Wrapped herself
around your neck,

Then,

Whispered lies

And

you

Believed

her

rule lasted ten years
but I only lasted three.
You sent me halfway
across the country,
back to where I

{She}

came from.

But Freedom is

Always Conditional.

I went from one cage
to another.

I wouldn't learn
until much later
That prison
wasn't

where I went;
Where I went,
the prison

Was

I, could I be safe
anywhere?

Did you know
you became "Daddy"
after

She
left
us{?}

Then I had to stop
Calling you
Anything,
Because you were

Nothing,
Nowhere
To

be found.
I longed to

hear
from you,
Even over
the phone
would do.

I
Tried to call you,
Daddy.
I

listened
until dial tone
turned symphony,
punched in digits;
stiff fingers,
bone dry throat,
Willed myself to try;
I Halted.

I wanted you to
Remember;
I Needed you to

Remember,

Daddy,
The night the three of us
took the dogs on a walk?
I asked you why
the moon followed us.
You told me the distance
caused a breakdown
in perception,

Then,

you showed me
Orion and his belt,
and how Sirius was bright
blue and twinkling.

Under these burning clusters
I felt so huge and so Small.
To this day I don't know how
to find any other constellations:
I never needed more than just

That

Night we drank beers
and watched a terrible
Batman movie
and laughed a little,
Because we never learned
how to laugh a lot,
And I tried not to love you
But you were there,
wanting me.

I thought I had
finally gotten through to

You

spread honey on my lips And I savored it
because I had nothing left

except a befuddling bit of hope;
Forgiveness on my tongue;
Acceptance on my lips;
Anger still boiling in my throat.
You held my heart so tightly,
{did}
{you}
{know?}
that even after all those years,
you could move a wrong muscle
And I would be back in the ground,
struggling to breathe against the soil
looking up to see you with the shovel;
You were God, then.
Not

Now,

you are just a man.
I learned to consider
{Your pains}
{Your losses}
{Your limitations}
Slowly, carefully, I waded through
all the ghost towns with my Soul intact
And I heard something Escape my lips:

“Dad”

Personal Writing Perspective

Shiloh Townsend

Whenever I access memories from my past, the most salient ones are juxtaposed between my experiences with suffering and those that shine victoriously after overcoming life's obstacles. As an author, my ability to poignantly and realistically tap into my personal history transforms my past traumas into a present reality of healing and hope. In tandem with receiving a blood disorder diagnosis, however, I have gained additional perspective from serving as a foster sister, being one of six female members in my family, and receiving a homeschool education. My hemophilia is just one aspect of my identity, and since I cannot work around it, I have decided to work with it. Instead of hindering my future's momentum, my diagnosis and its accompanying experiences imbue a meaningful purpose and vibrant clarity into my life. My reality is that I am a sixteen-year-old who suffers from a genetic blood disorder, so my prismatic writing perspective is unique for a person my age.

Over the years, opportunities have arisen for me to peer into the lives of those experiencing loss and suffering, and each one has served to amplify my perspective. Seven years prior to receiving my diagnosis, I became intimately acquainted with the lives and struggles of Wake County, N.C.'s foster children. My years living alongside children who had to learn to cope with their unique emotional, physical, and psychological wounds have taught me that healing is both an internal and external process. On a dark winter night in 2013, "Moppy," my parents' matronly friend from church, began coming over to babysit me and my three siblings. I leaned into her pillowy folds of skin as we lounged on the couch and inquired why she was there. "Moppy" answered, "Your parents are taking classes in Raleigh to care for children who need a good home and family like yours." My six-year-old mind accepted her explanation and was delighted with the extra television shows and later bedtimes afforded by her presence. On August 10, 2014, my mother received the phone call for my family's first foster care placement. My mind raced with anticipation as we drove to the Social Service's satellite office in Fuquay-Varina. I entered a small room and met four-year-old Carlos. Introductions were made; my parents accepted a stack of paperwork, and we escorted Carlos toward the parking lot. Unbeknownst to us,

Carlos's mother was exiting the building at the exact same time, adding to the trauma of the day. Kicking and screaming, he was forced to leave her behind. My parents drove around for over an hour as Carlos shrieked obscenities and fought to escape his seat belt's grip. He finally succumbed to mental and physical exhaustion; the silence felt eerie and surreal, but I was glad for it. Carlos remained in my home for two months and experienced calm, comfort, and healing. He reunited with a family member who, to this day, raises him as their adopted son. For the next ten years, I served as a foster sister to eight emotionally and mentally wounded children. The primary lesson those years gifted me is that each human being, no matter their age, carries with them an "invisible suitcase" packed full of the sum of their life experiences. My suitcase contains not only my diagnosis but the accompanying prismatic perspective that includes the sum of the thoughts, feelings, and experiences from my years as a foster sister. As a result, I am careful to maintain a confident-yet-empathetic voice within my writing, so my personal "suitcase" does not become too cumbersome to carry.

Although I am connected to all the women in my home, my particular perspective on womanhood differs due to my divergent experiences. My childhood home teems with estrogen. Most people are stunned to discover I am situated in the middle of a family that consists of six strong and extroverted females. My years of living with a genetic bleeding disorder amidst a considerable female presence means I value the depth of my perspective that has been born out of my unique journey from childhood into adulthood. Initially, I assumed my right of passage into womanhood would follow the same trajectory as my mother and sisters. However, I soon discovered my transition through puberty was replete with silent suffering. It took me some time to come to grips with the fact that my "gateway into womanhood" was not the same experienced by my female family members. Once my bleeding began, it never stopped. After I revealed my hidden travails to my older sister, she assured me I needed to let my mother know. I informed my mother of my symptoms of constant anemia and the incredible amounts of stomach pain that affected my quality of life. She immediately rushed to action, and after months of on-and-off visits to my pediatrician, and a referral to Duke Hospital, I received a diagnosis. I have von Willebrand disease, a genetic condition where my blood does not clot properly. I am grateful that the daily medication I now take helps stave off the symptoms, and most days, I can function with a low level of the disease's effects. From this experience, I have discovered that my perspective is malleable and

multifaceted; the kind of day I experience affects the emphasis of the message I extend to the outside world.

In addition to living with a blood disorder, my schooling experience is an aspect of my identity that contributes to my kaleidoscopic perspective. It is not uncommon to find that large families also homeschool, and mine is no exception. Even though the decision to homeschool me was made before I was born, it is a blessing in disguise to have been home-educated while adjusting to my diagnosis. As a person diagnosed with a blood disorder as a middle schooler, I am acutely aware that the maturation of one's responsive voice to personal suffering is a complex process. Because I did not have to wake up to attend a brick-and-mortar school building throughout the early years of my diagnosis, I was afforded a good deal of uninterrupted time to consider my predicament. I initially took advantage of this excess free time by coming to terms with the myriad sentiments surrounding my von Willebrand diagnosis. However, as the number of children in my home flexed from anywhere between four and eight, so did the quantity of educational, physical, and social needs. As a result, I often felt swept up in the pace of what it took to properly educate a house full of children. Over the past few years, I have found it challenging to cope with the conflicting emotions that arise from being raised as a homeschooled. On one hand, considering my diagnosis and my home life's additional responsibilities, I am proud to have persevered through my school work. However, I also feel I sacrificed some of my childhood innocence along the way. At times, I felt lost in the shuffle of my siblings and their individual academic and social needs. Other times, I felt too guilty to complain because my situation did not feel as acute as the traumas suffered by my foster siblings. For a few unfortunate years, I muffled my voice. However, in the end, I am proud to have learned that taking accountability for my unique needs and feelings has allowed me to become more adaptable and resilient than the majority of my peers. I have learned that maintaining the depth and clarity of my prismatic perspective breathes credibility, empathy, and positivity into my writing.

There are benefits to experiencing hardship and suffering that do not reveal themselves until after they are tested in the fires of adversity. I am convinced that neither my life nor my writing would be as unique as it is without my von Willebrand diagnosis. The blood disorder that leaves me without a vital protein, along with my years as a foster sister,

being one of six females in my family, and my years as a homeschooled are value-added aspects of my identity. Without the challenges I faced during my younger years, I would not have discovered that blessings coexist alongside difficulties and that it is simply a matter of perspective that determines whether their value is meaningless or priceless. My niche in the world constantly changes, but my commitment to voicing my meaningful and clear writing perspective to the outside world is my most powerful means of achieving a lifetime of self-discovery and healing.

From Shame to Shine: The Evolution of Black Women During the 20th Century

Michelle Jones

On March 18, 2022, the United States House of Representatives passed the Creating a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair Act of 2022, which is also known as the CROWN Act of 2022 (“H.R.2116”). The response of the African American community at the passing of this act includes both triumph and astonishment. The triumph is for the acknowledgement that one’s natural hair is acceptable and the astonishment because such a law is needed at all. How the country has arrived at the place of recognition of the challenges of certain races can be credited in large part to African American women. “Generation is one type of national subculture that reflects the value priorities emphasized during a country’s particular historical period,” and the identity of African American women has transformed over the course of the 20th century due to the influences of four different generations (Egri and Ralston 210). In their study of the 20th century generations, Nicky Dries, tenured Professor of Organizational Behavior at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium), and others explain that the 20th century produced the Silent Generation, born between 1925 and 1945; Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980; and Generation Y, born between 1981 and 2001 (910). Each generation developed distinct principles and characteristics because of their worldly experiences. An ever-evolving woman of color was produced by the ideals and values of each of these generational constructs and molded by the circumstances of her day; although she began in shame, she grew to be proud, fell to invisibility and now thrives in her confidence.

The identity of the Colored woman, a subset of the Silent Generation born from 1925 to 1945, is one of servanthood. They are not far removed from the era of slavery which left the Colored population with an inferior mindset. According to Professor Christina Greene of the University of Wisconsin Department of Afro-American Studies, “80 percent of Colored women worked as domestics” from the 1940s to the 1960s. The disproportionate number of Colored women as domestic workers during that time speaks to “the popular ‘mammy’ stereotype”

of the day (655). Colored women of the Silent Generation were also influenced by the generation’s characteristics of conformity and respect of authority. Since their era also included Jim Crow segregation, the idea of abiding by those laws, although oppressing, was accepted. The ideals from the generational influences as well as the experiences as a Colored person compounded the self-identity of Colored women and reduced it to humiliation. W. E. B. Du Bois adds that Colored people “are still ashamed of ourselves and are thus estopped from valid objection when white folks are ashamed to call us human” (qtd. in Dahn 93). This mindset, coupled with the influences of The Silent Generation under which they grew up, defined the Colored woman’s identity as a lesser citizen.

Although Colored women of the Silent Generation outwardly conformed to the society and mandates of their time, they instilled pride within the walls of their homes which fueled a new boldness in their Baby Boomer daughters. The Baby Boomer generation, born between 1946 and 1964, is defined as optimistic, and they “grew up during the period of unprecedented prosperity and affluence that followed World War II” (Egri and Ralston 213). Negro women inherited this same optimism and in turn believed in the notion that opportunities also existed for them. Further, for Negro women, this period was filled not only with influences from generational values but also from the Civil Rights Movement. This movement was at its height in the 1950s and 60s, when the Negro women of the time were in their formative years and absorbing the values of equal opportunity and justice. Womanist scholar K. Sue Jewell affirms the impact of the Baby Boomer generation’s hopefulness on Negro women:

During the Civil Rights Movement, African American women had their hopes and aspirations for greater opportunities increased. They anticipated that government policies, including affirmative action, educational grants and loans, government funding for small businesses and the like, would have resulted in unlimited opportunities for African Americans, including African American women. (qtd. in Narcisse)

Negro women were no longer performing the domestic work of their mothers but had migrated into the clerical jobs from which they had been excluded. The Negro woman had grown in confidence and self-esteem, and her identity emerged as independent, progressive, and unafraid.

With many Negro mothers playing a larger role in the workforce, coming from a generation of numerous Baby Boomers, their Generation X children became somewhat lost in the societal crowd. Born between 1965 and 1980, the people of Generation X were often referred to as latchkey kids because they were often at home alone after school and learned to be self-sufficient. Novelist Douglas Coupland asserts that this generational cohort is named with an “X” because it “referred to the namelessness of the group, aware of its own existence, but overshadowed by the huge number of boomers” (qtd. in Beutell and Wittig-Berman 508). For Black women of Generation X, their coming of age included more prospects at the corporate table due to the advances made during the 1960s equal opportunity and affirmative action laws (Wilson 391).

Black women knew that to compete in the corporate world, downplaying their natural features was necessary. Those who had advanced towards more professional lines of work began to conform to the corporate culture which was dominated by White culture. Most notably, using damaging products for hair straightening was commonplace. Also, writing and speaking with proper English was key to acceptance in corporate circles, but it was not the norm for many Black women in their homes or social settings. They became accustomed to altering their appearances, behaviors and ultimately their very selves: “To lessen their distinctiveness, many Black women feel compelled to engage in identity shifting. This is defined as altering the way one presents oneself in response to perceived social demands” (Karl et al. 12). The identity of the Black woman was conflicted with itself, and Coupland’s words proved eerily prophetic for the identity of Black women of Generation X, for although they were still aware of their own existence, they themselves overshadowed the truth of it with their identity shifting.

Although the African American women of Generation Y matured with an eagerness to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, they quickly recognized how taxing it was to adapt to the ethos of a dominant culture, especially while witnessing the atrocities committed against their people. Born between 1981 and 2001, this generation witnessed world events like none other such as 9/11 and school shootings and is driven by their generation’s values of self-confidence and civic duty (Dries et al. 910). They are the first generation whose accessibility to computers and technology was unhindered, and they became dependent upon them. Millennials, as they are also known, developed a connection with each

other through social media and are deeply influenced by it. While the world shrunk for the Millennial through social media platforms, African American Millennials were exposed to and awakened by the unjust killing of people of their communities. In 2012, the murder of Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American child, prompted the Black Lives Matter Movement to organize, and subsequent unjust murders of African Americans sparked the revitalization of African American women. The combination of civic duty and information accessibility was the driving force for African American women to band together around the civil rights causes of African Americans. Outward pride and self-esteem returned for African American women as they turned to a sense of community, diversity and care for their own. Today, Millennials range in age from 21 to 42, and its subgroup of African American women are highly responsible for the shift to self-acceptance in themselves and those that preceded them. For example, Manufacturing Close-Up reports that “the emerging trend of wearing the hair naturally among the black population has affected the hair relaxer sales. About 79 percent of the black consumers wore a natural hairstyle in 2017 while about 40 percent of the consumer looks to maintain healthy hair via natural ways” (“Research and Markets”). The convergence of the plight of African Americans with the characteristics of Generation Y has caused the African American woman’s identity to be bold, outspoken, and passionate.

In 1989, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Professor at both the University of California Los Angeles School of Law and Columbia Law School, introduced the term intersectionality “to address the marginalization of Black women within not only antidiscrimination law but also in feminist and antiracist theory and politics” (Carbado et al. 303). Crenshaw recognized that in the context of law, African American women are not distinctly African American or distinctly women. Today, intersectionality could also imply that membership of either the African American or the female group does not fully acknowledge the feelings, thoughts, ideas, struggles, and victories that are uniquely those of African American women. Her experiences are ones that will never be shared with any other demographic. The African American woman has stepped into the 21st century with the intent to shed the persona that has been thrust upon her and forge her own identity. She is inimitable, unapologetic, and it is her time to shine.

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SPILLING THE TEA:

British Literature

Tea drinking is a key aspect of British culture, and they don't like it when other people spill their tea.

English 241

There are rumors that Shakespeare did not write his plays and is ... a woman? An aristocrat?

John Milton raised controversy with his tortured anti-hero... the devil himself!

English 242

Scandal! Virginia Woolf caught in secret love affair with Vita Sackville-West! Woolf's husband could not be reached for comment.

Romantic poets have been escaping to the Lake District of late. Polite society is too much for them, apparently!

Transfer Credits

- Humanities Credit
- General Education Credit
- Elective credit

Why Take Literature?

- Expand your world view through history and art.
- Enhance your writing, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.
- Gain exposure to different philosophies and cultures.

Spilling the Tea: American Literature

America has a history of spilling other people's tea

English 231

There are rumors of witches in Salem... Beware!

The Roanoke Colony is still missing, and along with them, the first English born child in the American colonies – Ms. Virginia Dare.



English 232

A Mr. Edgar Allan Poe was seen wandering the streets of Baltimore delirious and in clothes that were not his own... before dropping dead!

There are whispers that the young poet, Ms. Emily Dickinson, has a close relationship with her brother's wife... Too close.



Transfer Credits

- Humanities Credit
- General Education Credit
- Elective credit



Why Take Literature?

- Expand your world view through history and art.
- Enhance your writing, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.
- Gain exposure to different philosophies and cultures.



Spilling the Tea: Literature by Women

Historically, women's voices have been muted or marginalized by patriarchal forces and sexism. Despite this, women have continued to spill the tea and show the world what it means to be a woman in the past and present.

English 274

This course exclusively focuses on literature by women.

- **Course Theme** – Each course has a theme chosen by the instructor. See the instructor list below to contact about their specific course.
- **Three Novel Focus**– This course does not feature an anthology, but instead is focused on three novels chosen by the instructor.



Transfer Credit

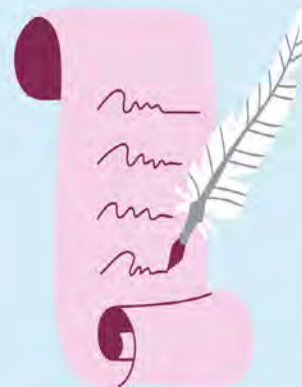
Elective credit - this course is unique and offers students a rare opportunity to expand their knowledge of diverse literature.

Why Take Literature?

- Literature, especially literature that offers diverse perspectives, can change how we see and understand the world around us.
- When we study and write about literature, we strengthen our writing, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.



Instructors



- Cynthia Neighbors - **Summer 2024 Session 2.** Course: ENG 274-0001
- Morgan Thompson - **Fall 2024.** Course: ENG 274-0002

Spilling the Tea

AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE



English 273 :



In American history, African Americans have had to fight against the insidious force of racism in the many forms that it takes in government systems and in the hearts and minds of people. Through literature, the Black experience in America can be known and understood across history and into the present.

TEXTS

Explore some of the most influential African American voices in history, such as:

- Toni Morrison
- Frederick Douglas
- Angela Davis
- James Baldwin
- Audre Lorde
- Langston Hughes



TRANSFER CREDIT



Elective credit - this course is unique and offers students a rare opportunity to expand their knowledge of diverse literature.

WHY TAKE LITERATURE?

- Literature, especially literature that offers diverse perspectives, can change how we see and understand the world around us.
- When we study and write about literature, we strengthen our writing, vocabulary, and critical thinking skills.



INSTRUCTORS



- Eileen Sweeney - **Summer 2024**
Session 1. Course: ENG-273-0001
- Kimberly Burnett - **Fall 2024.**
Course: ENG-273-0002



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As Wake Tech's only student literary and artistic publication, our mission is to provide a creative outlet for the students, faculty, and staff of Wake Technical Community College. At the Wake Review, we believe Wake Tech should always have a place for its creative voice. We are pleased to share the 2024 edition of the Wake Review with the entire Wake Tech community. Thank you.

